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COSMOLOGY AND NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

EDITED BY
JONATHAN T. PENNINGTON
AND SEAN M. McDONOUGH

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The editors would like to dedicate this volume to their wives
with affectionate gratitude for their love, support, and encouragement.
Sine qua non.

Tracy Diane Pennington

and

Ariana M. H. McDonough

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INTRODUCTION

Sean M. McDonough and Jonathan T. Pennington

Cosmology is easily disregarded in the modern world. Pictures of the moons of Saturn are quickly tossed aside to make room for pictures of the stars of Hollywood; the lights of the shopping mall blot out the night sky for a good portion of the population in the West. Not so for the ancients. Whether it was the philosopher contemplating the perfection of the heavenly orbits, the farmer searching the sky for signs of when to plant his crops, or the desert-dwelling sectarian looking for the end of the world, the cosmos held an endless fascination. It is ironic that while scientific knowledge about the universe has exponentially waxed over the last two millennia, popular interest has waned.

In light of this, it is hardly surprising that the study of cosmology has been relatively under-served in New Testament studies. While there are many valuable specialty studies on bits and pieces of NT cosmology available, and recent years have seen some important publications, there is still a need for an overarching perspective on this crucial backdrop to the world of the early Christians. The present study is an attempt to begin to address this lacuna in the field. In it, we will attempt to provide the necessary orientation to ancient cosmology in general, and then address specific questions concerning the presence and function of cosmology in the major areas of the NT canon. It is hoped that this will open up an ongoing conversation on this aspect of NT theology.

Ancient Roots

A fascination with (and fear of) the heavens goes deep into human history. In the Ancient Near East, the stars were universally regarded as divine beings, and 'astral mythology' is pervasive throughout the literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Babylonians in particular made meticulous observations of the heavenly bodies, and the interplay of their scientific calculations and their religious beliefs remains a fascinating area of inquiry. Of particular interest was the widespread assumption that terrestrial events were overseen, manipulated, or even completely controlled by celestial forces (see, e.g., the heavenly temple of Marduk as the prototype for the earthly Babylonian temple). The very fact that the heavens were the epitome of predictable, ordered movement made

disturbances in that order – comets, falling stars, the uneven movements of the planets (the 'wanderers') – deeply troubling.

Nor did interest in the heavens diminish with the advent of the distinctively Greek philosophical approach. The stars remained the standard of perfect order, and if the personalities of various heavenly bodies became less pronounced, they were considered no less, and probably more, divine for all that. Astronomical observation continued and produced many quite remarkable achievements. Astrology, which had doubtless always been present in some form, took on a greater prominence in the Hellenistic period, drawing upon both ancient astral religiosity and scientific (or pseudo-scientific) observation.

Biblical Resonance

The biblical texts are very much a part of this world. In the Hebrew Bible, motifs drawn from astral mythology are almost certainly present in places like Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, even if they have been substantially reworked in the light of the Israelites' distinctive religious history. The worship of heavenly bodies was regularly condemned, showing that it was considered a clear and present danger by the biblical authors. Yet the foundational text of Gen. 1.14 left room for a positive engagement with ancient astronomy, which could of course bleed easily into more astrological speculations. (What do we make, for example, of the brontologia and horoscopes within the hyper-orthodox community at Qumran?) The supremacy of YHWH, meanwhile, could be effectively demonstrated by noting that he is the creator of heaven and earth, the one who calls the stars by name, the Lord of the heavenly host.

Ancient cosmology is equally important for correctly situating the texts of the NT. Paul's statements about the 'spiritual forces of wickedness' have rightly been seen against the backdrop of cosmic battles of good and evil, while his mention of 'ascending to heaven' must be understood within some conceptual framework of the universe. The same goes for the descent/ascent motifs in the gospels, and John in particular. NT apocalyptic paints its picture of the past, present and future on a cosmic canvas, yet cosmological investigations of, for example, the book of Revelation have been deeply flawed and there is much yet to be said. Allusive references to Jesus as the agent of creation, with their echoes of Proverbs 8 and Genesis 1, are inexplicable apart from some understanding of ancient conceptions of the creation and ordering of the cosmos.

A survey of this material is sorely needed. One further refinement in the present study, however, is the attention devoted to the *status* of cosmological statements in the NT. For many years, one would imagine that the Holy Grail of biblical cosmology was the precise determination of the number of 'layers' or 'tiers' of the cosmos, with debates raging between two, three, four, seven, nine, or more of such layers. While this is a legitimate area of inquiry, it has distracted attention from other, perhaps more pressing, concerns about bibli-

cal views of the universe. Moreover, many of the studies seem to presuppose that there was a tacit, shared 'scientific' view on these matters which met with more or less universal approval in the ancient world. The biblical writers then reflect, or in ignorance deviate from, what everyone knew about the order of the cosmos (including the putatively all-important question of how many layers it had).

But is this really the case? Bona fide scientific observations of the cosmos go back at least to the Babylonians, and Plato had given a fairly comprehensive philosophical account of the universe in his highly influential *Timaeus*. But even in the latter case, he goes out of his way to state that this is only his best guess as to what is going on, and that one ought not to suppose it is a definitive statement at all. More to the point, none of the NT statements about the cosmos has anything remotely like the flavour of scientific inquiry about it. Rather than being illegitimate or distorted versions of a supposed ancient scientific consensus, NT cosmology seems to have an entirely different function.

Could the NT writers, while gravitating towards a 'three-tiered' view of the heavens, not have countenanced alternative schema for 'levels' of the cosmos, with the full awareness that these were not meant to be definitive accounts of what is scientifically the case, but rather were employed because they served useful literary or theological purposes? If this is the case, then the search for one definitive model of the cosmos is doomed from the start. Rather, we ought to recognize the latitude people in the first century had to employ different models according to their theological needs. This does not mark the end of the inquiry into NT cosmology, but the proper beginning. Does the 'three heavens' scheme, for instance, refer to the regions below the moon, above the moon, and above the sun – or might it be a tri-partite division of the night sky, with the Milky Way at the apex, with the other two regions dropping into the north and south? These are questions well worth asking, provided we also ask why Paul might have used this particular schema at this point in his Epistle. Likewise, one can explore the use of *huperouranos*, 'the above heaven', and fruitfully compare it with Plato's self-consciously fictionalized depiction of the ascent of the soul in the *Phaedrus*. What we are loath to do is to pit the various allusions to celestial matters in a kind of gladiatorial combat, with one model emerging victorious above the rest.

The Present Volume

Whatever differences may exist between ancients and moderns with respect to conceptions of the universe, there is an agreement that the cosmos is a large place. Yet it has occupied a relatively small place in formal NT study. The following essays hope to begin to redress the balance. In order to ensure that no potentially relevant material is overlooked, we have adopted a survey format, ranging through the canon book by book (or where necessary section by section,

as in the Pauline corpus). One might easily write a monograph on selected aspects of, for example, the cosmology of 2 Peter. It is hoped that the broad strokes of the present volume will facilitate this type of detailed investigation in the future. At the same time, we hope to make a material contribution to the field by a consistent emphasis on the theological dimensions of NT cosmology. Even within this limited sphere, there is ample room for disagreement, and we will welcome alternative explanations of how the New Testament writers thought about the world around them; 'in a multitude of counsellors there is safety' (Prov. 11.14).

Our collection begins with Eddie Adams' erudite overview of ancient cosmological and cosmogonical positions. Following this, our various essayists systematically work their way through the NT canon, asking the simple question: What cosmological language and concepts does this author employ, and how does this cosmology inform and affect the author's theological point(s)?

We have intentionally given much latitude to the contributors, not requiring a set structure or pattern for the essays. As a result, the essays follow the expertise and interest of the scholars and touch on a wide variety of theological topics in the NT. Yet, even more than was anticipated at the outset, there are several consistent and crucial themes that bubble to the top in almost every treatment. These include the foundational duality of heaven and earth, the way in which cosmological language serves to form Christian identity, community and world view, and the ever-present hope of the eschaton, itself inevitably described in cosmological terms. All of the studies confirm our initial impression: the NT authors regularly employ cosmological language (more than has been recognized in the past) and when they do so it is always for the purpose of making important theological, polemical and exhortational points. *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung* are inextricably and substantially intertwined.

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1

GRAECO-ROMAN AND ANCIENT JEWISH COSMOLOGY

Edward Adams

Cosmology seeks to explain the origin, structure and destiny of the physical universe. Cosmological concerns occupied major thinkers of Greek and Roman antiquity. Questions which have exercised cosmologists in modern times were rehearsed long ago by the philosophers of ancient Greece.[1] Is the cosmos static or developing? If the universe had a beginning (in time), how did it emerge? What is its size and composition? Is it finite or boundless? How is matter distributed in the universe? Does the universe show signs of intelligent design? Or is our world the product of chance events? What will be the ultimate fate of the universe? Recently proposed models of the emergence, evolution and future of the cosmos have their precedents in ancient theories. The cyclic, ekpyrotic theory of scientists Paul Steinhardt and Neil Turok, according to which the universe experiences an endless series of cosmic eras beginning with a 'big bang' and ending in a 'big crunch',[2] is a contemporary revival of the Stoic view of cosmic cycles. The cyclic cosmology advanced by physicists Lauris Baum and Paul Frampton, which has it that our universe will shatter into smithereens in an event called the 'big rip', with each shard going into the formation of new universes,[3] has a precursor in the ancient Atomic theory of the generation and destruction of universes.

The Old Testament contains material of a cosmological nature, though it lacks a 'scientific' cosmology of the kind developed, from the sixth century BCE onward in ancient Greece. Old Testament writers are not really interested in cosmology for its own sake; one might say that the kind of cosmological reflection we find in the Old Testament is more theological cosmology. Some other early Jewish writers, though, do indulge in a more speculative (and mystical) style of cosmology. Cosmological interest is especially evident in the Jewish apocalyptic literature.

1. See M. R. Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1995).

2. P. J. Steinhardt and N. Turok, 'Cosmic Evolution in a Cyclic Universe', *Physical Review* (web-based journal) D65 126003 2002.

3. L. Baum and P. Frampton, 'Turnaround in Cyclic Cosmology', *Physical Review Letters* (web-based journal) 98. 071301 (16 Feb 2007).

This essay is a survey of Graeco-Roman and ancient Jewish cosmology, setting the scene for the chapters that follow on the New Testament. The first and longer part deals with Graeco-Roman views; the second looks at the Old Testament and early Jewish material.

1. *Graeco-Roman Cosmology*

Scientific study of the fabric of the universe began in Greece in the sixth century BCE, with the work of the Ionian, or Milesian, natural philosophers; but there was by this time a long tradition of astronomical interest and ideas about the structure of the universe in Mesopotamia (especially Babylonia) and Egypt, and some important astronomical discoveries had already been made. For example, from around the thirteenth century BCE, the Egyptians had identified the five planets visible to the naked eye (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) and over forty stellar constellations, including the signs of the Zodiac.[4] There were also in circulation various popular mythical accounts of how the world came to be. Hesiod's *Theogony* (on which see below) is to some extent a synthesis of (competing) archaic cosmogonical myths.

Greek cosmological enquiry, from the sixth century BCE onwards, was based on the recognition that the external universe is a well-ordered system and the conviction that this order is open to rational analysis and explanation. It was the strong sense that the early Greek philosophers had of the world's orderliness that prompted the application of the word *kosmos* (κόσμος), which had the primary sense of 'order', to the physical universe. In early Greek usage, the term was used with reference to specific types of social orderings, such as the seating order of rowers (Homer, *Od.* 13.77), the order of soldiers (Homer, *Il.* 12.225) and well-ordered political states such as Sparta (Herodotus 1.65). It was also used for order in a general sense (Herodotus 2.52; 9.59).[5] According to Charles Kahn, the term was applied to the cosmic order 'by conscious analogy with the good order of society'.[6] Initially, *kosmos* was employed for the order exhibited by the universe, and then, by extension, it came to designate the universe itself as a well-ordered system.[7] One ancient tradition (Diogenes Laertius 8.48) accords Pythagoras the distinction of being the first to call the universe by the name of *kosmos*, but we cannot be certain that he was responsible for this semantic move. By the time of Plato in the fourth century BCE, *kosmos* was well established as a technical term

4. Wright, *Cosmology*, p. 15.

5. These earlier non-cosmological senses did not fall into disuse after the cosmological usage took off, but carried on alongside it.

6. C. H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 223.

7. See further E. Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), pp. 44–6; Kahn, *Anaximander*, pp. 219–30; G. Vlastos, *Plato's Universe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 3–22.

for the universe[8] (which was also designated by the expressions, 'the whole', το ὅλον, 'the all', τὸ παν, 'all things', παντα, and 'heaven', οὐρανος). The ancient Greeks saw beauty in order. In addition to its various senses relating to order, the word *kosmos* had the aesthetic senses 'decoration' and 'adornment' (especially the adornment of women, e.g., Homer, *Il.* 14.187; Herodotus 5.92).[9] When applied to the physical world, therefore, *kosmos* not only conveyed the idea of a well-arranged structure, it indicated that the orderliness displayed in the universe was a 'beauty-enhancing order'.[10] The early Greek natural philosophers of antiquity were profoundly aware that we live in an 'elegant universe'.[11]

The earliest picture of the cosmos we encounter in Greek literature is that assumed in the epic poems of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The earth is viewed as a circular, flat disc surrounded by the great river Ocean (*Il.* 18.607; cf. Herodotus 4.8), and the sky as a bowl-like hemisphere of bronze or iron (*Il.* 5.504; 17.425; *Od.* 15.329), covering the flat earth. Below its surface, the earth extends downwards as far as Tartarus (*Il.* 8.14). Anaximander, in the sixth century BCE, pictured the earth as cylindrical in shape, like a column drum, hanging without support in the surrounding air.[12] In the fourth century BCE, with Plato, Eudoxus and especially Aristotle, the 'classical' view of the cosmos took shape; this view was given its definitive expression by Ptolemy in his *Almagest* (meaning 'the Greatest') written in the second century CE. According to the Aristotelian cosmic model, the earth lies at the centre of the cosmos, surrounded by a number of concentric, rotating spheres, to which the sun, moon and planets are attached (see further below). The outermost sphere of the cosmic system is that of the fixed stars. This understanding of the structure of the universe, in its Ptolemaic form, prevailed until Copernicus in the sixteenth century. A heliocentric picture of the cosmos was proposed by Aristarchus of Samos (b. *c.* 320 BCE), but this was almost universally rejected.[13]

A survey of Greek and Hellenistic cosmological thought should begin with the poet Hesiod, who lived around 700 BCE. Hesiod bridges the mythologizing of his predecessors and the rationalizing of his philosophical successors.

1.1. *Hesiod*

Hesiod's *Theogony* (*Birth of the Gods*) is a genealogy of the gods of Greece, interwoven with episodes in the tale of the succession of divine kings. The

8. Plato, *Phileb.* 29e; *Polit.* 269d; cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.11.

9. It is from *kosmos* in the sense of 'adornment' that we get the English words 'cosmetic', 'cosmetics', 'cosmetician'.

10. Vlastos, *Plato's Universe*, p. 3. Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 30a.

11. B. Greene, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

12. G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (2nd edn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), texts nos. 122–4, pp. 133–4.

13. Wright, *Cosmology*, pp. 153–6.

poem, written in the Epic style, is set forth as a song taught to Hesiod by the Muses when they appeared to him on Mount Helikon (*Theog.* 1-32), which gives it the character of a kind of divine revelation. The composition is partly an attempt to combine various longstanding myths about the gods into a common narrative. It traces the history of the gods from the beginning to the established and uncontested reign of Zeus. The first gods are personifications of the main components of the cosmos, so their appearance constitutes the formation of the physical world. First came Chaos. After Chaos came Earth, Tartarus and Eros. Chaos then produced Erebos (dark place) and Night (night). From them came Aither (brightness) and Hemera (day). Earth brought forth Ouranos (heaven), mountains and sea. A striking feature of this cosmogony is the primacy of Chaos. What Hesiod meant by 'Chaos' was the subject of much ancient discussion and continues to be debated. An attractive (though not unproblematic) suggestion is that it refers to the gap between the sky and earth, which would make the first stage of creation the separation of what was formerly one mass.[14] The idea of the separation of an originally indistinct earth and sky was a well-established feature of Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cosmogonies.[15]

The rest of the gods in the genealogy are mostly anthropomorphic mythical personages. The Titans, the youngest of whom is Cronos, the Cyclopes and the hundred-handed giants are the offspring of Earth and Ouranos. The Olympian gods, the youngest of whom is Zeus, are the children of Cronos and his sister Rhea.

The clash between the Titans and the Olympians, and the later conflict between Zeus and Typhoeus, takes the world to edge of total collapse. Hesiod employs colourful imagery of cosmic catastrophe to depict the battles of the divinities (*Theog.* 678-705, 847-68). With all opposition vanquished, Zeus secures the stable existence of the cosmos. Hesiod seems to suggest that the earth is everlasting (*Theog.* 116-17). Philo (on whom see below) regards him as the father of the Platonic doctrine that the world is created and indestructible (*Aet. Mund.* 17).

1.2. *The Milesians*

It was in the harbour city and trading centre of Miletus, in the region of Ionia, during the sixth century BCE, that the first Greek attempts to give a rational, non-mythological account of the structure of the cosmos were made. The pioneering figures were Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes.[16] These thinkers maintained that the universe originated from a single generative principle or *arche.* They explained the emergence of the cosmos in biological terms, as

14. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 39.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–4.

16. None of the writings of the Presocratic philosophers has survived. Their teachings are only known from fragments, reports and summaries.

growth from a seed. The Milesians were hylozoists: they believed that the cosmos is animate. For Thales, whom Aristotle identifies as the founder of the *arche* type of cosmogony, the originating principle was water.[17] Thales also seems to have taught that the earth floats like a piece of a wood.[18] He apparently predicted the occurrence of a solar eclipse in the course of a particular year, and his prediction came true.[19] How he managed to do so is still debated. Anaximander held that the seed from which the universe grew was secreted by an indeterminate entity which he called 'the boundless' (*apeiron*).[20] He contended that the world's order is maintained by the interaction of opposites.[21] There are rhythmical shifts between, on the one hand, heat and drought, and on the other, coldness and rain, as in the seasons of summer and winter, but an overall equilibrium is maintained because of a certain justice in the nature of things that prevents one of the opposing forces from gaining complete ascendancy.[22] Anaximenes, like Thales, took the *arche* of the cosmos to be a material principle, but he identified the substance as air. He maintained that the physical elements could be explained as transformations of air. Thus air, by rarefaction, changes into fire, and through condensation changes into water and earth.[23]

The Milesians apparently believed that the cosmos would eventually return to the principle out of which it arose; thus generation would be matched by dissolution at the end of its natural life.[24] There is a tradition which states that the Milesians, or Anaximander at least, held to a cyclic view of cosmic history, according to which the cosmos is generated, dissolved and generated again in endless cycles.[25] But we cannot be sure that the Ionians themselves espoused such a scheme.

17. Aristotle, *Met.* 983b6. Aristotle, who is our only source of information on this point, presents Thales as teaching that all things were made of water and that water continues as the material substrate of all things. It is possible, though, that what Thales actually taught was that the earth *emerged* from water, and that he was simply reflecting the belief that the earth rose out of the primaeval ocean, found in ANE cosmogony and also in Homer (*Il.* 14.201, 246). But, on the other hand, Thales could well have transformed the mythological notion into a physical theory. Anaximenes, his successor, certainly believed that air was the actual material source and substrate of everything, and it is generally assumed that he was pursuing a line of reasoning instigated by Thales. See the discussion in Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 88–95.

18. Aristotle, *de Caelo* 294a28.

19. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 81–2.

20. *Ibid.*, text no. 101.

21. *Ibid.*, text no. 110 (the extant fragment of Anaximander). On the role of the opposites in the process of world-formation, see text nos. 118, 119, 121.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 119–20.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 144–8.

24. So Aristotle in *Met.* 983b6.

25. Eusebius, *Ev. Praep.* 1.7.

1.3. *Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles and Anaxagoras*

Heraclitus (*c.* 540–480 BCE) spoke of the world-order as unmade: 'it always was and is and shall be: an everliving fire'.[26] He conceived of fire as the basic form of matter, though it was not an originating substance as water and air were for Thales and Anaximenes.[27] Although later Stoics ascribed to him their doctrine of the periodic destruction and regeneration of the cosmos by fire, this fragment of his teaching seems to invalidate the attribution and rather indicates that he took the view that the world had neither beginning nor end.[28] He was thus an early proponent of the 'steady-state' view of the universe. Fire, which is the underlying substrate, earth and sea are the three main cosmic constituents.[29] Transformations between these three masses are going on all the time, but in such a way to preserve the quantity of each, and to maintain the stability of the whole. Heraclitus spoke of the *logos* (λόγος) as the principle of unity and balance.[30] This *logos* is accessible to all, though the majority fail to comprehend it.

Parmenides of Elea (born *c.* 514) is one of the most complex and intriguing Presocratic philosophers. His cosmological views were expressed in a poem that has not been preserved in its totality. The poem falls into two parts, commonly labelled, 'The Way of Truth' and 'The Way of Opinion'. In the first, Parmenides insists that objective truth cannot be arrived at via sensory perception, since the senses cannot be trusted. Rather, judgements about what is true must be made by reason alone. On logical grounds, only what 'is' can be the proper subject of human thought and discourse; what 'is not' must be excluded.[31] Since what 'is' is not subject to change, that which exists, i.e., the universe, is continuous and indivisible, uncreated and imperishable.[32] In the second part, however, Parmenides constructs a cosmology (involving the all-pervasiveness of light and night) precisely on the basis of sensory observation and the opinion of mortals, the approach he has just rejected. How these two sections of the poem are meant to relate to each other is notoriously unclear. Succeeding Greek philosophers generally took 'The Way of Truth' as representing Parmenides' fundamental position. Since his argument here stymies empirical enquiry into the nature of the cosmos, subsequent natural philosophers who wanted to follow the empirical route had to answer Parmenides' objection or circumvent it.[33]

26. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, text no. 217 (= Heraclitus, fr. 30).

27. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

28. Kahn, *Anaximander*, pp. 225–6; J. V. Luce, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 44.

29. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, text no. 218.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 186–8.

31. *Ibid.*, text no. 291.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 249–53.

33. Luce, *Introduction*, pp. 54–5.

Empedocles maintained that the cosmos derives from the four elements or 'roots' as he called them, earth, air, fire and water.[34] He rejected Parmenides' disallowance of the concept of change, and saw change in the natural world as influenced by the opposing forces of 'love' (attraction) and 'strife' (repulsion).[35] Following Aristotle's interpretation of him (*de Caelo* 1.10), Empedocles is usually seen as propounding a cyclic cosmology, and the relevant extant fragments of his work have been read in this light. On a conventional understanding of Empedocles' cosmology, the world alternates between the total ascendancy of love and the complete domination of strife.[36] At the height of love, the elements are completely amalgamated, and there is no distinction between earth, sea, etc. When strife is dominant, the elements are completely separate. A world-arrangement such as we have at present is possible during two phases of the cycle, when love is in process of ascending, or when strife is increasing. However, in recent years, some Empedoclean scholars have rejected the 'cosmic' interpretation of Empedocles' cycle, arguing that he was rather talking about the regular cycles of nature, within a fixed and stable cosmos.[37] Certainly, Empedocles viewed the world as having a birth. A remarkable feature of his theory of origins is his account of the evolution of animal and human life, which in a crude way anticipates the Darwinian explanation.[38]

Anaxagoras (*c.* 500–428) shared the view of his predecessors that it is 'quite impossible that anything should come into being from the non-existent or be dissolved into it'.[39] In his opinion, the cosmos is composed of an infinite number of 'seeds' of various substances, each of which contains at the same time a tiny portion of every other substance.[40] Initially existing in a primeval mixture, Mind (*nous*) set in motion a process which spread and separated the seeds, such as hot and cot, dry and wet, forming the ordered universe that we experience.[41] Anaxagoras conceived of Mind as a quasi-autonomous, all-pervading force, but he avoids suggesting that it is god.[42] His successor, Diogenes of Apollonia (*fl.* 440–30 BCE) identified the cosmic intelligence with air, which following Anaxamenes he took to be the material source of all things. Diogenes took the step of calling the directing intelligence 'god'.[43]

34. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, text nos. 346–7.

35. *Ibid.*, text no. 348 (= Empedocles fr. 17.1-13).

36. Luce, *Introduction*, pp. 63–4.

37. See D. J. Furley, *The Greek Cosmologists. Volume 1: The Formation of the Atomic Theory and its Earliest Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 101–2.

38. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 302–5.

39. *Ibid.*, text no. 496.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 365–8, 376–8.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 362–5.

42. Wright, *Cosmology*, p. 171.

43. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *Presocratic Philosophers*, text no. 603.

1.4. *The Atomists*

The Atomists, Leucippus and his younger but more well-known contemporary Democritus, rejected the idea that the universe arose from a single material principle, such as water or air. In their view, the cosmos is made up of indestructible particles of matter called atoms (*atomon* meaning 'uncuttable'). These particles are of different sizes and shapes but are so tiny that they are below the threshold of visibility. Atoms are infinite in number and move randomly in infinite space or void.[44] They collide, bounce back and interlock to form aggregates that can be seen and touched. The ordered cosmos came about when a mass of atoms collected in a region of the void. Their collisions caused a vortex or whirlwind and the atoms began attaching themselves to each other to form compounds. The heavier compounds collected at the centre thus forming the earth. The lighter compounds, ignited by the whirling motion, formed the substance of the celestial bodies.[45] This world came into being by chance and necessity; there was no cosmic intelligence directing the physical processes.

Our cosmos is one of many *kosmoi* in infinite space. Leucippus and Democritus maintained that there are innumerable worlds, differing in size, shape and constituency.[46] Some worlds have no sun and moon, in others the celestial luminaries are larger than in our world, and in others they are more numerous. Worlds are at various stages of growth: some are just in process of emerging, some are fully developed, and some are nearing their end. Since all compounds are inherently destructible, our cosmos and all other worlds will eventually be destroyed. Leucippus and Democritus believed that a cosmos is destroyed when it clashes with another cosmos. The particles of a shattered cosmos go into the formation of new worlds.

1.5. *Plato*

Plato dismissed the Atomists' view that our cosmos is one of an infinite number of accidentally caused worlds. He insisted on the singularity and uniqueness of our cosmos, and maintained that the order manifested in the cosmos was not there by chance but has been imposed upon it by a divine intelligence.

Plato set out his cosmology in detail in his treatise, the *Timaeus*, which became the most important and influential cosmological work in antiquity.[47] In this writing, Plato draws a distinction between the realm of being and the realm of becoming. The former is the realm of ideas, which is eternal, unchanging and accessible to reason; the latter is the realm of sense-perception, the visible

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 413–16.

45. *Ibid.*, text no. 563.

46. *Ibid.*, text no. 565.

47. See D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Philosophia Antiqua 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 46–57. Runia states that (p. 57), 'the *Timaeus* was the only Greek prose work that up to the third century AD every educated man could be assumed to have read'.

world. Plato tells how the visible cosmos was formed by a craftsman-deity – a demiurge – who shaped the raw material at his disposal into an ordered structure based on the model of the eternal forms. The extent to which Plato intended his readers to interpret the details of the creation-scheme literally has been debated. That he calls his account a 'likely story' (*Tim.* 29D) tells against a straightforwardly literal interpretation. Whether he meant to convey the thought that the world had an actual beginning in time has been a particular matter of controversy. Aristotle interpreted him literally on this point, but Plato's successors in the Academy, from Xenocrates onward, maintained that he was not assigning a temporal starting-point to it.[48]

It should be noted that Plato does not accentuate the distance between the ideal realm and the visible world. Nor does he emphasize, in Parmenidean fashion, the untrustworthy nature of the sense-perceptible: in fact he claims that the faculties of sight and hearing are gifts from heaven (*Tim.* 46C-47D). Certainly, the visible cosmos lacks the absolute perfection of the realm of being (due to an element of 'brute fact' in it), but Plato stresses how *closely* the material cosmos resembles the ideal pattern.[49] The cosmos is described as 'beautiful'; 'the fairest of all that has come into existence' (29A); 'most fair and most good' (30B).

Plato tells us that the cosmos has been perfectly constructed (32D-33B). All existing matter has been used in up its production; nothing has been left outside. In its formation, the elements have been perfectly combined. The cosmos cannot be injured by something external to it, nor can it be undone by internal disharmony. Therefore, it is not subject to decay and dissolution. Only the craftsman himself can unmake what he has created. But the demiurge is wholly good (30A) and could never engage in such an evil act as to destroy this consummate achievement and work of art. The physical cosmos is thus everlasting and indestructible. It is a living creature (30CD) with body and soul (34B). The world's body consists of the four elements; the soul extends throughout the body and animates it. (Plato's world-soul became a central feature of Middle Platonic cosmology.) As regards its structure, the cosmos is spherical in shape (33B), rotating on its own axis, with the earth at the centre (40B-C). The movements of the heavenly bodies serve to mark time, which Plato calls the moving likeness of eternity (37D). The revolutions of the heavens also have an ethical function, manifesting a cosmic order that human beings should replicate in themselves (47B-C).[50] The cosmos is such an excellent structure of matchless beauty that it must be regarded as 'a perceptible God made in the image of the Intelligible' (92C; cf. 34B; 68E).

48. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The* Timaeus *of Plato* (reprint of 1935 original; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), p. 26.

49. See C. J. de Vogel, 'Was Plato a Dualist?', *Thêta-Pi* 1 (1972), 4–60.

50. Cf. Plato's *Laws* 897A-B.

After a period of relative neglect, there was a revival of Plato's cosmological teaching in the first century BCE leading to the movement generally known as Middle Platonism.[51] Philo and Plutarch, Middle Platonists of the first century CE, demonstrate a close knowledge of the *Timaeus* (on Philo, see below).

1.6. *Aristotle*

Aristotle had much to say about the structure and workings of the physical cosmos in the course of his vast philosophical project.[52] A number of his works are relevant to the topic, but especially the treatise known as *De Caelo* (*On the Heavens*).

Aristotle maintained that the cosmos is eternal, having neither beginning nor end (*De Caelo* 1.10-12). The cosmos is spherical in form, and limited in extent (1.5-7). There is no empty space beyond it nor within it. He viewed matter as extending continually throughout the universe leaving no gaps. At the centre is the earth, which is encircled by concentric spheres to which the heavenly bodies are affixed. The outermost sphere, encasing the whole, is the sphere of the fixed stars. The terrestrial sphere is made up mainly of the element earth, which has on its surface water, and is enclosed by air, which is in turn enveloped by a sphere of fire. Aristotle did not, though, think that the elements were completely distinct; he allowed for their interpenetration and transformation. Above the lunar sphere, matter is of a different character. The heavenly bodies and their spheres are not composed of any of the four terrestrial elements, but a 'fifth element', aither (2.7). Aristotle limited change to the sublunary sphere.

For both Plato and Aristotle, perfect motion was circular. However, the planets (literally, the wanderers) did not appear to exhibit that motion consistently. They seemed to deviate occasionally from their rotations, turning back from their eastward movement in relation to the constellation and moving westward for a while – a phenomenon known as retrogradation. Eudoxus, a younger contemporary of Plato, offered a mathematical explanation of planetary movements that tried to account for this phenomenon. He proposed that the paths of the celestial bodies were produced by the rotations of concentric spheres moving at different velocities and with different axes, with the earth as the shared centre (Aristotle, *Meta.* 12.8.9-10). Callippus then modified Eudoxus' theory (12.8.11). Aristotle made his own adaptations to the theory, positing the existence of no less than fifty-five rotating spheres (12.8.12-14). Whereas

51. On which see J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977).

52. On Aristotle's cosmology see L. Elders, *Aristotle's Cosmology: A Commentary on the* De Caelo (Philosophical Texts and Studies 13; Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V., 1965); F. Solmsen, *Aristotle's System of the Physical World: A Comparison with his Predecessors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960).

for Eudoxus and Callippus, the spheres existed only on a theoretical level, for Aristotle, they were actual corporeal entities.

Aristotle thus produced an account of the ordered universe as a mechanized system. For Aristotle, the universe could not be the cause of its own movement. A prime mover was required, external to the universe: 'something which moves without being moved' (*Met.* 12.7.2). Aristotle did not hesitate to call the prime mover 'god' (12.7.7-9), though Aristotle's 'god' is not the personal deity of the Old Testament.

1.7. *Epicurus and Lucretius*

Epicurus (341–271 BCE) was the one of the most important philosophers of the Hellenistic era and founder of the influential Epicurean school of philosophy. He wrote extensively, producing a grand 'theory of everything', but most of his work has not survived. Three letters have been preserved by Diogenes Laertius which provide a summary of his teaching.[53]

Epicurus accepted the Atomists' account of the nature of reality and the origins of the cosmos. Our world, one of an infinite number of worlds in infinite space, came into existence, not by divine agency,[54] but through the accidental collision and combination of atoms in an area of the void. It will eventually perish when the compound breaks up and the atoms disperse. He explained the life of a cosmos using a biological model.[55] A world grows by taking in nourishment. It absorbs atomic matter until it reaches the peak of maturity. After growth, there is decline, when more particles are exuded than taken in, until eventually the cosmic body, no longer able to resist the external forces bearing down upon it, becomes so weak that it collapses and disintegrates.

Lucretius (99–55 BCE), a dedicated Epicurean, gives an exposition of Epicurus' physical system in his *De rerum natura* (*On the Nature of Things*); this is the fullest extant account of Epicurean cosmology. In Book 5, he attacks Platonic and Aristotelian belief in cosmic indestructibility. The world is a mortal entity, the collapse of which is inevitable.[56] Its end may come 'within some short time'. He also strikes at the belief that the cosmos has been divinely ordered and made for the benefit of human beings. He argues that the world is far too flawed to be of divine origin (5.195-234). Most of the earth's surface is uninhabitable, and of what is left, much is wild and infertile. Extremes of

53. Diogenes Laertius 10. Charred fragments of his work, *On Nature*, were discovered at Herculaneum. With technological advances, the text is gradually being recovered.

54. Epicurus believed in the existence of the gods but denied that they involve themselves in cosmic processes or human affairs.

55. See F. Solmsen, 'Epicurus on the Growth and Decline of the Cosmos', *AJP* 74 (1953), 34–51.

56. Lucretius (5.235-415) offers four arguments for the destructibility of the cosmos. See further Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven: 'Cosmic Catastrophe' in the New Testament and its World* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 112–13.

weather frustrate human agricultural endeavours. Lucretius thus dissents from the view that the world has been shaped toward the best possible end.

1.8. *The Stoics*

Cosmology was a chief interest of the Stoics, and Stoic cosmology is a fascinating subject in its own right.[57] Hahm thinks that 'from the third century BC to the second century AD more people in the Mediterranean world seem to have held a more or less Stoic conception of the world than any other'.[58] He maintains that the Stoic world view was the most influential in Graeco-Roman antiquity. In sharp contrast to the Epicureans, the Stoics viewed the cosmos as the well-constructed product of a divine creator. They differed from Plato and Aristotle, though, in making the divine intelligence, 'god', co-extensive with the cosmos. 'God' was understood as the rational, active principle – the *logos* – present in matter (and inseparable from it), pervading it and giving it order (Diogenes Laertius 7.134). The Stoics were thus thoroughgoing pantheists (and thoroughgoing materialists), identifying the cosmos itself with god (Diogenes Laertius 7.137). The ascription of full divinity to the cosmos shows how highly they esteemed it.

Plato and Aristotle rejected the notion of space outside the cosmos, but the Stoics argued for the existence of an infinite void external to the cosmos (into which the cosmos expands when it ignites at the conflagration).[59] They made a terminological distinction between 'the whole' and 'the all', which hitherto had been used synonymously: the former is the physical cosmos; the latter is the cosmos and the void together.[60] The cosmos is conceived in Aristotelian fashion as a series of spherical tiers, with earth at the centre and the heavenly bodies at the periphery.[61] Terrestrial matter divides into the four terrestrial elements: earth, fire, air and water. But these elements are transformations of a more basic form of matter, 'designing fire', to be distinguished from the element fire.[62] The celestial bodies are composed of aither, which is 'designing fire' in its purest form, though the Stoics appear to have shied away from calling aither a fifth element.[63]

57. See D. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology* (Columbus: Ohio State Press, 1977); M. Lapidge, 'Stoic Cosmology', in J. M. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley, CA/London: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 160–85; *idem*, 'Stoic Cosmology and Roman Literature, First to Third Centuries A.D.', *ANRW* 36.3 (1989), 1379–1429.

58. Hahm, *Origins*, p. xiii.

59. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 294–7.

60. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, text no. 44A.

61. Lapidge, 'Stoic Cosmology', p. 177.

62. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, text no. 46D; Lapidge, 'Stoic Cosmology', p. 167.

63. Cicero, *de fin.* 4.12. Lapidge, 'Stoic Cosmology', p. 178.

On the Stoic theory of cosmogony, the universe originates in a pure fire (none of the Greek natural philosophers posited creation *ex nihilo*). The fiery substance changes to air and then to water, and out of the primordial water the four elements arise, and these combine in many ways to make up the variety of things and forms of life on earth (Plutarch, *Stoic.* 1053a; Diogenes Laertius 142). From the residue of the original fiery matter, the heavenly bodies are made. World-formation is not, though, a purely mechanical process; it is the activity of a divine agent acting in and through natural forces (Diogenes Laertius 135-6). Since god is conterminous with matter, the elemental changes that bring about the variegated cosmos are transformations of god himself.

Eventually, the present ordered world will return to its original state of pure fire.[64] The celestial bodies, especially the sun, which feed on terrestrial moisture, will in due course suck the cosmos dry, causing it to ignite and turning it into a total cosmic fireback (Cicero, *Nat. de.* 2.118). This is not a sad end for the cosmos, but a wholly positive end in the life of god, when he reaches the peak state of his existence.[65] After the conflagration, the fire abates and the process of world-formation begins all over again. The cycle repeats itself endlessly. The periodic destruction of the cosmos into fire was taught by the early Stoics. It was abandoned by some middle Stoics, including Posidonius, whose philosophical teaching was very influential (Philo, *Aet.* 76-7). But it seems to have been widely accepted in Roman Stoicism of the first century CE. Seneca, in a number of passages, tries to portray the destructive event.[66]

The Stoics, like Plato, viewed the cosmos biologically (but they pressed the biological analogy further than Plato). It comprises body and soul,[67] and is animated by 'breath' (πνευμα). 'Breath' is the life-force of the cosmos, sustaining it and maintaining its unity.[68] The cosmos has birth and growth, but it 'must be not said to die';[69] the conflagration is not the death of the cosmos but its acme.

For the Stoics, every event in history is connected in a causal chain: 'nothing in the world exists or happens causelessly'.[70] The whole course of universal history, including every detail of it, is determined in advance by the divine intel-

64. On the Stoic theory of *ekpurosis* or cosmic conflagration, see A. A. Long, 'The Stoics on World-Conflagration', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985), 13–37; J. Mansfeld, 'Providence and the Destruction of the Universe in Early Stoic Thought', in M. J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 129–88.

65. Mansfeld, 'Providence', pp. 176–77.

66. *Ben.* 6.22.; *Consol. ad Marc* 26.6-7; *Nat. Quest.* 27; *Thyes.* 835-884. Similar imagery is found in Lucan's *Civil War.* See further E. Adams, *The Stars Will Fall.*

67. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, text no. 46E (= Plutarch, *Stoic.* 1052C-D).

68. See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, pp. 280–9.

69. *Ibid.*, text no. 46E.

70. *Ibid.*, text no. 55N.

ligence. This history is repeated exactly, or almost exactly, in every successive world-cycle.[71]

Stoic cosmology supported natural theology.[72] The Stoics believed that god's existence and providential activity could be deduced from the structure of the universe. This is possible because of the affinity between human reasoning and the reason or *logos* that permeates the cosmos.

The Stoics also drew connections between cosmology and ethics. The goal of ethics, in Stoicism, is to live in accordance with nature, or the universal order.[73] The notion of contemplating and learning from the governance of the cosmos became a prominent ethical theme in Roman Stoicism (Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.9.4; 1.10.10). A key concern was to find one's place in the universal scheme (Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.1.19-20; 24.95).

The human individual, the household and the city and the state were viewed as microcosms of the cosmic order. According to Cicero,

> The Stoics hold that the world is governed by divine will: it is as it were a city and state shared by men and gods, and each one of us is part of this world. From this it is a natural consequence that we prefer the common advantage to our own.[74]

The stream of thought that the order of the universe is analogous to the civic order ran deep in Greek cosmological reflection, going back as far as Anaximander,[75] and was, I have argued elsewhere, a feature of the worldview evoked by the word *kosmos* (when applied to the universe).[76] In Stoicism, the ideological ramifications of this linkage were made explicit. Thus we see the politicizing of cosmology and its use to legitimate the social order and the power structures of the day.

1.9. *A High View of the Cosmos*

It should be clear from the foregoing that Greek and Hellenistic cosmology, up to New Testament times, was on the whole world-affirming. Outrageous is the view, which has been quite popular, that Greek thinkers from Plato onwards denigrated and despised the material world. As Jaap Mansfeld states,

> By and large, Greek philosophical cosmology is positive and optimistic. This holds especially for Plato, and for Aristotle and the Stoics, who have been decisively influenced by Plato in this respect. [T]he mainstream of Greek thought concerning the cosmos is optimistic; such less positive views as can be found, are, as a rule, against the current or are only introduced for the sake of an argument.[77]

71. See *Ibid.*, pp. 308–13.
72. See *Ibid.*, pp. 323–33.
73. Luce, *Introduction*, p. 135.
74. Cicero, *On Ends*, 3.62. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 57F.
75. Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, text no. 110.
76. E. Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 69–75.
77. J. Mansfeld, 'Bad World and Demiurge: a Gnostic Motif from Parmenides and Empe-

Plato, as we have seen, at least in the *Timaeus*, was highly enthusiastic about the physical cosmos, calling it a 'god'. The tendency throughout the Hellenistic era and early Roman times, was toward veneration of the cosmos, rather than vilification of it. Stoicism, as we have seen, fully divinized the cosmos, and during the period 100 BCE to 100 CE, there develops, according to Schweizer, 'a religion of the cosmos'.[78] A distinction between the cosmos and god is maintained in the Stoicizing Aristotelian treatise, *De Mundo*, but the work nevertheless exemplifies the cosmic piety of the time.[79]

2. *Ancient Jewish Cosmology*

We turn now to Old Testament and early Jewish cosmology. The Old Testament contains a great deal of material that could be called cosmological. However, it is only within the last generation that scholars have recognized the importance of creation and cosmology to Old Testament theology. For the best part of the twentieth century (and before), cosmology was viewed a minor and late interest in the Old Testament.[80] According to Gerhard von Rad, in an influential essay published in 1936, the doctrine of creation did not emerge in Israel until after the exile; it developed out of the Hebrew understanding of salvation in history.[81] Old Testament scholars tended to neglect or historicize references to the natural world in the Hebrew Bible. The mounting public concern for the environment, though, has brought about an upsurge in interest in what the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, has to say about the wider created order.[82] Study of Old Testament thought regarding creation in relation to contemporary environmental concerns is now a major growth area. Contra von Rad, it seems unlikely that cosmological interest was a late development in the history of Israel. As noted earlier, there was a long history of cosmological speculation, largely mythical, in the cultures surrounding Israel, and the Old Testament exhibits correspondences with their ideas. If cosmology was a longstanding interest in the ANE generally, it is probable that Israel shared that wider interest from an early stage

docles to Lucretius and Philo', in R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 261–314 (263).

78. Schweizer, σῶμα, *TDNT* 7: 1024–94 (1037).

79. A more negative cosmology did come to expression with later Platonic thinkers, especially Numenius, and among (to use the increasingly problematic label) 'Gnostic' authors.

80. Cf. T. E. Fretheim, *God and the World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Abingdon: Nashville, 2005), p. ix.

81. G. von Rad, 'The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation', in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), pp. 131–43.

82. See the seminal essay, B. W. Anderson, 'Creation and Ecology', in B. W. Anderson (ed.), *Creation in the Old Testament* (Issues in Religion and Theology 6; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), pp. 152–71. For more recent work, see the *Earth Bible*, vols 2–4.

in its history.[83] Israel's own cosmological thought may well have developed, to some extent, in relation to the cult. The structure of creation and that of the temple are correlated in Ps. 78.69: 'He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever'. Scholars have noted correspondences between the Priestly account of creation in Gen. 1.1–2.4a and God's instructions to Moses for the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31, suggesting 'a homology of world building and temple building'.[84]

In the Old Testament, the created universe is most frequently designated 'heaven(s) and earth'.[85] In the Septuagint, κόσμος with the sense world or universe occurs only in the later writings, 2 and 4 Maccabees (5 and 4 times respectively) and the *Wisdom of Solomon* (19 times), works originally written in Greek, and not translations from the Hebrew. This is not to say, though, that the Hebrew Bible itself has little or no conception of an orderly cosmos. That God has established a well-ordered and well-regulated creation emerges from Gen. 1.1–2.4a, and is expressed in passages such as Psalm 104 and Prov. 8.22-31.

The Old Testament seems to presume a three-level structure of the world, with a central earth, heaven above and Sheol below (Ps. 115.16-17; 139.8; cf. Sir. 1.3).[86] Such a picture, as Luis Stadelmann observes, is rooted 'in the basic human experience of the external world from whose impressions man conceived such an imaginative depiction', but it is also reflective of a widespread mythological pattern in the ancient world.[87] Job 11.8-9 suggests a four-fold division of the experienced universe: heaven, earth, Sheol and sea. In Genesis 1 (cf. Ps. 19.1), the physical heaven (i.e., the sky) is pictured as a dome arching over the earth, much like the bowl-like covering envisaged by Hesiod. The curved structure or 'firmament' prevents the waters above the earth from engulfing the earth, unless its windows are opened (Gen. 7.11; Isa. 24.18). In other places the heavens are likened to a canopy stretched out over the earth (Ps. 104.2; Isa. 40.22; 44.24; etc.). The earth is conceived as resting upon foundations (Ps. 18.15; 82.5; 104.5; Isa. 24.18; 40.21, etc.; Job 9.6 has it standing on 'pillars'), which extend down into the cosmic sea (Ps. 24.2). In Job 26.7, though, the earth is said to hang from above and rest on nothing. Job 26.11 speaks of the 'pillars of heaven'. The use of architectural imagery indicates that the world is

83. See Robert A. Oden Jr., 'Cosmogony, Cosmology', *ABD* 1: 1164–7.

84. J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 84. See also J. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), pp. 123–5, 196–9.

85. Gen. 1.1; 2.1, 4; Ps. 113.6; Jer. 10.11; etc.

86. L. J. Stadelman, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* (AB 39; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), pp. 9–10. Though see also the critique of this common view in Jonathan T. Pennington, 'Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology: *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*', *SJOT* 18/2 (2004), 260–77.

87. Stadelmann, *Hebrew Conception*, p. 9.

being likened to a building (such as the temple). This analogy is given its most extensive application in Job 38.4-7.

> Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
> Tell me, if you have understanding.
> Who determined its measurements – surely you know!
> Or who stretched the line upon it?
> On what were its bases sunk,
> or who laid its cornerstone
> when the morning stars sang together
> and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

In post-biblical cosmological tradition, we find a desire to structure and number the heavens. The notion of three heavens, which is probably reflected in 2 Cor. 12.2,[88] may have originated in the biblical formula 'heaven and the heaven of heavens' (Deut. 10.14; 2 Kgs 8.27). The idea of seven heavens seems to have been more common; it is found in the *Testament of Levi* (which in its present form is a Christian redaction), the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *2 Enoch* and the Christian work *Ascension of Isaiah*. The seven heavens are often thought to be connected with the seven planets,[89] but Yarbro Collins points out that there is no clear indication of such a link in the early Jewish literature.[90] *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* only speak of one heaven, so there does not appear to have been a consistent Jewish conception of the world in the first century CE.

2.1. *The Old Testament*

In the Old Testament, cosmological reflection serves a theological purpose. This is clear from the nature psalms, esp. Pss. 8; 19.1-6; 33.6-9; 136.4-9, 104, which extol the variety, beauty and harmony of the created order, not as virtues in their own right, but as testimony to the majesty, supremacy and omnipotence of the creator. Admiration of the natural order and its splendour leads to praise of its creator. Nature psalms not only elicit human praise; some of them, such as Ps. 148.3-10, bid nature itself to praise God.[91]

> Praise him, sun and moon;
> praise him, all you shining stars!
> Praise him, you highest heavens,
> and you waters above the heavens!

88. J. D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America), pp. 113–25, thinks Paul is working with the seven heavens scheme, but this seems less likely.

89. Cf. the seven planetary spheres in Cicero's 'Dream of Scipio' (*Republic* 6.17).

90. A. Yarbro Collins, 'The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses', in *idem*, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (JSJS 50; Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 21–54.

91. Fretheim, *God and the World*, pp. 249–68.

> Let them praise the name of the LORD,
> for he commanded and they were created.
> He established them forever and ever;
> he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.
>
> Praise the LORD from the earth,
> you sea monsters and all deeps,
> fire and hail, snow and frost,
> stormy wind fulfilling his command!
>
> Mountains and all hills,
> fruit trees and all cedars!
> Wild animals and all cattle,
> creeping things and flying birds!

The various parts of the natural order, from the celestial bodies and meteorological phenomena to the features and creatures of the earth, are called to join in a universal acclamation and celebration of the Lord's sovereignty and power. There may be an implied critique here of the widespread tendency in ANE to deify parts of nature, especially the celestial bodies. God's power over nature is also expressed in hymns and oracles which exhibit the theophany pattern: God appears and nature convulses at his presence.[92]

The creation of the world is described in Gen. 1.1–2.4, which is conventionally assigned to the Priestly writer. The passage has rhythmic features (the recurring use of various formulae, such as 'and God said', 'and there was evening and there was morning', and 'and God saw that it was good') giving it a poetic quality, though it is still more prose than poetry (when compared with the nature Psalms, especially Psalm 104, which are plainly hymnic). The creation narrative of Gen. 1.1–2.4 has parallels with other cosmogonies of the ANE, especially the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish*. But the differences are more striking, the most basic of which is that the *Enuma Elisha* depicts creation as taking place through conflict, with Marduk killing the sea monster Tiamat and forming heaven and earth out of its split carcass, while Genesis betrays no hint of the conflict mythology; God creates by his own word and activity. Unlike the *Enuma Elish*, the Genesis narrative is thoroughly monotheistic (the plural of Gen. 1.26, 'let us make', notwithstanding). The author/editor of the Genesis account seems to be familiar with older ANE creation stories, but his stance toward them is predominantly antagonistic.[93]

Creation is described as taking place in successive stages, over six 'days'. World-construction is effected by divine command ('God said', 1.3, 6, 9, etc.)

92. See J. Jeremias, *Theophanie: die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 10; Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1965).

93. See esp. G. F. Hasel, 'The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology', *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974), 81–102.

and action – making (1.7, 16, 25, 31) and separating (1.4, 6, 7, etc.). The climax of the creative process is the making of humankind (1.26-30). The primordial situation is described in Gen. 1.2: 'the earth was formless and void and darkness covered the face of deep'. Whether Gen. 1.1 refers to a prior act of creation – that of bringing the unformed mass of 1.2 into existence – has been much debated. It is extremely doubtful that the author/redactor of Genesis thought in terms of creation *ex nihilo*, a notion which emerged some time later. Nevertheless, the ambiguous relation of 1.1 to 1.2 created space for the importation of this later idea into the text.

One of the key features of the creation story is the emphasis laid on the goodness of God's creative handiwork. After each act of creation, the statement is made, 'and God saw that it was good' (1.4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). At the conclusion of God's activity (1.31) it is stated comprehensively that 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good'. A thoroughly positive assessment of the whole created order is thereby given. *All* the components of the universe, not merely its human inhabitants, are declared to have an intrinsic value to God, an observation that has relevance for contemporary environmental concerns.

There are traces within the Old Testament of the conflict model of creation which is rejected in Gen. 1.1–2.4a (Ps. 74.12-17; 89.9-10; Isa. 51.9-10),[94] though there are debates about how this imagery functions within the literary contexts in which we find it.[95]

The creation poem/hymn of Prov. 8.22-31 focuses on the presence of wisdom alongside God at the world's origins. Wisdom is a divine attribute (not a separate entity), but for poetic purposes, God's wisdom is personified and gendered female. She is the speaker throughout this passage. Whether personified wisdom played an active part in creation is unclear because of the uncertainty surrounding the Hebrew word in v. 30. If translated 'master workman', as the NRSV has it, Wisdom is being accorded a role in the building of the cosmos. In the apocryphal work, the *Wisdom of Solomon* (7.22–8.1), Wisdom is clearly presented as God's instrument of creation. She is 'the fashioner of all things' (Wis. 7.22).

Since the Old Testament gives attention to the world's origins, it is natural to assume that there would be a corresponding interest in its fate. There are various texts that seem to say that the created order is designed to be everlasting. For example, Ps. 148.6, cited above, states that the celestial orders have been established 'for ever and ever'. Eccl. 1.4 speaks of the earth remaining forever. The physical heavens, understood to be permanent fixtures, serve as a

94. On the conflict model of creation, see J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 1–61.

95. For example, some think that the reference in Ps. 74.12-17 is to the Exodus, rather than the creation of the world.

symbol of endurance and long-lastingness (Ps. 72.5-7; 78.69; 89.29, 36-7). On the other hand, there are passages that imply or speak explicitly of a definite end to the created world, above all Ps. 102.25-7. These apparently contradictory affirmations can be resolved within a hierarchy of endurance. As Caird states, in comparison with the transitoriness of human existence, the earth will last till the end of time, but it is not everlasting as God is everlasting.[96] Prophetic texts, especially Zechariah 14, anticipate a transformation of the created order. Isa. 65.18-25 (cf. 66.22) envisages 'a new heaven and a new earth', though scholars debate whether this involves the destruction of the present cosmic order or its (non-destructive) renewal.[97]

2.2. *The Apocalyptic Literature*

Jewish apocalypticists display a particular interest in cosmological matters. The corruption and redemption of the natural world are recurring themes in Jewish apocalyptic and related writings. The corruption of creation (i.e., the introduction of evil into the created cosmos) is normally related to human sin or the sins of the Watchers – there is no indication that creation is *inherently* evil. The cosmic renewal is usually conceived either as the (non-catastrophic) transformation of the existing creation or, more commonly, its destruction and re-making.

A fascination with the structure and operation of the cosmos is a notable feature of the Enochic literature, and this seems to reflect a tradition of cosmological speculation in the circle within which the literature arose. In *1 Enoch* 17–36, which belongs to the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1–37), Enoch is taken on a tour of the cosmos and shown places out of the reach of other human beings.[98] The cosmography of these chapters, which is not consistent, has affinities with ANE and Greek cosmographies. Reflected, for example, is the early Greek tradition that the earth is a flat disc surrounded by a great river. On his cosmic tour, Enoch sees the chambers of thunder and lightning, the source of all the world's rivers and the storerooms of the winds (17.1–18.1). He is shown how the stars turn, and sees the cornerstone of the earth and the four winds which bear the whole cosmic edifice (18.2-4).[99] He also visits the prison houses for the seven stars and the fallen angels (18.13-15; 21.1-10) and the places where the 'the spirits of the souls of the dead' are kept till the final assize (ch. 22). The reference to the seven stars (18.13-14; 21.3-6) is intriguing. They are held accountable for transgressing

96. Caird, *Language and Imagery* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann, 1997), p. 257.

97. For fuller discussion of OT views of creation's future, see Adams, *The Stars Will Fall*, pp. 28–35.

98. Chapters 17–19 and 20–36 are twin accounts of the journey. On the former see K. C. Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19* (JSJS 81; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

99. The idea of the earth resting on the four winds arises from Job 26.7. See further G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on 1 Enoch Chapters 1–36, 81–108* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), p. 285.

God's command (18.15; 21.6). Matthew Black connects the disobedient stars to the seven recognized planets.[100] If this identification is correct, their 'wandering' is being interpreted as an errant feature in nature.[101] Overall, though, the picture in these chapters is of a cosmos that operates according to God's design and command. Enoch's journey through the created world 'provides a frame within which human problems are seen in a new perspective'.[102]

The Astronomical Book (*1 Enoch* 72–82) is a sustained description of the movements of the celestial bodies from a quasi-scientific perspective. The regularity of the celestial phenomena underpins belief in the order and harmony of the created cosmos. The cosmological observations also support the solar calendar of 364 days.[103] The introduction makes clear, though, that the cycles of nature continue 'till the new creation which abides forever is created' (72.1). Chapter 80, which is thought by some to be a later addition to the book, describes what happens when the end approaches, and the normally consistent order of the cosmos breaks down with the increase of human sin that precedes the end.

2 Enoch, which is normally dated in the late first century CE, is an account of Enoch's ascent into heaven through the seven heavens (chs 3–37) and his return to earth to tell his family what he has seen and inform them of coming events (chs 38–66). The book shows a deep interest in the structure of the cosmos, especially the heavens. The first heaven is the level of the angels who govern the stellar constellations. The second heaven is where the condemned angels are incarcerated. The third contains paradise, which is the place of reward prepared for the righteous. On this level is also located the place of punishment reserved for the wicked. The fourth heaven contains the tracks of the sun and the moon. The fifth heaven is where the unfallen Watchers operate. In the sixth heaven are the angels who regulate the stars and the seasons. The seventh and highest heaven is the dwelling-place of God.

Chapters 24–33 are an extended account of the world's creation from 'invisible things'. From the invisible entities, which exist alongside him, God calls down Adail and Arukhas, from whom light and darkness originate. The natural world is formed through the creative processes of condensation and mixing. Light solidifies into the upper foundation, and darkness into the lower foundation. Light and darkness mix to form water. Water solidifies to form rocks, and the rocks are assembled to form earth, and so on. The narrative represents an attempt to combine the Genesis creation account with Persian cosmology and Greek science.

100. M. Black with J. C. VanderKam, *The Book of Enoch or Enoch I. A New English Edition* (Leiden Brill, 1995), p. 160.

101. Bautch (*Study*, pp. 147–9) connects the seven stars to the Pleiades.

102. J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd edn) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 58.

103. In early Judaism, there were sharp disputes about the correct calendar. See J. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time* (London: Routledge, 1998).

2.3. *Philo*

Philo of Alexandria was thoroughly conversant with Greek cosmological traditions. His own cosmological thought is heavily influenced by Plato's cosmology, and also to a lesser extent by Stoicism.[104] In Platonic fashion, he conceives of the universe as globular in form, with earth at the centre (*Mos.* 1.212), the planets revolving around it, and the sphere of the fixed stars at the outer limit (*Cher.* 23).[105] Like Plato, he emphasizes the oneness of the cosmos and its indestructibility, and also like Plato, he calls the cosmos an intelligent creature and even applies the word θέος to it. He agrees with Plato that the universe owes its existence to the goodness of the creator. Philo's treatise, *On the Creation* (*De Opificio)* is a remarkable attempt to synthesize Genesis 1–3 with Plato's *Timaeus*. The visible world is patterned on the ideal, perfect world. Philo relates the first 'day'[106] of Genesis 1 to the creation of the κόσμος νοητός – the intelligible world, and days two to six to the creation of the corporeal cosmos.

The *logos* is an important feature of Philo's cosmology. It performs a range of functions in relation to the cosmos. It contains the world of ideas (*De Opificio* 24), it is the instrument of creation (*Alleg.* 3.96) and it is the principle of cosmic cohesion (*Fug.* 122).[107]

In line with Stoicism, Philo sees the cosmos as a great city governed by a universal law (*Opific.* 3). He puts his own twist on the Stoic theme, though, by identifying the universal law with the law of Moses. Human beings are meant to live in accordance with the law of nature (*Abr.* 61).

Philo exhibits the high regard for the cosmos that was typical of Greek and Hellenistic natural philosophy. His Jewishness comes out, though, in his firm insistence that the created universe is subordinate to its father and maker (despite calling the cosmos a 'god') and in his polemic against astral worship. Philo's eulogizing of creation is tempered by his praise of the creator.[108]

Conclusion

According to the faithful saying of 1 Tim. 1.15, 'Christ Jesus came into the world (εἰς τὸν κόσμον) to save sinners'. New Testament scholars regard it as vital to have an accurate knowledge of the world or 'Umwelt' into which Christ came, but it is also important to have an understanding of how the world – understood in its broadest sense – was conceptualized at the time of his coming.

In this essay, I have done little more than adumbrate Graeco-Roman and ancient Jewish cosmology, but I trust that the review serves the immediate

104. See K. Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005), pp. 51–6.

105. Schenck, *Brief Guide*, pp. 63–4.

106. For Philo, this 'day' is not meant to be understood literally.

107. See further Schenk, *Brief Guide*, pp. 58–63.

108. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, pp. 458–61.

purpose of setting out, at least in general terms, the cultural context of New Testament cosmological statements. In terms of influence, it is clear that the Old Testament is the most important background to New Testament cosmology. However, as will be seen, the writers of the New Testament do not simply impart a world view they have inherited. The coming of Christ into the cosmos has for them given new meaning to the cosmos. Indeed, it has occasioned a re-construction and re-mapping of the cosmos.

2

HEAVEN, EARTH, AND A NEW GENESIS: THEOLOGICAL COSMOLOGY IN MATTHEW

Jonathan T. Pennington

Introduction

Over 30 years ago John Dominic Crossan wrote a little book entitled *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story*.[1] Therein Crossan provides a schema of ways in which Story relates to the world. On one end of the spectrum a Myth establishes the story of the world. On the opposite end, a Parable is used to subvert the world's story. In between we have the categories of Apologue (which defends the world), Action (describing the world), and Satire (attacking the world). These heuristic categories are used by Crossan to demonstrate that Jesus' parables are world-disrupting.

In reflecting on the teaching of Matthew, Richard Hays adopts Crossan's categories and suggests that the First Gospel lies 'somewhere at the myth/apologue end of the spectrum... Matthew is both creating an ordered, symbolic world, in which Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth, and defending it against rival worldviews'.[2] Hays is certainly right. The Gospel of Matthew is a complex and highly-skilled literary piece which has the grand point of establishing and defending a Christocentric universe, a world view that centres upon the person of Jesus.

It is the purpose of this chapter to show how Matthew's frequent and nuanced use of cosmological language serves to create and establish a theological world view, one that finds its foundation in Genesis and its consummation in the new Genesis inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

Survey of Some Key Cosmological Terms

It will be helpful to begin with a survey of some of the varied words and expressions in Matthew that may be called cosmological terms. In doing so we will

1. J. D. Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Niles, IL: Argus Communications, 1975). Crossan's book is a period piece from early 1970s Structuralism, which I find ultimately lacking, yet these categories are helpful in thinking about the different modes through which the biblical authors witness to their revelation.

2. R. B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 94.

begin to see the ways in which 'physical' cosmological terms are simultaneously invested with metaphorical or theological meaning.

(1) *Heaven*

Regarding cosmological language in Matthew, pride of place certainly belongs to 'heaven' (οὐρανός). Of course, this word is no stranger to the pages of the Jewish Scriptures or the NT. From Gen. 1.1 to the end of John's Revelation we regularly encounter reference to heaven. The varied appearances of this important concept can be categorized into three primary uses:

1. οὐρανός in reference to portions of the visible creation distinguished from the earth, such as the firmament or sky above, the starry heaven, and the atmosphere where the birds fly.
2. οὐρανός combined with γῆ as a merism to refer to the whole world, heaven and earth.
3. οὐρανός in reference to the invisible, transcendent place(s) above where God dwells along with his angels and the righteous dead.

Of the NT authors, Matthew employs οὐρανός more than any other, alone supplying us with 30 per cent of all the NT uses.[3] Additionally, the related term οὐράνιος ('heavenly') is found nine times in the NT, seven of which are in Matthew.[4] Another interesting observation to note is that Matthew prefers plural forms of οὐρανός to singular ones, and he appears to use these different forms to contrast the divine and heavenly realms.[5] Clearly the language and concept of heaven is one of Matthew's favourites and one to which he devoted careful thought.

In terms of how heaven functions in Matthew, we may observe that the First Gospel utilizes heaven in all three of the senses described above. Heaven is frequently used to refer to the created order of the sky and atmosphere. Jesus will appear on the clouds of heaven, i.e., the sky (24.30; 26.64), the colour of the face of heaven reveals the weather (16.2-3), and birds are regularly called τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (6.26; 8.20; 13.32). More frequently, heaven is used in its 'spiritual' sense. We find that God is the Father in heaven (5.16; 6.1; 16.17;

3. Of the 273 occurrences of οὐρανός in the NT, 82 are found in Matthew. This is far more than any other author, with the second being the book of Revelation with 52 occurrences.

4. In the NT we also find the later adjective ἐπουράνιος 12 times in the Pauline corpus and 6 times in Hebrews.

5. For charts and fuller statistics on the use of heaven in Matthew, see J. T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (NovTSup 126; Leiden: Brill, 2007). Regarding singular and plural forms of οὐρανός, I argue that Matthew uses singular 'heaven' to refer to the skies (earthly realm) and in conjunction with 'earth', while he uses plural forms ('heavens') always to refer to the divine realm, such as the 'kingdom of (the) heaven(s)' and the 'Father in (the) heaven(s)'. Thus, even at the level of morphology Matthew is communicating a distinction between the divine realm and the earthly realm.

18.19; *et al.*) and his throne is there (5.34; 23.22). Heaven is whence the Spirit of God descends (3.16) and the voice of God speaks (3.17). It is also the place of promised rewards (5.12; 6.20; 19.21) and the normal realm of existence of the angels (18.10; 22.30; 24.36; 28.2). Overlapping with both of these categories, heaven in Matthew is very frequently conjoined with reference to the earth. This too is a favourite theme of his, especially when compared to the other Gospels, which rarely make use of this expression.[6] By far the most common uses of οὐρανός in Matthew are in the phrases ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (kingdom of heaven), occurring 32 times, and ὁ πατήρ ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (Father in heaven) and the related ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος (heavenly Father), occurring 13 and 7 times, respectively. These two expressions comprise major theological themes in Matthew (the kingdom and the fatherhood of God) and it is notable that both are regularly connected with reference to heaven.

(2) *Earth*

Earth (γῆ) occurs 43 times in the First Gospel, 16 of which are in combination with οὐρανός (37 per cent). As in the OT, γῆ in Matthew reflects the wide semantic flexibility of this term. It can refer to specific peoples' areas such as the land of Israel, Judah and Zebulun (2.6, 20; 4.15; 11.24), more generally to geographic space (9.26, 31; 14.24), or to the ground or soil (10.29; 13.5, 8). Earth can also refer to the physical world (5.18; 12.40, 42; 27.45, 51) as well as to the inhabitants and systems of the earth (5.13; 6.10; 17.25), and many times it is difficult to discern between these two.

One theologically important example of Matthew's use of γῆ is when the word is used in connection with Jesus' Gentile-inclusive mission. For example, after four chapters of prologue and preparation, Matthew presents the beginning of Jesus' ministry as the fulfilment of Isaiah 8, with its reference to light coming to the *lands* of the Gentiles (4.14-16; cf. Mt. 12.17-21). Additionally, in the midst of the many staggering promises of the Beatitudes, the inheritance of the earth/land is promised not exclusively to those of Jewish descent (cf. the paradigmatic words of Mt. 3.8-9), but to the disciples of Jesus who, like him, are meek (5.5). The significance of such 'theological' uses of γῆ becomes apparent when one considers how the promise of the land is at the very core of Israel's self-identity before God. Now this promise is made to all those who align themselves with Jesus.

As mentioned above, another important use of γῆ is when it is combined with οὐρανός. When joined together, this familiar expression (found throughout the

6. Matthew uses heaven and earth pairs of some kind over 20 times, compared with twice in Mark and 5 times in Luke. Again, for fuller discussion, see my treatment in *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*. There I argue that the heaven and earth theme is a key literary and theological motif in Matthew, used by him to emphasize the contrast between God and humanity, all the while looking forward to its eschatological resolution inaugurated by Jesus Christ. See further discussion below.

Scriptures from Gen. 1.1 on) gives a comprehensive picture of the universe, depicted as a bipartite reality. Such is the usage in Mt. 5.18, 11.25, and 24.35. At the same time, the combination of 'heaven' and 'earth' is quite frequently used by Matthew to contrast the two realms of reality, that of the divine and the human (e.g., 5.34-35; 6.10; 6.19-20; 18.18). The significance of this will be taken up below.

(3) *World*

Matthew also occasionally employs the term κόσμος,[7] which for him apparently serves as a synonym for earth, understood in a broad sense. It is found either in idiomatic phrases about the 'foundation of the world' (13.35; 24.21; 25.34), or most often, as a reference to the inhabited earth (4.8; 5.14; 13.38; 16.26; 26.13). There is also one instance of the term οἰκουμένη in 24.14. This word, which clearly refers to the inhabited world of humanity, helps us see that Matthew can view κόσμος in the same way, as the two words are used interchangeably in the parallel verses of 24.14 and 26.13.[8]

Regarding the theological significance of κόσμος, we do not find it as frequent and highly significant a term as we do in the Gospel of John or even Paul.[9] Instead, Matthew prefers the older manner of speaking of the universe, with the expression 'heaven and earth'. Nevertheless, we may observe one subtle way in which Matthew does use κόσμος in a significant theological way. In the temptation narrative (4.1-11) Matthew chooses to make the final and climactic temptation to be the devil's offer of 'all the kingdoms of the world and their glory' (4.8). This is the final stage before Jesus begins his ministry, a ministry that is summarized in 4.17 as the proclamation that the 'kingdom of heaven' is at hand. The contrast of Satan's offer of the glory and authority of the kingdoms of *this world* with Jesus' offer of the kingdom *that comes from heaven* is no accident. Once again, a contrast between this human world and God's realm is posited.

(4) *Hades/Gehenna*

Compared to the other Evangelists, Matthew more frequently and more descriptively speaks of a future judgement and hell.[10] Among the variety of expressions

7. There are either 8 or 9 occurrences of κόσμος, depending on the textual variant in 13.35.

8. There is also another Greek word that occasionally is translated as 'world', αἰών. This occurs 8 times in Matthew, 5 of which are in direct combination with συντέλεια. One can see with this intriguing word how its semantic range spans our ideas of 'world' and 'age' while indicating the eschatological-cosmological expectation of the two ages, this age and the (eschatological) age to come.

9. See *inter alia* the helpful entry under κόσμος in Balz and Schneider's *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 2:309–12. Also see the essays on Pauline cosmology in the present volume.

10. See the helpful discussion and analysis in the essay 'The Problem of Gehenna' in D. C.

used, the most potentially 'cosmological' terms are Hades (twice) and Gehenna (7 times). Hades is the Greek equivalent of the general place of the dead, Sheol. Its 2 occurrences in Matthew are strongly symbolic, both being used as hyperbolic counterpoints to heaven (11.23; 16.18). Gehenna occurs only 12 times in the NT, 7 of which are in Matthew. It is clearly connected with the notions of fire and judgement. It is not entirely clear if Matthew's 6 references to a place of outer darkness and gnashing of teeth refer to the same thing as Gehenna or not, but it seems likely.

Whether such terms are truly cosmological in intent is difficult to discern. That is, while they are referred to as 'places', it is not clear whether they are thoughtfully considered part of the structure of the physical world, or instead are stock images for the reality of future judgement. 'Outer darkness', 'gnashing of teeth', and Gehenna are 'symbolic Jewish descriptions of the fate of the ungodly'.[11] Nearly every one of the references to Gehenna and the place of gnashing of teeth connect this idea with raging fire. The emphasis is not on a place per se, but on the exhortational value of the eschatological judgement to come upon those who do not align themselves with the kingdom of heaven. As Allison remarks, we may note that Jesus never turns Gehenna into a topic in and of itself; it is never a subject of discourse nor does Jesus dwell on it at any length. 'It is always rather a serviceable assumption shared by the audience, a dreaded thing invoked to admonish or rebuke'.[12] So once again we may observe that the purpose of such cosmological terms, if Hades and Gehenna can be called such, is theological rather than purely cosmological.

(5) *Assorted Meteorological Terms*

For completeness, we should also mention a number of words that fall under the rubric of cosmological expressions such as ἥλιος ('sun', 5 times), σελήνη ('moon', once), νέφελη ('cloud', 4 times), and ἀστήρ ('star', 5 times). These terms are standard elements in the created world. For our purposes it is noteworthy that in almost every usage, these words take on great theological significance. For example, the references to the moon and clouds are employed as part of standard Second Temple apocalyptic language. Here in Matthew they refer to the events of Jesus' coming (24.29-30; 26.64) as well as the glory cloud of the Transfiguration (17.5). All of the uses of ἀστήρ are likewise imbued with theological significance. The revealing and leading star is referenced 4 times in ch. 2 (vv. 2, 7, 9, 10), likely being used as an understood metaphor for

Allison, Jr's *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), pp. 67–8.

11. R. T. France, *Matthew* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 156. Cf. F. V. Filson, *The Gospel according to St Matthew* (2nd edn; London: A&C Black, 1971), p. 100; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (trans. R. Barr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 83.

12. Allison, 'The Problem', p. 78.

the angel of the Lord.[13] The stars are also said to fall at the return of the Son (24.29). These uses of cosmological terms are intended to communicate the gravity of the events surrounding Jesus – even the cosmos itself is disrupted by his appearing. At his birth a new star appears, disturbing the set motions of the heavens,[14] and at his Second Coming, the fabric of creation itself is torn (as it was proleptically at Jesus' baptism and resurrection).

Summary and Purpose

The purpose of this survey of terms has been to seek to understand how Matthew depicts the world or the cosmos by looking at key words and phrases. We may call this his *Weltbild*, or picture of the physical universe. Yet we have begun to see that for Matthew, like the other NT authors, cosmological terms and expressions carry much theological freight. The NT authors, unlike some of their Graeco-Roman contemporaries, were not interested in cosmology *qua* cosmology.[15] Instead, whatever conception of the physical world (*Weltbild*) existed in the mind of Matthew, it was certainly not divorced from his theological constructs regarding God and creation, what we may call his *Weltanschauung*. Moreover, whenever Matthew speaks about the cosmos he is simultaneously and primarily making theological claims. Thus, we may observe how Matthew's *Weltbild*, which is likely at least in part unconscious,[16] is both informed by and serves to promote his *Weltanschauung*. It is this 'theological world view' that drives his apologetic, polemical, and evangelistic points.

A Worldview Pattern?

Going beyond this survey of terms, it is fair to ask whether we can observe any pattern to Matthew's *Weltbild* and/or *Weltanschauung*. A close reading of

13. Following the argument in Allison's essay, 'The Magi's Angel', in his *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), pp. 17–41.

14. See the interesting essay by N. Denzey, 'A New Star on the Horizon: Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse', in Scott Noegel, Joel Walker and Brannon Wheeler (eds.), *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003). She suggests that in the early Christian interpretations of Matthew 2 'Christians saw themselves as triumphant, possessed of a secret conviction that the star of Bethlehem signaled not just the birth of the Savior but the transformation of the entire cosmic *oikonomia*' (p. 221).

15. See the survey of the variety of ancient cosmological theories in Edward Adams' essay in the present volume.

16. As E. C. Lucas observes, the biblical (and human) tendency is to articulate one's world view more clearly than one's cosmological view. The two are interrelated, though rarely does a biblical author clearly spell out the latter. E. C. Lucas, 'Cosmology', in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), p. 131.

Matthew's cosmological language and how it functions in his narrative reveals that there is indeed a central rubric that holds together both his *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*: the theme of heaven and earth.

I have argued elsewhere that in the OT we find an essentially bipartite picture of the world, built on the foundational pattern of heaven and earth.[17] This cosmological view in the OT is organically related to and undergirds the much more important matter, which is the conceptual world view. The same holds true for the First Gospel. Through a series of literary devices, Matthew has developed an elaborate heaven and earth theme. This includes a difference in singular and plural uses of οὐρανός, his developing and exploiting the expressions 'Father in heaven' and 'kingdom of heaven', and his regularly pairing of heaven and earth both lexically and conceptually. All of this serves for Matthew to make the theological point that a great contrast and tension exists between heaven and earth, between God and humanity. By regularly emphasizing the tension between heaven and earth, Matthew crafts a sharp distinction between two realms: one represented by the earthly world and the other by God in heaven. This is fundamental to all of Matthew's theological understanding and it corresponds with his biblically-informed perception of the world as consisting of 'heaven and earth'. Space does not permit me here to present full arguments for these points, but only to suggest this as a central point of understanding along the way toward establishing the main point of this essay.

Building upon this understanding, the next question to ask is what the origin may be of Matthew's heaven and earth *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*. The obvious answer is the Jewish Scriptures, and especially the opening book of the OT, which establishes the foundation of Jewish and Christian understanding. It is not merely coincidental that Genesis begins with references to heaven and earth and that Matthew also uses this language and theme regularly. To the book of Genesis we may now turn.

Matthew, Genesis and the New Genesis

Like all the NT authors, when Matthew speaks he exudes Bible. From the level of basic vocabulary to the height of macrostructure, Matthew consciously and unconsciously mimics the Jewish Scriptures. As Hays rightly observes about all of the Gospels, the evangelists are concerned to show that Jesus' teachings, actions, death and vindication 'constituted the continuation and climax of the ancient biblical story'. The Old Testament was the '*generative milieu* for the gospels, the original environment in which the first Christian traditions were

17. J. T. Pennington, 'Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology: *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*', *SJOT* 18/2 (2004), 260–77.

conceived, formed and nurtured'.[18] This is apparent for Matthew as much as any of the Gospels.[19]

It is no surprise, then, to discern so many quotes from and allusions to the Old Testament in the First Gospel. Even more thoroughgoing than that of the other Synoptic Gospels,[20] Matthew provides us with over sixty explicit and implicit citations and quotations.[21] In addition to these, there are countless other allusions which we can discern with various levels of confidence. Numerous studies on Matthew's frequent 'formula quotations' have been undertaken, in addition to investigations into the influence of specific OT books and motifs on Matthew.[22] The importance of the OT for Matthew cannot be overstated. Graham Stanton sums it up this way: 'The OT is woven into the warp and woof of this gospel; the evangelist uses Scripture to underline some of his most prominent and distinctive theological concerns'.[23]

In light of the OT's genetic stamp on Matthew *and* the centrality of the book of Genesis in the Jewish mind,[24] it is not surprising to find that the First Gospel

18. R. B. Hays, 'The Canonical Matrix of the Gospels', in S. C. Barton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 53.

19. Cf. the excellent discussion in R. T. France's, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity Press, 1989), particularly pp. 166ff. France argues that the theme that best summarizes the whole of Matthew's message is the fulfilment of the OT. While this could be said for all of the NT books, in Matthew it plays a most dominant role.

20. Compared to the other Synoptics, Matthew includes all of the OT citations from parallel passages in Mark and Q and expands upon them.

21. Richard Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 17, leaning on the works of M. D. Goulder and D. Senior.

22. Examples include K. Stendahl, *The School of St Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament* (Lund: Gleerup, 1968); R. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ*; M. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993). One may also consult a large number of articles, such as A. Leske, 'Isaiah and Matthew: The Prophetic Influence in the First Gospel: A Report on Current Research', in W. H. Bellinger, Jr. and W. R. Farmer (eds.), *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press, 1998), pp. 152–69. A good recent example of the subtle but powerful way in which the OT serves as a subtext for Matthew can be found in D. Moffitt, 'Righteous Bloodshed, Matthew's Passion Narrative, and the Temple's Destruction: Lamentations as a Matthean Intertext', *JBL* 125.2 (2006), 299–320.

23. G. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 346.

24. A number of recent books have dealt with history of interpretation of Genesis, showing how central and pervasive its influence is. Examples include G. H. van Kooten (ed.), *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); J. Frishman and L. van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997); and several of the essays in A. Wenin (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

also shows conscious dependence upon and interaction with the language and themes of Genesis.[25] The argument that follows will seek to show a variety of ways in which Genesis serves as a crucial backdrop for Matthew, as well as how this Genesis theme provides the vocabulary for the resolution of Matthew's heaven and earth tension.

Genesis in Matthew

Not a great deal of work has been done on Matthew's connection with Genesis. The suggestion that Matthew's structural form mimics the Pentateuch as a whole was famously argued by Bacon,[26] but has been much disputed since. A few other studies have uncovered typological connections between Genesis–Exodus and Matthew.[27] But the most obvious connection between Matthew and Genesis, and the one most discussed, is the striking opening to the First Gospel: βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. The first two words and this opening line are not accidental in their intertextual power. This opening salvo puts Jesus Christ in the context of three of the most important realities of Jewish history and identity – the book of Genesis, the king David, and the patriarch Abraham.[28]

Numerous commentators have observed how the words βίβλος γενέσεως connect Matthew's narrative with the first book of the Bible.[29] Recently, Warren Carter has similarly argued that the phrase βίβλος γενέσεως in Mt. 1.1 evokes for the reader not just the name of the Book of Genesis in the LXX and the references in Gen. 2.4 and 5.1, but also 'the larger Genesis accounts of which

25. The NA27 appendix of references lists four quotations and 23 allusions to Genesis, the latter of which vary in strength.

26. B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930).

27. D. Allison's *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993) provides a full-length treatment of this theme. Additionally, Michael Goulder uses the Genesis and Exodus allusions in Matthew 1–5 as an example of justified typological interpretation: M. D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: SPCK, 1964), pp. 1–13.

28. One may observe how the Gospels of Mark and John similarly connect themselves with Genesis through their opening words: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος (Jn 1.1) and Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Mk 1.1).

29. Persuasive arguments can be found in W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998–1999), 1:149–54. See also now Allison's essay, 'Matthew's First Two Words (Matt 1:1)' in his *Studies in Matthew*, pp. 157–62. In addition to citing many sources who understand Mt. 1.1 as referring to Genesis, Allison points out that Ulrich Luz himself has changed his mind in this regard between the first and second editions of his commentary. Instead of translating Matthew's opening words as 'Urkunde des Ursprungs' Jesu Christi', Luz now glosses the phrase as 'Buch der "Genesis" Jesu Christi'. Also helpful is R. Heckl's 'Der biblische Begründungsrahmen für die Jungfrauengeburt bei Matthäus: Zur Rezeption von Gen. 5,1-6,4 in Mt 1', *ZNW* 95 (2004), 161–80.

they are a part'.[30] Leaning on John Foley's work on 'traditional referentiality' and how a partial citation evokes a well-known larger text, Carter suggests that Matthew intentionally alludes to Genesis to call to mind 'the story of God's creative and sovereign purposes for the whole world as the initial context for hearing the story of Jesus'.[31]

Following right after these evocative words in 1.1, Matthew's genealogy also displays important intertextual connections with Genesis. The series of 'begats' in 1.2-17 clearly parallels the series of תולדות phrases in Genesis (literally, 'begattings'). As M. D. Johnson states, βίβλος γενέσεως is best understood as a 'reflection of the toledoth formula in Genesis, in either the Hebrew or Greek form, or both'.[32] Also supporting this connection, John Nolland has argued that the Matthean genealogy can be classified as an 'annotated genealogy', a type of genealogy which functions particularly 'to set genealogies into their wider narrative context and to ensure that the genealogies function as compressed tellings of the history that stands behind them'. Most important for our purposes, Nolland suggests that 'Matthew learned his craft for the creation of an annotated genealogy from study of the genealogical materials in Genesis'.[33]

Thus, from the first words through the first section of Matthew, the imprint of Genesis is clear. This pattern continues as Matthew progresses. It may be more than coincidental that Matthew emphasizes that Jesus' father, named Joseph, is a receiver of divine dreams (1.18-25; 2.19-23), even as the more famous Joseph of Genesis was. This possibility is strengthened when one observes how important movement to and from Egypt is for Joseph, Mary and the young Jesus. More certainly, the work of the Holy Spirit in 3.16 harkens back to the Spirit's activity at creation. While the meaning of the Spirit's descent as a dove is not entirely clear (3.16), it likely alludes either to the Spirit's brooding over the waters in Gen. 1.2 like a bird over its nest, or to the dove returning to Noah's ark (Gen. 8.8-12), thus signalling the end of judgement and the beginning of the age of blessing.[34] Either way, the connection with Genesis is made. Similarly, reference to the beloved son in 3.17 recalls Isaac, the son Abraham loves in Genesis 22. References to Abraham also appear several times in Matthew (1.1-2; 3.9; 8.11; 22.32) as do Sodom (10.15) and 'the days of Noah' (24.37). Also significant is the three-fold allusion to the Cain and Abel story (Gen. 4.1-16) in

30. W. Carter, 'Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation', *JSNT* 26.3 (2004), 259–82 (262). See also Carter's 'Evoking Isaiah: Matthean Soteriology and an Intertextual Reading of Isaiah 7–9 in Matthew 1:23 and 4:15-16', *JBL* 119 (2000), 503–20.

31. Carter, 'Matthew and the Gentiles', p. 262.

32. M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (2nd edn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 149.

33. J. Nolland, 'Genealogical Annotation in Genesis as Background for the Matthean Genealogy of Jesus', *Tyndale Bulletin* 47.1 (1996), 115–22 (115).

34. D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993), p. 58.

Matthew (5.21-25; 18.21-22; 23.34-36).[35] There are also the obvious quotations of Genesis in Mt. 19.4-5 and 22.24. One may also see a probable allusion to the pre-creation darkness of Gen. 1.2 in Mt. 27.54, where the whole earth/land is covered with darkness at Jesus' death.[36]

We have observed that the opening words and section of Matthew make a particularly clear intertextual allusion to Genesis. It is not insignificant that the closing words of Matthew likewise reference the same. We may even say that the climactic pericope of Matthew (28.16-20) serves as a capstone for this intentional connection with Genesis.[37] Notice how Mt. 1.1 highlights the role of Abraham, as does 28.19 with its reference to the Gospel going forth to 'all nations'. This clearly alludes to Genesis 11–12 and the introduction of Abraham as the one through whom God will bless 'all the nations of the earth' (12.2-3). This connection is very significant because in Genesis God's authority as creator over heaven and earth (Genesis 1–2) is the basis for his redemptive purpose for all the nations, worked out through the person of Abraham (Genesis 12 and beyond). Matthew's structure shows sensitivity to this redemptive narrative, with its strong theme of heaven and earth throughout, culminating in Jesus' own authority over heaven and earth (God's prerogative in Gen. 1.1) *with the result that* his disciples may go and bring the blessings of the gospel to all nations – the purpose and zenith of the process begun in Genesis 1–12.

It appears that Matthew uses 28.16-20 so that we might view his Gospel account as an appropriate bookend matching the first book of the Scriptures. One of the key pointers to this is that the final five words of Matthew (ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, 'to the end of the age') form an *inclusio* with both Mt. 1.1 and Gen. 1.1, spanning from the creation to the end.

Additionally, beyond the level of these quotations and allusions to Genesis, we may also observe that the predominant theme of heaven and earth in Matthew, suggested above, finds its fount in the language of Genesis. Having

35. The words 'the blood of Abel the just' in Mt. 23.35 make this connection explicit. The other two passages in Matthew are thick with allusions to Gen. 4.1-16 as Dale Allison ably points out in his essay, 'Murder and Anger, Cain and Abel (Matt. 5:21-25)', in *Studies in Matthew*, pp. 65–78.

36. W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 84. See also Allison's essay 'Darkness at Noon', in his *Studies in Matthew*, pp. 83–4.

37. This important text in Matthew likely serves several intertextual purposes. In addition to connecting to Genesis, it is widely recognized that Mt. 28.16-20 also refers to Dan. 7.13. Additionally, a good argument can also be made for a connection between Mt. 28.16-20 and 2 Chron. 36.23 (canonically, the last verse of the Hebrew Bible): 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up"'. Cf. B. J. Malina, 'The Literary Structure and Form of Mt. 28:16-20', *NTS* 17 (1970), 87–103; Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, p. 297.

seen how important Genesis is for Matthew, it is not difficult now to recognize that Matthew's central heaven and earth theme has its primary source in the opening words of the Jewish Scriptures. Thus, not only at the level of citation and allusion, but also on the plane of language and theme – here the expression 'heaven and earth' – Matthew is expressing his indebtedness to Genesis.

The Function of Genesis in Matthew

Having established the frequency and depth of Matthew's dependence on Genesis, we may ask what significance this may have. What is the function of Genesis in Matthew? We have seen above that Carter suggested that the opening words of Matthew serve to evoke the whole story of Genesis and God's redemptive acts. This accords with the many functions of intertextuality in Scripture. Along similar lines, reference to the Genesis תולדות schema in the Matthean genealogy shows Jesus to be the new and final milestone in this foundational system. This, combined with many other typological connections in the opening chapters of Matthew, serves to show the continuity of Matthew's story and the events of Jesus with the work of the God of Israel.

Even more specifically, Matthew's frequent use of Genesis, including the heaven and earth theme, is a key that Matthew wants us to understand the work of Jesus Christ as constituting a complement to the Genesis story, indeed a new creation. Thomas Hieke makes the fascinating argument that the first four words of Mt. 1.1 are an intended change of and twist upon the LXX version of Gen. 2.4 and 5.1. Those two texts both use βίβλος γενέσεως followed by the genitive phrases οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς (2.4) and ἀνθρώπων (5.1). Significantly, Matthew substitutes these genitive phrases with his own Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Hieke concludes that it is very easy to see that this shows that Jesus is to be understood as signifying an eschatological new creation, as the consummation of both heaven and earth and humanity.[38] Similarly, in commenting on the opening words, Davies and Allison argue that Matthew employs the words βίβλος γενέσεως 'in order to draw a parallel between one beginning and another beginning, between the creation of the cosmos and Adam and Eve on the one hand and the new creation brought by the Messiah on the other'.[39] They continue, 'This means, according to the principle that the end will be like the beginning, that the gospel concerns eschatology; it recounts the fulfillment of the hope for a "new creation"'.[40] Or, to use the words of John Nolland, if Mt. 1.1 were meant as a

38. T. Hieke, 'Biblos Geneseos: Mt 1,1 vom Buch Genesis her Gelesen', in J.-M. Auwers and H. J. De Jonge (eds.), *The Biblical Canons* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), pp. 646–7; see also the chart on p. 644.

39. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:150. See also Allison, 'Matthew's First Two Words', pp. 157–62.

40. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:153.

reference to the 'book of Genesis', then Matthew would be using this language 'to imply that telling the story of Jesus is like providing a new Genesis account, that is, since creation is the origin to which Genesis traces things, that a new (eschatological) creation comes into being with Jesus'.[41]

Therefore, in light of the previous discussion, there is good reason to believe that Matthew intentionally interwove his Gospel with the language and images of Genesis to show that the consummation of God's redemptive work has occurred in Jesus Christ. In addition to assorted uses of Genesis overall, he uses the familiar and foundational language of heaven and earth found in Gen. 1.1 and beyond to connect his own Gospel with the larger narrative of Genesis, thereby proclaiming that Jesus is the One in whom God's foundational purposes are consummated. So, we may observe that the ultimate function of Matthew's cosmological language (especially but not only 'heaven and earth') is the theological purpose of showing the continuity between the God of the Old Testament and the Messiah Jesus.

The Meaning of Matthew's Palingenesia

There is yet one crucial reference to Genesis that we have not mentioned. It is the oft-overlooked word παλιγγενεσία in 19.28. The variety of data presented above for the significance of Genesis in Matthew provides an important backdrop for fully understanding this word and its function in Matthew.

Παλιγγενεσία occurs only two times in the NT, here in Matthew as well as in Tit. 3.5. In the latter case it is typically translated with the word 'regeneration'. With language that approaches a creedal formulation, Tit. 3.4-7 speaks of the saving work of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Verse 5 describes this as a saving διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας και ἀνακαινώσεως ('through the washing of regeneration and renewal'). For our purposes we may note that the common thread between these two nouns (παλιγγενεσία and ἀνακαίνωσις) is that of 'again-ness'. There is a strong affirmation here that the new, life-giving work of God is one of restoration, resulting in eternal life for humanity (3.7) even as God's original work breathed life into man and woman.

Παλιγγενεσία does not occur in the LXX, but the NT's usage does not come to us in a vacuum. The NT's relative infrequency of usage does not reflect that of Greek literature preceding and contemporary with Matthew, where we do find many uses of the word. A number of scholars have explored this issue. For example, F. W. Burnett did an extensive study of the many occurrences

41. It must be stated that this is *not* Nolland's position, though ironically, it is one of the best summaries of what I am arguing here. This quote comes from Nolland's essay, 'What Kind of Genesis Do We Have in Matt. 1.1?', *NTS* 42 (1996), p. 469, n. 25, in which he rejects the view that Matthew's opening words are functioning in this way, though his arguments to this end are less than convincing.

of παλιγγενεσία in Philo and found that the word is a central idea in Philo's writings and basically means the rebirth of the virtuous soul into a noncorporeal existence,[42] though it can also refer to the new world after the Flood (*Vit. Mos.* 2.65; cf. *1 Clem.* 9.4). Παλιγγενεσία is used in other Greek literature in a variety of ways. It is perhaps most important in Stoic writings, where παλιγγενεσία was often used to refer to the periodic dissolution and renewal of the universe in fiery conflagration.[43] One interesting use is found in Josephus where the word is used to refer to Israel's re-establishment after the Exile (*Ant.* 11.66)

In terms of the word's meaning in Mt. 19.28, we may first observe that it is defined, at least in part, in the following phrase as 'when the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne', a reference itself to Dan. 7.9-27 which will occur again in Mt. 25.31 and 26.64.[44] This time is also described as when the disciples 'judge the twelve tribes of Israel', which likely refers to the eschatological age when the disciples will exercise some type of authority in God's kingdom on the earth.

Burnett, mentioned above, wrote an article examining this word in 19.28 and suggested that it refers to the rebirth of the world or the rebirth of the individual, and that these often entail one another. Thus, 'in its Matthean context παλιγγενεσία could have overtones of both the new world and life in the new world ("resurrection")'. In parallel with Mk 10.30 it is basically synonymous with 'the end of the age' or 'the age to come'.[45] J. Duncan M. Derrett responded and argued that instead the word means only the single event of 'the Resurrection'. He claims in support of his view many heavyweights in the history of interpretation, including Augustine, Munster, Beza, Capellus and (though he is somewhat ambiguous) Jerome. However, Derrett's view is too narrow in limiting it to the time of the resurrection. As a result, many, including Davies and Allison, reject Derrett's reading of the word as too punctiliar; better is the understanding that the παλιγγενεσία refers to a time period, 'the age to come'. The παλιγγενεσία is 'the world in which Christ reigns, a world with a redeemed Israel'.[46] David Sim takes up the discussion once more in his 1993

42. F. W. Burnett, 'Philo on Immortality: A Thematic Study of Philo's Concept of παλιγγενεσία', *CBQ* 46 (1984), 447–70. Burnett even states that when one speaks of παλιγγενεσία in Philo one is speaking simultaneously 'of what is perhaps the organizing centre of his thought, viz., the migration of the soul towards immortality' (p. 447).

43. E.g., Marcus Aurelius 11.1.3. See also Diogenes Laertius 7.134; Cicero *Nat. Deorum* 2.118. See discussion in Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 799.

44. In addition to Daniel 7, connection can also be found with Deut. 17.18 and *1 Enoch* 62.5; 69.29 (and cf. Rev. 3.21).

45. F. W. Burnett, 'Παλιγγενεσία in Matt. 19:28: A Window on the Matthean Community?', *JSNT* 17 (1983), 60–72 (65).

46. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:57–8. This is also the view of BDAG. Quite similar is the

JSNT article.[47] He reviews the argument that the word means the age to come and only that, with no connotation of cosmic destruction and re-creation. This is an issue because of the potential influence that Stoicism, with its belief in the regular destruction and re-creation of the universe, had on Jewish and Christian cosmology. Many have been rightly concerned to show the differences between a Stoic conception of the world and that of Second Temple Jewish eschatology, namely that (unlike the Stoic view) the cycle of destruction and re-creation is *not* perpetual in the Jewish world view. But Sim shows that a view of παλιγγενεσία that does not take into account the reality of cosmic destruction and re-creation is insufficient. This is because the rejection of the destruction–recreation view is usually made by arguing that Matthew never speaks of the end of the world or cosmos. But as Sim points out, Matthew does indeed do so in 5.18 and 24.35. Therefore, Sim argues that (in line with the Second Temple apocalyptic literature) παλιγγενεσία 'expresses the idea, common in apocalyptic circles, of cosmic destruction and regeneration which the new age will bring'.[48] Thus, in 19.28 the word means 'not just the new age but the total re-creation of the cosmos which accompanies the new age'. Sim points out that while Matthew does describe this regeneration with a word borrowed from Stoicism, he does not appear to share the Stoic view.[49] Thus, while Matthew, like other Second Temple writers, does not believe in the Stoic view of a perpetual cycle of destruction–re-creation, his borrowing of παλιγγενεσία is appropriate in that it envisages a real destruction and re-creation.

Writing much earlier, Geerhardus Vos comes to similar conclusions.[50] He discusses the biblical eschatological principle that the end corresponds to the beginning, but notes that unlike other Ancient Near Eastern beliefs such as Stoicism, in the biblical view there will not be a repetition of the same process, but 'a restoration of the primeval harmony on a higher plane such as precludes all further disturbance'. Vos sees Matthew 19.28 as a reference to this new heavens and new earth that 'marks the world-renewing as the renewal of an abnormal state of things'. Vos is careful to point out that this is indeed a renewal, not a creation *de novo*, thereby again making a distinction between the Stoic and biblical views.[51]

This modern scholarly discussion of παλιγγενεσία is beneficial. But what has not been sufficiently pointed out is that in Matthew this word comes to us

view of Gundry: The word '...probably refers to Israel's renewal when God fully establishes his kingdom on earth'. Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 392.

47. D. C. Sim, 'The Meaning of παλιγγενεσία in Matthew 19.28', *JSNT* 50 (1993), 3–12.

48. Sim, 'The Meaning', p. 5.

49. Sim, 'The Meaning', p. 11.

50. Geerhardus Vos, *ISBE*, s.v. 'Heavens, New (and Earth, New)', 2:1353–4.

51. In this discussion Vos also addresses what may appear to be the Stoic view in 2 Pet. 3.6-13. He argues that in that text the language of destruction by fire is actually renewal language, not that of destruction in light of analogue of the Flood which also 'destroyed' the world through water.

not alone but as one of the many signposts pointing us back to Genesis and the theological point he is making via this intertextual move.[52] That is, I affirm that the referent or *denotation* of παλιγγενεσία for Matthew is the eschatological age to come, depicted as that of a renewed creation. But just as importantly, we must recognize the greater *connotation* that we as readers of Matthew are intended to receive: that reference to a 'genesis again'[53] should trigger in our minds the plethora of other ways that Matthew has been using Genesis from his opening words on. And again, the point of this broad thematic and linguistic overlap between Genesis and Matthew is to argue that in Jesus Christ we find the consummation of God's work that began with his creation. The same is occurring here in 19.28. In the eschatological new creation those who will sit as judging authorities are none other than Jesus' own chosen disciples. This is clearly a claim that goes far beyond a mere prophetic eschatological vision! This is one statement among many in the First Gospel that reveals that Matthew's *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung* are thoroughly Christocentric.

Conclusion

Our earlier discussion of world view will bring to mind for many the paradigmatic work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and the idea of one's 'symbolic universe'. Berger and Luckmann define symbolic universes as 'bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality'.[54] More simply, we may describe a symbolic universe as the integrated system of beliefs, values and symbols which are used by groups to legitimate their understanding of the world. The symbolic universe is understandably important for religious groups, especially ones which have broken away from another, 'mother' group. Berger

52. It should be noted that one of the few people to explicitly make the connection between Genesis 1 and Mt. 19.28 is John Nolland. Though, as with the discussion above (see n. 41), Nolland sees how some could make this connection only to reject it himself (Nolland, 'What Kind of Genesis…?', p. 465). However, Nolland's brief arguments against the Genesis–Matthew connection here prove wanting. He does not seemingly want to allow Matthew to make such a play on words, and more perplexing, he writes that 'παλιγγενεσία has clearly been chosen for its wider Hellenistic associations and not for any capacity to evoke the biblical creation tradition'. Herein lies a false dichotomy. Can we say that a Jew, writing in Greek from within the Hellenistic world, has chosen a word with Greek connotations *rather than* for its biblical connections? Rather, it seems that the biblical authors chose Hellenistic Greek words, often aware that these words had different Hellenistic connotations, yet they imbued them with their own meaning from their own biblical world view.

53. I am quite aware of the many dangers of dissecting a word into its etymological parts to discern its meaning. However, in this instance, especially in light of the many Genesis references in Matthew, this translation has much to commend itself.

54. P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1966; repr. 1991), p. 113.

has called this a 'sacred canopy'.[55] The last quarter-century has seen much work done in applying this view to the study of Matthew.[56]

This approach is very pertinent to our discussion of Matthew's cosmology. I have argued above that a variety of cosmological terms can be found in Matthew and that in every case this language ultimately has a strongly theological point. Central to Matthew's cosmological language is the theme of heaven and earth. Matthew regularly uses this theme as but one of the many ways in which he is presenting his Gospel as a bookend to Genesis. In a striking way, Matthew's connection with Genesis serves as the foundation for both his *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*. By using Genesis as a foundational subtext, Matthew is able to provide a comprehensive symbolic universe while also indicating what is likely his understanding of the physical world, thus again showing the inevitable overlap of these two realities.

As Hays has observed, the First Gospel functions very much like a *mythos*, a world-creating, foundational story of reality. In this way Matthew clearly mimics Genesis. The stories of Genesis, especially chs 1–11, provide the fundamental understanding of the world (both *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*). For Matthew, this is accepted and understood anew in light of the person of Jesus. For Matthew, the entirety of creation and God's dealings with his creation are consummated in the God-man who took on created flesh, Jesus the Christ. With Genesis as the foundational testimony to the world view of Matthew the Jew, he now understands this reality to find its apex and goal in the incarnation of 'God with us' (1.23; cf. 28.20). Thus, Matthew is providing for his readers a *mythos* that establishes the new and final world view, one that corresponds with Genesis even while we await the 'genesis-again' inaugurated by Jesus.

55. P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990). See also the discussion in P. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 8–10.

56. Examples include D. L. Balch (ed.), *Social History of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); J. A. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); *idem*, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1996); A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

3

Tearing the Heavens and Shaking the Heavenlies: Mark's Cosmology in its Apocalyptic Context

Michael F. Bird

Carl Sagan's book, *The Demon Haunted World*, is a militantly atheistic attempt to dislodge a theistic world view with a purely materialistic one.[1] The author of the Second Gospel, whom I follow tradition in naming Mark, would be most unlikely to subscribe to Sagan's *atheological* perspective of the cosmos. For Mark, his world view is consistently theocentric and indebted to the Jewish *Weltanschauung* with a Creator of 'heaven and earth' (e.g. Gen. 14.19, 22; Exod. 20.11) who has also created/elected his own people, Israel (Deut. 4.32-33; Isa. 43.1; 44.1-2).[2] But one point where Mark would agree with Sagan, or Sagan's book title at least, is that this world is indeed demon haunted. In a very real sense, humans are oppressed by malevolent powers (the political and spiritual not always neatly distinguished, e.g. Mk 5.1-14), it is full of suffering, and reeks of death. Mark's 'world' is truly macabre, dark and tragic – but Mark thinks this 'world' is changing. According to Mark, God has both a Son and a Kingdom which have broken into this demon haunted world and are effecting its transformation, its redemption and finally its re-creation. As Michael Patella writes: 'The passion, death, and resurrection are Jesus' triumph over Satan in the cosmic battle. This triumph sweeps in the eschaton. Creation is saved and reunited with God'.[3] This is the fulcrum of Mark's story of Jesus, this is the hope that he wishes to impart to his audiences, this is why Mark called his work εὐαγγέλιον ('gospel') in 1.1. Thus, Mark's Gospel presupposes a certain cosmology in that the salvation and redemption achieved by the Marcan Jesus is indelibly bound up with a certain understanding of the world. In light of this, the aim of this study is to describe elements of Mark's cosmological scheme

1. C. Sagan, *The Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Random House, 1995).

2. Cf. J. T. Pennington, 'Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology: *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*', *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 18 (2004), 260–77; S. Grindheim, *The Crux of Election* (WUNT 2.202; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005), pp. 8–9.

3. M. Patella, *The Lord of the Cosmos: Mithras, Paul, and the Gospel of Mark* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), p. 59.

and to identify how it impacts the theological structures embedded within his narrative.

Mark as Apocalyptic Eschatology

Mark expresses a world view which, in its basic outlook, can be categorized as apocalyptic eschatology. Certain writings can be described as 'apocalyptic literature' but Mark is not 'apocalyptic' if by that one means the text's perspective and world view; rather, Mark exhibits a form of apocalyptic eschatology. By 'apocalyptic eschatology' I mean that the conceptual framework of Mark's Gospel bears significant correlation to the features of a certain eschatology characterized by pessimism, dualism, determinism, messianism and a hope for a divine deliverance. This should be contrasted with *apocalypticism*, which is a social and religious phenomenon found among groups like Qumran and the Branch Davidians. I think it possible that Mark's Gospel is oriented towards the apocalypticism that characterized certain quarters of the early Jesus movement, but it is going beyond the evidence to suggest that Mark was written for an apocalyptic community.[4] We must also distinguish Mark from an *apocalypse*, which is a literary genre that gives written expression to apocalyptic eschatology through a variety of literary, rhetorical, narrative and theological devices focusing on the disclosure of divine mysteries.[5]

The Gospel of Mark is most analogous in genre to the Graeco-Roman βίοι.[6] At the same time, one of the features of Mark's Jesus-story is that it is a form of historiography written up in apocalyptic mode.[7] Several things evidence this: (1) The Gospel represents a form of messianism in that the central character is Jesus Christ (Mk 1.1). Mark's preferred title for Jesus, the 'Son of Man', is also found in other apocalyptic writings such as Daniel (7.13-15), Revelation (1.7, 13; 14.14), *1 Enoch* (37–71, esp. 46.1-8; 48.1-10; 62.1-15; 70.1) and *4 Ezra* (13.1-13). (2) The use of parables, especially in Mark 4, is indicative of other apocalyptic literature that uses parables such as the Qumran writings (1QapGen 20.13-16, 4Q302a), *4 Ezra* (4.47-52; 8.1-3), and *1 Enoch* (37–71). The Marcan parables are also revelatory in that they impart the mystery (μυστήριον) of the kingdom of God (Mk 4.11-12; cf. 6.51-52; 7.19; 8.17-21 and 13.14) that constitutes an epistemological axiom for Mark.[8] (3) The discourse of Mark 13, though

4. On the problems of finding and describing a 'Marcan community' see M. F. Bird, 'The Marcan Community, Myth or Maze?', *JTS* 57 (2006), 474–86.

5. Cf. P. D. Hanson, 'Apocalypses and Apocalypticism', in D. N. Freedman (ed.), *ABD* (6 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:280–2.

6. R. A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

7. A. Y. Collins, 'Narrative, History and Gospel: A General Response', *Semeia* 43 (1990), 145–53 (148).

8. Joel Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), pp. 62–5,

not necessarily burgeoning with apocalyptic devices like heavenly journeys, is recognizable as an apocalyptic composition. (4) The necessity of Jesus' death (e.g. Mk 8.31-32; 9.30-32; 10.32-34; 14.21) and its redemptive significance (Mk 10.45; 14.22-25) are conceivable as the outworking of an apocalyptic scenario. Paul Hanson goes so far as to say that: 'With Mark the gospel tradition reaches its apocalyptic peak'.[9] According to N. T. Wright, Mark invites readers to discover the inner secrets behind the outer story of Jesus, a story that retells and subverts common narrations of Israel's history and hopes. While denying that Mark *is* an apocalypse, Wright says nevertheless that: '*Mark's whole telling of the story of Jesus is designed to function as an apocalypse*'.[10]

On the whole, the attention given to situating Mark in the context of apocalypticism seems appropriate, although commentators interpret its significance differently.[11] But how does Mark's apocalyptic eschatological framework impact his cosmological perspective?[12] The short answer is through the radical dualism of the narrative where the climactic events of Jesus' life reveal heavenly signs, provide portents of destruction, and offer glimpses of a glory that lies beyond the veil of human knowledge. In addition to Jesus' teachings that reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom, and beyond Jesus' exorcisms that fight the battle against the evil one, the Marcan narrative exhibits key moments where heaven and earth meet, and readers gain a panoramic view of Mark's symbolic universe.

Marcan Cosmology: The Linguistic Indicators and their Significance

Mark's use of key cosmological terms illuminates his 'symbolic universe' of meaning generated by his story of Jesus. In a sense Mark's *Weltbild* could potentially be described as three-tiered with οὐρανός ('heaven'), γῆ ('earth'), and γεέννα ('hell'). But what complicates this arrangement is that Mark's *Weltbild* interfaces with his *Weltanschauung* so that the constituent levels of the created order are permeated by spiritual and political realities and they are part of an over-arching narrative. The apocalyptic world view

229–33; *idem*, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1999), pp. 303–8.

9. Hanson, 'Apocalypses and Apocalypticism', 1:289.

10. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 395 (italics original).

11. For example, H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 64–76; *idem*, *The Beginnings of Christianity: An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), pp. 99–120; B. L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), pp. 325–31; C. Myers, *Binding the Strongman: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (New York: Maryknoll, 1988); Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, pp. 391–6; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, pp. 70–3.

12. Cf. A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (JSJSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1996).

also blurs the heaven/earth distinction in its entirety. Thus, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of Mark's cosmological narrative than a specific *Weltbild*. For instance, the word κτίσις ('creation') occurs at Mk 10.6; 13.19 and in Ps.-Mk 16.15. Out of all of the Gospels, the word is found only in Mark and is rare even in the Septuagint where it appears only in works deriving from the Hellenistic period.[13] Its obvious sense is that which God has created.[14] Mark's specific formulation understands κτίσις as the result of the divine creation-act. Additionally, salvation will mark a restoration of divine–human and human–human relationships back to the initial ordering of κτίσις. The rationale for prohibiting divorce by the Marcan Jesus in Mk 10.2-9 is that the coming of the Kingdom will mark a return to the primaeval state of human relations, where divorce between man and woman is impossible since the union of male and female is divinely instituted. Hence, the phrase ἀπὸ δὲ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως ('from the beginning of creation') is not simply a temporal marker, but designates the normative period to which human relations will return with the advent of the kingdom. Jesus demands that people start living that way now in anticipation of the coming kingdom. That implies that the ordering of κτίσις is more authoritative than the law of Moses. The use of the word in Mk 13.19 signifies that the coming tribulation is a crisis that affects the whole κτίσις. In this sense the fate of Jesus-followers and the fate of creation are intertwined (see Rom. 8.19-23).

In regards to κόσμος in Mk 8.36; 14.9, and Ps.-Mk 16.15, its use has slightly negative connotations in contrast to κτίσις. For Mark the κόσμος is the sum of human existence, including empires, nations, material wealth, patronage and power that stands against Jesus and his followers and at the same time is in desperate need of them. According to Mk 8.36, in following Jesus a person gains their ψυχή ('soul') but spurns the κόσμος ('world'). The proclamation of the gospel is said to come upon the whole κόσμος (Mk 14.9; cf. Ps.-Mk 16.15). A comparison of Mk 14.9 with 13.10 is illuminating:

> εἰς πάντα τὰ **ἔθνη** πρῶτον δεῖ κηρυχθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον
> And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations
> (Mk 13.10).[15]

> ἀμὴν δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν **κόσμον**, καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη λαληθήσεται εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς.
> Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her
> (Mk 14.9).

13. Cf. Jdt. 16.14; Tob. 8.5; 3 Macc. 6.2; Wis. 5.17; 16.24; 19.6; Sir. 43.25.

14. Thus, the addition of the phrase ἣν ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς ('which God created') to ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως ('from the beginning of creation') in Mk 13.19 is tautological and may rest on a Semitic idiom.

15. On text-critical issues, grammar and meaning see M. F. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission* (LNTS, 331; London: T&T Clark, 2006), pp. 296–302.

The comparison shows that κόσμος and ἔθνος stand parallel and are both objects of the proclamation of the gospel. It is evident that κόσμος and ἔθνη also stand in opposition to the gospel and represent hostility to the divine order and the divine emissaries. That is not to say that the κόσμος is the same thing as the ἔθνη. The latter is a subset of the former. In the Jewish reckoning the nations are what create such tumult within the cosmos since they rebel against Israel, the post-Edenic custodians of creation (see Daniel 7 and *4 Ezra* 6.54-59). Probably the best exposition of what Mark thinks of κόσμος is found in the stories of the Rich Young Ruler (Mk 10.17-31) and the teachings of Jesus about service (Mk 10.41-45), where the pursuit of possessions and power characterizes what the world values and aspires to. In both stories the values of Jesus and the kingdom are the opposite of the present age. The coming of the kingdom and the proclamation of the gospel result in the subversion and finally the transformation of the κόσμος.

It might be possible to speculate and to say that Mark has a sub-textual meta-narrative being played out in his Gospel. The κτίσις of God has become the κόσμος of the nations, and it is through Jesus and his gospel that the κόσμος will begin to reflect the glory and goodness of the original κτίσις. In a sense this is standard apocalyptic theology. Where Mark differs from other apocalypticists is in his conviction that the return to the primaeval era, the redemption of Israel, and the renewal of the Adamic race do not occur through a purge of the Gentiles or through the military triumph of a Jewish ruler over the nations; rather, it is through the cross, in Jesus' suffering under the fury of the gentile beasts *for Israel*, and in the proclamation of the gospel, that the alienation between creation and Creator comes to an end. It is then in the rumors of resurrection that Mark alerts his readers to the possibility of a world now partially reborn, but only for those with eyes to see and ears to hear and faith in God.

The Marcan Inclusio: Tearing of the Heavens

The most significant and most frequently used cosmological term in Mark's Gospel is οὐρανός ('heaven') which it occurs 16 times in all.[16] In Marcan usage οὐρανός can function as a circumlocution for 'God' (Mk 8.11; 11.30-31), Jesus frequently looks to the οὐρανός in performing miracles (Mk 6.41; 7.34), while elsewhere οὐρανός is used cosmologically for the dwelling place of God, of the angels and the expanse above the earth (Mk 1.10, 11; 4.32; 10.21; 11.25; 12.25; 13.25, 27, 31, 32; 14.62). But the significance of οὐρανός for Mark's narrative is best observed by juxtaposing the baptismal episode with the account of Jesus' death.

16. Mk 1.10, 11; 4.32; 6.41; 7.34; 8.11; 10.21; 11.25, 30, 31; 12.25; 13.25, 27, 31, 32; 14.62.

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρὲτ τῆς Γαλιλαίς
καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου.
καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς
καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖον εἰς αὐτόν·
καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν· σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee
And he was baptized by John into the Jordan.
And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens torn open
And the Spirit descending upon him like a dove
And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'
(Mk 1.9-11).

The story of Jesus' baptism is significant both for early Christianity and for Mark's Gospel. The fact that Jesus was baptized by John, which implies Jesus' subordination to John, and that it was a baptism of repentance, was potentially embarrassing to the early Christian movement. Nevertheless, the Evangelists did not shirk from including the pericope in their Jesus-stories and they have understood it as part of Jesus' commissioning as both the Servant of the Lord and the Messiah, hence the echoes of Isa. 42.1; 64.1 and Ps. 2.7. Within the scope of the Marcan narrative the baptism episode signals the inauguration of the new exodus, validates Jesus' messianic identity, and marks out Jesus as the true representative of the Jewish nation through the solidarity of baptism. The presence of the divine voice lends some support to the idea that what transpires is an 'apocalyptic theophany'.[17] More to the point, this 'theophany' results in the union of the Messiah with the Spirit, a well-known Jewish theme (Isa. 11.2; 61.1; *1 En.* 49.3; 62.2; *Pss. Sol.* 17.42; *T. Levi* 18.6-7; *T. Jud.* 24.2-3). In Mark's narration: 'Jesus is anointed by the very presence and power of God'.[18]

As Jesus 'came up' out of the water it is reported that 'he saw the heavens torn open'. Mark's language is clearly abrupt and dramatic, thus Luke (Lk. 3.21) and Matthew (Mt. 3.16) feel compelled to substitute the more subdued ἀνοίγω ('open') for the violent σχίζω ('tear'). The verb εἶδεν has Jesus as its subject and not John. In contrast to Matthew and Luke, Mark's version is not objectivized, but it is an experience of Jesus. That comports with the notion that Jesus was a prophetic seer who experienced visions during the course of his ministry (see Lk. 10.18).[19] The motif of the tearing of the heavens is attested elsewhere

17. J. Marcus, *Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 56–8.

18. B. Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 75.

19. Cf. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 358–68; Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Seer* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1999), pp. 246–92.

in Israel's sacred traditions and Second Temple literature (Isa. 64.1; Ezek. 1.1; *2 Bar.* 22.1; *T. Levi* 2.6; 5.1; 18.6; *T. Jud.* 24.2-3; *Jos. Asen.* 14.2-3) as well as the New Testament (Jn 1.51; Acts 7.56; Rev. 4.1; 11.19; 19.11). Vincent Taylor comments: 'The rending of the heavens is a common feature of apocalyptic thought, the underlying idea being that of a fixed separation of heaven from earth only to be broken in special circumstances'.[20]

The 'tearing' most likely echoes Isa. 64.1 [LXX 63.19] and it is interesting to observe how such intertextuality shapes Mark's cosmological and theological perspective.

> Oh, that you would tear the heavens [LXX: ἀνοίξῃς τὸν οὐρανόν,
> MT: לוא קרעת שמים] and come down.
> That the mountains might quake at your presence
> As when fire kindles brushwood
> And the fire causes water to boil to make your name known to your adversaries
> And that the nations might tremble at your presence
> (Isa. 64.1-2).

In context, the prophet desperately longs for Israel's liberation from foreign oppression. When this day comes, it will be the coming of God himself. In the divine visitation the heavens are torn and the earth quakes, boils and melts at the presence of God. God enters into contention against Israel's oppressors (Isa. 64.2-4), He brings cleansing from sin and iniquity (Isa. 64.5-7) and restores Jerusalem from desolation (Isa. 64.8-12). The plea of Isaiah 61 is for a heaven-shaking and earth-shattering event whereby God intervenes against Israel's adversaries and restores the fortunes of Israel. The hope for divine intervention is cast in cataclysmic and cosmic imagery where the tearing of the heavens occasions the revelation of God into the world to radically transform the circumstances of his people. Mark's employment of this Isaianic motif has the effect that the desperately sought after theophany of God and the associated earth-melting revelation of the divine presence has taken place in Jesus. Mark's baptismal account, far from implying an adoptionist christology, exhibits an implicit incarnational christology where the tearing of the heavens that marked the coming of God instead marks the union of God's Spirit with God's Son.[21] The only language appropriate to describe this union of divine agents is the cosmological language of heaven being ripped open.

Although it is not immediately obvious, the tearing of the veil in the temple at the moment of Jesus' death in Mk 15.39 actually has great significance for Mark's story. It is also related in more than one way to the baptismal account.[22]

20. V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 160.

21. Although it is common to regard Mark's Christology as 'low', this evaluation overlooks the abundance of 'God' language used for Jesus in the Marcan Gospel. See E. Boring, 'Markan Christology: God-Language for Jesus?', *NTS* 45 (1999), 451–71.

22. Cf. S. Motyer, 'The Rending of the Veil: A Markan Pentecost', *NTS* 33 (1987), 155–7.

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφεὶς φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν.
καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ᾽ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω.
ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν
εἶπεν· ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν.

And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed-out his last.
And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.
And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God'
(Mk 15.37-39).

What is depicted here is the veil or curtain of the Holy Place being ripped completely and thoroughly into two parts.[23] The function of the event is probably twofold. First, the tearing of the veil functions as riposte to the charges that Jesus is a pseudo-prophet (Mk 14.62) and pseudo-Messiah (Mk 15.32), and so vindicates Jesus' claims, despite his trial and crucifixion, against these charges. Second, the tearing of the veil announces the triumph of the eschatological king and the declaration of judgement upon an apostate institution.[24] This comports with Mark's view of the Temple as apostate and ripe for judgement given his intercalation of the Temple incident bracketed by the cursing of the fig tree (Mk 11.12-25) and the prediction of the Temple's destruction in the Olivet discourse (Mk 13.2; cf. 15.29).[25]

23. The word ναός could refer to either the Holy of Holies (e.g. Mt. 23.17, 35) or the temple generally (e.g. Mk 14.58; 15.29; Lk. 1.9; Jn 2.19-20). Likewise, καταπέτασμα could refer to the curtain of the inner sanctuary (Exod. 26.31-35; Lev. 16.2, 12; 21.23; 24.3; Num. 3.26; [LXX]; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.75, 90; *War* 5.219; Heb. 6.19; 9.3; 10.20; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.86, 101; cf. *Gos. Phil.* 84) or the outer sanctuary (Exod. 26.37; 38.18; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.75; *War* 5.212; *Ep. Arist.* 86; also used is κάλυμμα in Exod. 27.16; 40.5; Num. 3.25). In some later Christian literature the curtain in question is ambiguous (cf. *Gos. Naz.* 36; *Gos. Eb.* 6; *Gos. Pet.* 5.20; *Gos. Jas.* 24.3; *T. Levi* 10.3 [if a Christian interpolation]). Others such as R. Pesch (*Das Markus Evangelium* [2 vols.; HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1976–77], 2:498) and R. Brown (*Death of the Messiah* [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994], pp. 1109–13) think it is either irrelevant or impossible to determine which curtain was destroyed. However, from Golgotha only the outer curtain of the Holy Place or court of the Israelites would be visible (cf. Mt. 27.51, 54). Although the tearing of the curtain in the Holy of Holies would be theologically significant, as the metaphor is for the author of Hebrews, R. T. France (*The Gospel of Mark* [NIGTC: Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002], pp. 656–7) is correct to note that we cannot assume that Mark shared the same theological perspective as the writer to the Hebrews. Mark's focus is not about human access to the divine as such (though it is probably implied), his attention is the dramatic and visual effect of Jesus' death and the confirmation of a forthcoming judgment against the temple. In support of a reference to the outer curtain see J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 478–9; France, *Mark*, pp. 656–7, and BDAG, 524. See for general discussion D. M. Gurtner, 'The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend', *JETS* 49 (2006), 97–114 who thinks there was only 'one' curtain in the Herodian Temple.

24. C. Rowland, 'Christ in the New Testament', in John Day (ed.), *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 480.

25. C. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), p. 509.

Predictions of the Temple's destruction (some legendary, some *ex eventu*, and some perhaps genuinely predictive) often include accompanying signs associated with its destruction. Josephus writes that many divine portents occurred leading up to the war with Rome. These were apparently signs that foretold the future desolation of the temple (*War* 5.288-315). Tacitus states that during the assault of the temple the door of the east gate of the inner court suddenly opened by themselves and a great voice cried, 'The gods are departing' (*Hist.* 5.13; cf. Josephus, *War* 5.412). The *Testament of Levi* declares that 'the curtain of the temple will be torn' as a judgement on Israel's lawlessness and shameless behaviour (*T. Levi* 10.3). In *Lives of the Prophets* a prophecy was given that a 'western nation' would come and 'the curtain of the *Dabeir* [holy of holies] will be torn into small pieces' (*Liv. Proph.* 12.11-12). In a rabbinic tradition the Roman general Titus slashed the veil with his sword (*b. Git.* 56b). Mark's account of the tearing of the veil is analogous to similar signs associated with the destruction of the Temple as an act of divine judgement against Israel.

The 'tearing of the heavens' narrated in Mk 1.10 relates to the 'tearing of the veil' in Mk 15.38 in several ways. First, both tearings occur in the context of baptism. The 'tearing' in Mk 1.10 transpires in the setting of Jesus' baptism by John and in conjunction with Jesus' identification as the messianic son and his intention to launch the Isaianic Exodus. Conversely, the tearing of the veil in Mk 15.38 takes place at the moment of Jesus' death, which has already been identified as Jesus' baptism elsewhere in the Marcan story (Mk 10.37-39). Second, in both passages the tearings are accompanied by reference to πνεῦμα or 'Spirit'. In Mk 1.8-10, Jesus receives the 'Holy Spirit' directly after the heavens are torn open, while in Mk 15.37 he 'expirates' (ἐκπνέω) or gives up the Spirit just prior to the tearing of the veil. The activity of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus is only operative between his baptism and his death, between the first σχίζω and the second σχίζω. Third, both tearings are followed immediately with an announcement of Jesus' divine sonship. In Mk 1.11 a voice from heaven calls Jesus, ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ('my beloved son') while the centurion at the cross professes that, ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν ('truly this man was the Son of God'). The divine voice and the centurion's confession become moments of revelation, triggered by the tearings, which disclose Jesus' messianic identity and his unique filial relation to Israel's God. Fourth, and most significant of all, both tearings are in fact tearings of the heavens, albeit in different ways. This is made explicit in Mk 1.10 (οὐρανός, 'heaven'), but the veil in the outer sanctuary is also a tearing of the heavens since the veil was decorated with an embroidered pattern of the universe upon it.[26] Josephus describes the outer veil of the Jerusalem temple as it was during Herodian times.

26. Cf. further D. Ulansey, 'The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic "Inclusio" ', *JBL* 110 (1991), 123–5.

According to Josephus, this veil was intricately crafted and measured some 80 feet in height. Josephus describes the veil as follows:

> πρὸ δὲ τούτων ἰσόμηκες καταπέτασμα πέπλος ἦν Βαβυλώνιος ποικιλτὸς ἐξ ὑακίνθου καὶ βύσσου κόκκου τε καὶ πορφύρας θαυμαστῶς μὲν εἰργασμένος οὐκ ἀθεώρητον δὲ τῆς ὕλης τὴν κρᾶσιν ἔχων ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ εἰκόνα τῶν ὅλων
>
> κατεγέγραπτο δ᾽ ὁ πέπλος ἅπασαν τὴν οὐράνιον θεωρίαν πλὴν ζῳδίων
>
> But before these doors there was a veil of equal size with the doors. It was a Babylonian tapestry, with embroidery of blue and fine linen, of scarlet also and purple, wrought with marvelous skill. Nor was this mixture of materials without its mystic meaning: it typified the universe ...
>
> Crafted on this tapestry was a panorama of the heavens except for the signs of the zodiac.
> (Josephus, *War* 5.212, 14).

Thus, while there is no mention of the tearing of the οὐρανός, the same motif is supplied by the tearing of the veil which was a tapestry of the heavens. David Ulansey writes:

> In other words, the outer veil of the Jerusalem temple was actually one huge image of the starry sky! Thus, upon encountering Mark's statement that 'the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom', any of his readers who had ever seen the temple or heard it described would instantly have seen in their mind's eye an image of *the heavens being torn*, and would immediately have been reminded of Mark's earlier description of the heavens being torn at the baptism. This can hardly be coincidence: the symbolic parallel is so striking that Mark must have consciously intended it.[27]

Dale C. Allison contends that the rending of the outer veil with the heavens upon it means that the rending of the heavens of the 'Day of the Lord' has come to pass (Job 14.12 [LXX]; Ps. 102.26; Isa. 64.1; Hag. 2.6; *Sib. Or.* 3.82; 8.233, 413; Mt. 24.29; Lk. 21.25; 2 Pet. 3.10; Rev. 6.14).[28] This is supported further on the grounds that the imagery and language of Mk 15.33, with the sudden 'darkness' (cf. Exod. 10.21; Jer. 15.9; Amos 8.9), suggest that the coming judgement of the Day of the Lord is manifested at Jesus' crucifixion.[29]

27. Ulansey, 'Heavenly Veil Torn', p. 125. R. H. Gundry (*Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993], p. 972) objects as to whether the pattern on the tapestry can be thought of as being significant for Mark's readers: 'But Mark cannot expect an audience who require his explanation of Jewish matters to know the pictorial design embroidered on the outer veil of the Jewish temple. Had they known so much about the temple, he would have needed to specify the outer veil if they were to detect the suggest symbolism'. Against Gundry we simply do not know how much of the design and artistry of the temple was known to Mark's readers or to Christians outside of Judaea. But the spread of Christians from Palestine to the Diaspora and the reports of the Temple's destruction may have meant that such knowledge was more widespread than Gundry allows for.

28. D. C. Allison, *The End of Ages Has Come* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985), p. 33.

29. E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3rd edn, 1990), p. 126.

In Mark's 'Day of the Lord' there is a cosmological transfer taking place where the dramatic and apocalyptic event once transpiring in heaven is now said to take place in the Temple, which has become the stratosphere of divine revelation and judgement. That accords with the Jewish perception of the Temple as the epicentre of the earth and the nexus to heaven. The Temple was also filled with 'cosmic symbolism' and could represent the inhabited world, the expanse of the cosmos, an earthly counterpart to the heavens or a microcosm of heaven and earth (cf. Ps. 78.69; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.181; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.87-88).[30] As such, the lines between heaven and earth become blurred momentarily upon both 'tearings'. The first tearing indicates that what was exclusively available through the Temple, the divine presence, is now available through Jesus. The second tearing signifies that the divine presence is no longer associated with the Temple, as its judgement is now sealed by virtue of the role of the temple leadership in orchestrating Jesus' death. In the words of Herman Waetjen:

> Jerusalem is no longer the navel of the world where heaven and earth are united and where God's presence is uniquely experienced. Heaven and earth have been reconciled cosmically and universally. Accordingly, the binary opposition between the sacred and the secular, constituted by the temple as the *axis mundi* of Judaism, is dissolved. Both are reunited, and the entire creation once again becomes ambiguously sacred and profane... God's presence will be experienced wherever the eschatological reality of the New Humanity that Jesus incarnated throughout his ministry is encountered.[31]

The Marcan Apocalypse: Shaking the Heavenlies

The discourse of Mark 13 has been called the 'Eschatological Discourse', the 'Olivet Discourse' and the 'Little Apocalypse'. The speech is not strictly speaking an apocalypse,[32] but it contains many striking similarities to an apocalypse including familiar imagery (cosmic portents), common theological features (e.g. determinism, pessimism, combat myth and judgement), and shared motifs (e.g. the prediction of familial discord in v. 12, the prediction of the tribulation in v. 13, the cosmic signs in vv. 24-25, and the gathering of the elect in v. 27) that signify that Mark 13 is an apocalyptic-prophetic discourse written up in a

30. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), pp. 29–80.

31. H. C. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), p. 238; see also Patella, *Lord of the Cosmos*, p. 111.

32. Cf. the definition given by John Collins: 'Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world'. J. J. Collins, 'Apocalypses and Apocalypticism', *ABD* 1:279.

unique literary form.[33] Mark 13 is about the end of the world – more properly the end of 'a world' – the world of Judaism centred upon the Jerusalem Temple.[34] I find myself in agreement with a growing number of commentators who suggest that Mark 13 concerns itself with the destruction of Jerusalem and not (directly at least) with the *parousia* of Jesus.[35] I cannot imagine Mark depicting the disciples as asking Jesus a question about the destruction of the Temple and then having Jesus respond by engaging in a speech about his return from heaven. It may be possible to take the later sections in vv. 32-37 as referring to the eschatological denouement[36] or detect a merging of historical and eschatological events throughout the speech,[37] but this is far from certain. That being said one does not have to collapse the entire eschatological scenario into pre-70 CE events. As Heinrich Holtzmann saw long ago, the destruction of Jerusalem itself marks the beginning of God's final judgement.[38] The 'Day of the Lord' and the 'coming of the Son of Man' that bring judgement on Jerusalem remain a *typos* for a future judgement of the οἰκουμένη ('inhabited world') and the salvation of the ἐλεκτοί ('elect') that will take place through the appointed judge, Jesus Christ, as the early Christians were to believe (Acts 10.42; 17.31; Rom. 2.16). We should not forget either that regardless of how one understands the referents for the eschatological events portrayed in Mk 13.3-37, the ultimate task of the text is paraenetic, viz., an exhortation to faithfulness and endurance in the light of the sufferings and tribulation about to occur.

What is of immediate concern is the imagery in the later sections of the discourse:

> Ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις μετὰ τὴν θλῖψιν ἐκείνην ὁ ἥλιος σκοτισθήσεται, καὶ ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φέγγος αὐτῆς, καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες ἔσονται ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πίπτοντες, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς σαλευθήσονται.

33. On the association of Mark 13 with an apocalypse see further J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 2nd edn, 1990), p. 329. See also Gerd Theissen (*The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* [trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], pp. 134–5) who labels the speech 'apocalyptic prophecy'.

34. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (COQG; London: SPCK, 1996), pp. 345–6; Witherington, *Mark*, p. 340; Beale, *Temple*, pp. 212–16.

35. Examples include R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1971), pp. 139–48, 231–3; *idem*, *Mark*, pp. 497–546; G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (ed. L. D. Hurst; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 365–6; Wright, *New Testament and People of God*, pp. 393–6; *idem*, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 339–68; S. McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 142; B. Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile* (WUNT 2.204; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005), pp. 330–48.

36. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, pp. 231–2; *idem*, *Mark*, pp. 541–6.

37. Cf. E. Adams, 'Historical Crisis and Cosmic Crisis in Mark 13 and Lucan's *Civil War*', *TynBul* 48 (1997), 329–44; *idem*, 'The Coming of the Son of Man in Mark's Gospel', *TynBul* 56 (2005), 39–61; Evans, *Mark*, pp. 328–9.

38. H. J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie* (2 vols; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2nd edn, 1911 [1896–1897]), 1:150.

> καὶ τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης.
> καὶ τότε ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἐπισυνάξει τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ' ἄκρου γῆς ἕως ἄκρου οὐρανοῦ.
>
> But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.
> And then he will send out the angels, and will gather the elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.
> (Mk 13.24-27)

Commentators are perplexed as to whether or not the imagery of celestial havoc refers to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the end of the space-time universe and whether the descriptions should be taken literally or metaphorically. The language itself is derived from Isa. 13.10 and 34.4 that depict the vengeance of God executed against Babylon and Edom (see similar metaphors in Isa. 14.4, 12-15; Ezek. 32.5-8; Joel 2.10-11, 30-32; 3.14-15; Amos 8.9).[39] What we find in all of these passages are predictions of a divine judgement, which is temporal, in a historical framework, and is orientated against a political entity that threatens Israel. The accompanying language with its cosmic upheaval and geophysical disturbances invests political events with theological meaning.[40] The language of the heavens being shaken and stars falling is not literal (like meteors crashing to earth) but it aims to introduce a transcendent perspective into the equation so that the rise and demise of empires is not a matter of purely historical cause and effect (due to economic, political and social forces) but results from the radical intervention of Israel's God into the sphere of human empires, emperors, cities, and alliances. This is most aptly described as *religio-political cosmology*. But this is more than using metaphorical language to describe Ancient Near Eastern politics, as there is undoubtedly a religious dimension to the events described. There is an intrinsic connection between pagan politics and the pagan pantheon; in order to destroy one, you must destroy the other. The luminaries that crash to earth may be taken figuratively for the ejection of pagan gods from the heavenly habitation by Yahweh. It is understandable how such symbolism could be applied to Babylon, Egypt, Edom or Rome, but the application of such vivid metaphors to the destruction of Jerusalem may appear decidedly odd. The rationale is perhaps that the religion of the Jerusalem Temple is effectively pagan and this Temple and all its political and economic tiers will bear the divine wrath.

39. See the excellent treatment by Pitre, *Jesus*, pp. 333–4 on the imagery and its connection to Jewish restoration hopes. More immediately we should note that the eclipses of the sun and moon were often regarded as signs foreshadowing the death of kings and the destruction of cities: Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 395d; Plutarch, *Caes.* 69; Dio Cassius 56.29.3; Josephus, *Ant.* 17.167; *Sib. Or.* 3.796-803.

40. Cf. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, pp. 298–9.

The interface of religious and political meanings is continued in the coming of the Son of Man in Mk 13.26. The language is an explicit echo of Dan. 7.13-14 and the underlying narrative created by the intertextual allusion is that of the representative of God's people going before the Ancient of Days (i.e. Yahweh) and receiving kingship and vindication over and against the pagan beasts who oppress the Jewish people. The Danielic vision of the enthronement of the victorious Son of Man is ostensibly transformed into the triumph of Jesus against the Temple. This does not spell out the demise of the Jewish nation, but rather Israel's vindication through the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy against the Temple.[41] The political dimension is underscored further with the statement that the elect will be gathered from the ends of the earth. The act may not only be concurrent with the destruction of the Temple, but to some degree also look beyond it. A commonly held hope in Israel's sacred traditions was for the regathering of the Diaspora to Palestine and the return of the exiles to Jerusalem with Gentiles in tow.[42] The discourse thus shifts from judgement to restoration, from political disintegration to national re-creation.

Thus, Mark's narration cosmology is just as political as it is religious and spatial. Between God, the firmament, earth, and political kingdoms is an indelible connection. However foreign it might be to our modern mindset, the shaking of the heavens means the end of political fortunes and the radical transformation of religious realities.

Conclusion

The New Testament authors are hardly unanimous in sharing the one *Weltbild*[43] but they do partake of a similar *Weltanschauung* in that Jesus is God's agent to bring salvation to the elect, and this salvation will have a transformative impact upon the whole of the inhabited world. Mark's contribution to that perspective is that the coming of Jesus has wrought a cataclysmic transformation in the relation between heaven and earth.[44] Although the κόσμος is hostile to God's

41. Cf. further France, *Mark*, pp. 534–5.

42. Deut. 30.4; Ps. 107.2-3 (= 106.2-3 LXX); Isa. 11.11-12; 35.10; 43.5; 49.5-6, 22-26; 56.8; 60.4, 9; 66.20; Jer. 3.18; 31.10; Ezek. 11.17; 20.34, 41; 28.25; 34.12-16; 36.19, 24-28; 37.21-23; 39.27-28; Zeph. 3.20; Zech. 2.6-11; 8.7-8; 10.9-12; 2 Macc. 1.27-29; 2.18; Sir. 36.11-22; 48.10; Bar. 4.37; 5.5; *4 Ezra* 13.39-50; Tob. 13.4-5; 14.5-6; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.63, 98, 131-33; Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 117, 164-70; *Pss. Sol.* 8.28; 11.1-5; 17.31, 44; *T. Jos.* 19.2-12 (Arm); *1 En.* 57.1; 90.33; *Jub.* 1.15-18; 23.27-32; *2 Bar.* 29.1-30.3; 78.7; *T. Benj.* 9.2; 10.11; *T. Mos.* 10.7-10; *Sib. Or.* 3.265-294; 1QM 2.1-3, 7; 3.13; 5.1; 11Q19 18.14-15; 57.5-6; 59.9-13; CD 2.11-12; *m.Sanh.* 10.3; *t.Sanh.* 13.10; *Tg. Isa.* 45.5; 53.8; *Tg. Hos.* 14.8; *Tg. Mic.* 5.1-3; Lk. 13.28-29/Mt. 8.11-12; Jn 11.52; Lk. 24.21; Acts 1.6; 26.7; Rev. 21.12; Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 134.4.

43. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, p. 32.

44. In addition to the rending of the veil and the eschatological discourse, the transfiguration (Mk 9.2-8) has a further bearing upon Mark's cosmological perspective.

people, a time is coming when the κόσμος will begin to reflect the goodness of the original κτίσις. Following the Isaianic script, Mark describes the anointing of the messianic Servant for his ministry as commencing with the heavens being ripped open and the Spirit descending into him. The rending of the veil in the Temple signals the end, however, of the Temple's role as a nexus into the divine realm. The tearing is a symbol of judgement upon the religious institution and its leadership. Likewise, the shaking of the heavens and the falling stars when juxtaposed with the coming of the Son of Man in Mark 13 is indicative of a particular metaphysical construction where politics and portents are merged together. That implies that Mark's cosmology is all at once social, religious and political.

4

'THE HEAVENS OPENED': COSMOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION IN LUKE AND ACTS

Steve Walton

In Luke's story, both heaven and earth are transformed through Jesus and by the Spirit. This process of transformation affects even how God is to be seen and understood, for there is now a human being in heaven at God's right hand – and he pours out the Spirit upon God's people to equip them to reclaim creation for its Creator.

Luke's Gospel and Acts are unique in two important respects for this study. First, Luke[1] alone of the Evangelists provides a 'volume two' telling the story of the establishment of the earliest Christian communities. This allows us to see how the remarkable intervention of Israel's God in human history through Jesus is played out among those who follow Jesus. By writing Acts, Luke portrays the universal claims of Jesus with particular clarity.

Second, Luke alone among the NT writers narrates the ascension of Jesus, and he does so twice (Luke 24; Acts 1). By contrast with angels, who come from heaven and return there, Jesus is a human being who enters heaven. Jesus both shares the rule of God over the universe and continues to intervene in the story of his followers, both in his own person and by the Spirit. In piercing the barrier between earth and heaven, Jesus restructures how reality is understood, both now and in the days to come.

To explore Luke's engagement with cosmology, we shall first review his perspective on the key cosmological terms and ideas which he uses. We shall then focus on the shift of perspective which the ascension of Jesus brings. This will lead into discussion of those who invade this realm of earth from heaven, notably angels, the Spirit and Jesus himself after his ascension, repulsing the occupying forces of Satan, demons, and unclean and evil spirits. Finally, we shall consider some key passages in Acts where there seems to be explicit dialogue with rival accounts of cosmology, particularly those which centre on the Jerusalem Temple, on paganism, or on the role of Caesar.

1. For the purpose of this study we make no assumption about the identity of the author of Luke and Acts, other than his gender.

Naming Space(s): Key Terms

Luke uses οὐρανός ('heaven' or 'sky') 61 times in his two books. The Lukan favourite ὕψιστος ('highest') can denote the heavenly realm as well. Luke also has a number of uses of ᾅδης 'Hades' (4 of 10 NT uses are in Luke–Acts). By contrast, Luke does not use the κτίζω ('create') word group at all, and uses κόσμος ('world') only four times. Luke does use γῆ, variously translated as 'earth', 'soil', 'land', 58 times, notably for our purpose in combinations with οὐρανός. This impression is borne out by more detailed examination. Thus *prima facie* Luke shows a strong interest in the heavenly realm and its interaction with the earthly one.

Luke's preference for 'heaven and earth' language over κόσμος is rather unexpected given that Luke is writing into a Graeco-Roman setting, where κόσμος is more common than 'heaven and earth' as a label for the universe. Plausibly, this is an example of Luke imitating the LXX, where usage is similar.[2]

Heaven/the Heavens,[3] the Highest, and Hades

The large majority of Lukan uses of οὐρανός occur in prepositional phrases.

Lukan assumption of an above/below metaphor for the division of heaven and earth is seen in the expression 'under heaven' (ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν), in each use suggesting universality (Lk. 17.24; Acts 2.5; 4.12).

Likewise, movement 'into heaven' (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) is upwards in relation to earth, especially in Jesus' ascension (Lk. 24.51; Acts 1.9-11). Peter contrasts Jesus with David, who did not ascend (ἀνέβη) there (Acts 2.34). Jesus is now in an exalted position of power in the realm of God (cf. Acts 3.21; 7.56).[4] The angels depart into heaven (Lk. 2.15), and the sheet in Peter's vision is taken up into heaven (Acts 10.16; 11.10). The above/below metaphor is expressed in relation to prayer in the tax collector who will not lift his eyes εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν (Lk. 18.13) and Jesus looking up (ἀναβλέψας) into heaven when he gives

2. As a rough and ready measure, the 71 LXX uses of κόσμος are completely outweighed by 621 uses of οὐρανός and 3043 uses of γῆ. I am grateful to Dr Jonathan Pennington for suggesting the link with the LXX to me.

3. I have excluded uses of οὐρανός for 'sky' or 'air' (such as τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ 'the birds of the air', found five times in Luke–Acts), but have focused on those of greater cosmological and theological significance.

4. It is hard to accept Strelan's antithesis concerning the three-fold use of εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν in 1.10-11: 'This is not a spatial or locative description; it means that Jesus now participates in the rule of God'. R. Strelan, *Strange Acts: Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles* (BZNW 126; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), p. 39. Why can location not be the denotation and rule the connotation of the expression?

thanks (Lk. 9.16). In these cases 'heaven' stands for the realm of God, as it does in the prodigal son's affirmation that he has sinned 'against heaven' (Lk. 15.18, 21), and in Stephen seeing 'into heaven' (Acts 7.55).

The expression 'from heaven' (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανου, ἐξ οὐρανοῦ or ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) indicates intervention from that realm into the earthly. Often this is positive intervention from the divine realm in the form of sound (Lk. 3.22; Acts 2.2; 11.9) or sight (Acts 9.3; 11.5; 22.6) or great signs (Lk. 21.11). However, judgement in the form of fire can come from heaven (Lk. 9.54; 17.29), and Satan fell from heaven (Lk. 10.18). As previously, 'heaven' is the divine realm, where the Father is (Lk. 11.13; cf. 20.4).

By contrast with these present-oriented expressions, ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, 'in heaven' is often used in future settings. Those who follow Jesus will receive a reward or treasure in heaven (Lk. 6.23; 12.23; 18.22), and their names are written in heaven (Lk. 10.20). There is rejoicing in heaven when sinners repent (Lk. 15.7; cf. 15.10). Rejoicing happens ἐν ὑψίστοις 'in the highest' (Lk. 2.15; 19.38). Heaven is also a place of peace and glory (Lk. 19.38).

Heaven, however, is not to be attained easily: Capernaum will not be exalted to heaven (ἕως οὐρανοῦ), but brought down to Hades (Lk. 10.15). Hades is a realm of pain and suffering (Lk. 16.23; although a parable, this draws on popular assumptions about the nature of the after-life[5]). Ps. 15.10 LXX (MT 16.10) is quoted in Acts 2.27, 31, and read as a prophecy of the Messiah not being abandoned to Hades. In mentioning Hades, Luke may now be using a 'three-decker' model of the universe, with earth in the middle, heaven 'above' and Hades 'below'.[6]

Most striking for our study are uses of οὐρανός as closed or open. Jesus speaks of the famine in Elijah's time in which 'the heaven was closed (ἐκλείσθη ὁ οὐρανός) for three years and six months' (Lk. 4.25). The closure of heaven is clearly a reference to the lack of rain from the sky, but probably also implies that God had ceased to care for the people of Israel because of Ahab's sin and their idolatry.[7] Conversely, to speak of heaven as open indicates that intercourse between God and earthly beings is taking place – indeed 'I saw heaven opened' is a standard apocalyptic formula for God revealing himself.[8] Jesus has a vision of heaven opened at his baptism (Lk. 3.21); Stephen sees the heavens opened as he is being stoned and recognizes the exalted Jesus in heaven (Acts 7.56); and

5. J. Nolland, *Luke* (WBC 35; Dallas: Word, 1989–93), 2:557.

6. Cf. Leslie Houlden, 'Beyond Belief: Preaching the Ascension', *Theology* 94 (1991), 173–80 (177).

7. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p. 188.

8. E.g. Ezek. 1.1 LXX; John 1.51; Rev. 19.11. See the surveys of Jewish apocalyptic in M. N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (WUNT 2/36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990); and Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982).

Peter sees heaven opened when he has the vision of the sheet (Acts 10.11). This language is highly suggestive, for it indicates that God is communicating with his creation, both with Jesus while he is on earth and, after his ascension, with Jesus' followers.

Earth,[9] *the World*

A number of times the pair 'heaven and earth' expresses the totality of existence. God made them and is their Lord (Acts 4.24; 14.15; 17.24). Heaven is God's throne and earth his footstool (Acts 7.49, quoting Isa. 66.1). In an intriguing pair of sayings, Jesus asserts that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest character to be dropped from the law (Lk. 16.17), and yet says that heaven and earth *will* pass away, but his words will not (Lk. 21.33). Heaven and earth clearly possess a certain durability, but not greater durability than Jesus' teaching! Luke thus hints at the coming renewal of the universe.

Elsewhere heaven and earth stand in contrast: the sheet Peter sees is let down from heaven to earth (Acts 10.11) and, suggestively, Saul falls to the earth after the light from heaven shines around him (Acts 9.3-4). Here the superiority of the realm of God is asserted over the human, earthly realm.

Where γῆ occurs without οὐρανός it is used to speak of life here and now by implicit contrast with life in heaven (e.g. Acts 8.33 [quoting Isa. 53.8 LXX]; 22.22). Thus Jesus' birth brings peace upon earth (Lk. 2.14) and he has authority on earth (Lk. 5.24). The future of which he warns will include distress and suffering on earth (Lk. 21.23, 25, 35), and his own ministry will bring fire rather than peace (Lk. 12.49, 51). In Acts the expression ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς 'to the end of earth', derived from Isa. 49.6, is a keynote for the breadth of the believers' mission (Acts 1.8), a mission which they gradually come to see includes Gentiles (Acts 13.47) – thus, all the earth's families will be blessed (Acts 3.25, echoing Gen. 12.3).

The Universe as God's Creation

Luke does not use the κτίζω 'create' word group at all, but the idea of the universe as God's creation is clear, particularly where believers are encountering pagans. In Athens, Paul presents God as the one 'who made (ὁ ποιήσας) heaven and earth' and who (in consequence) is 'Lord of heaven and earth' (Acts 17.24). This God is no deistic watchmaker, for he continues to give πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα 'to *all* people life and breath and all things' (v. 25), and (quoting a pagan poet) 'in him we live and move and exist' (v. 28). Luke also presents Jesus as referring to God's kindly providence toward the birds and

9. I exclude here uses of γῆ for 'soil', 'land' (i.e., a country) or 'land' (by contrast with sea or lake); these account for about 25 uses from a total of 58 in Luke–Acts.

the flowers of the field and thus, *a fortiori*, for people made in his image (Lk. 12.24-28).

This theme can also be seen in Stephen's speech (Acts 7.50, quoting Isa. 66.2), where God's 'hand' is synecdoche for God himself – his power in particular; in the prayer of the believers (Acts 4.24); and in Paul's words in Lystra (Acts 14.24).[10] In the latter two cases, the sequence 'the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them' follows that in the creation story of Gen. 1.1–2.3, further underlining the claim that the God of the believers is the Creator. God's creation of the universe is also hinted at in the idea of 'the foundation of the world' (Lk. 11.50), which presupposes a beginning, although hints of creation in Luke's Gospel are rare – it is only in the wider mission in Acts that this theme becomes explicit.[11]

Changing Space(s): the Ascension[12]

Luke alone narrates Jesus' ascension, and does so twice (Lk. 24.50-53; Acts 1.6-11); other NT authors assume its existence or spell out its significance.[13] Luke's double telling shows the importance of the ascension, which provides the basis for much that follows in Acts, as well as being the appropriate climax to the Gospel's story.[14] It marks Jesus' stepping from the realm of earth into heaven, from whence he continues to act; it marks a watershed in his life and in the way the universe is seen and experienced. Because the ascension is so significant for the cosmology of Luke–Acts, we shall focus on it first, and then consider how Luke's Gospel prepares for this remarkable event.

The ascension of Jesus marks the close of the forty-day period of resurrection appearances (Acts 1.3), and vividly shows the risen Jesus entering heaven (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, 'into heaven'), an expression which occurs three times in

10. Both 4.24 and 14.15 echo LXX Exod. 20.11; Neh. 9.6; Ps. 145.6 [MT 146.6]; Isa. 37.16, while not being an exact quotation of any of them.

11. It is also worth observing that, while God's fatherhood is linked in the OT and Second Temple Jewish writings with creation, this link is not made in Luke–Acts. For references and discussion, see D. G. Chen, *God as Father in Luke–Acts* (StBibL 92; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 84–5, 136–7.

12. A number of significant issues concerning the ascension, including its historicity, are beyond the scope of this limited study. Significant studies include: Strelan, *Strange*, pp. 33–49; A. W. Zwiep, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology* (NovTSup 87; Leiden: Brill, 1997); M. C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke–Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context* (JSNTSup 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), with useful review of previous work on pp. 14–18; G. Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu: Untersuchungen zu den Himmelfahrts- und Erhöhungstexten bei Lukas* (SANT 26; München: Kösel, 1971).

13. See Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 15–40, 275–80; T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1976), pp. 106–22.

14. Cf. Eric Franklin, *Christ the Lord* (London: SPCK, 1975), p. 35.

Acts 1.10-11. Lk. 24.50-53 appears to relate the same event, but with no time frame provided: v. 50 is linked to v. 49 only by the vague δέ. This account contains the same note of Jesus entering heaven (v. 51). It is beyond the scope of this essay to debate the precise relationship of resurrection and ascension; the view taken here is that the resurrection and ascension, although they should be seen together, are distinct moments in the process of Jesus' exaltation to God's right hand.[15] The ascension may then be seen as the culmination of the process of Jesus' exaltation and the point at which Jesus is visually exalted to heaven, thereby providing the disciples with a visual demonstration of the truth of Jesus' exalted status. Hence, Acts 1.9-10 uses a rich visual vocabulary which stresses the reality of the event, for the terms used are not visionary or dream language: βλεπόντων, τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, ἀτενίζοντες,[16] ἐμβλέποντες, ἐθεάσασθε.

What the Ascension Implies

Given the stress Luke places on the ascension and heavenly session of Jesus, what intersection does it have with cosmological issues? At least six points come to mind.

First, the ascension and exaltation of Jesus to God's right hand imply that he now reigns alongside God from heaven; it is now appropriate to call him κύριος ('Lord') as well as Χριστός ('Messiah'), for God himself has done so in exalting Jesus to his right hand (Acts 2.36). His ascension is 'into heaven' (Lk. 24.51; Acts 1.10, 11). The account of the ascension is brought to a close for the disciples by a cloud (Acts 1.9), a cloud which echoes the singular cloud of Lk. 21.27 upon which the son of man comes (contrast Mk 13.26; Mt. 24.29). It therefore appears that Luke intends an echo of Lk. 21.27 in Acts 1.9, and thereby makes a connection to Dan. 7.13 concerning the Son of Man who comes to the

15. See the helpful summaries in Kevin L. Anderson, *'But God Raised Him from the Dead': The Theology of Jesus' Resurrection in Luke–Acts* (PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), pp. 6–10, 41–7; R. F. O'Toole, 'Luke's Understanding of Jesus' Resurrection-Ascension-Exaltation', *BTB* 9 (1979), 106–14. I share the view of Anderson and P. A. Van Stempvoort, 'The Interpretation of the Ascension in Luke and Acts', *NTS* 5 (1958–59), 30–42, *contra* Lohfink, *Himmelfahrt*, pp. 80–98, 270; J. A. Fitzmyer, 'The Ascension of Christ and Pentecost' in J. A. Fitzmyer, *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies* (2nd edn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 265–94, esp. 265–77; Zwiep, *Ascension*.

16. Strelan, *Strange*, pp. 38–9 unconvincingly seeks to argue that ἀτενίζοντες implies entering into a trance-like state, which is unlikely – the verb here (as elsewhere) denotes intent looking or staring at something or someone (*BDAG*, 148). Even if Strelan were correct about ἀτενίζοντες, Luke has used numerous other visual words which carry no such implication; cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 1998), 1.81 on βλεπόντων, whose use 'places the Ascension in the same category of events as any other happening in the story of Jesus'.

Most High on the clouds. The prominent use of a cloud in the transfiguration (three times in Lk. 9.34-35) further reinforces the likelihood that the ascension cloud connotes God's presence and glory.[17]

Alongside these links, Luke explicitly states that, after Jesus ascended, 'they worshipped him' (Lk. 24.52). Since for Jews worship is to be given to God alone, Jesus is here being placed alongside YHWH as an object of worship.[18] His entry into heaven is thus different from those of Elijah or Enoch, for his entry follows his resurrection.[19] Thus, the way 'God' is understood changes:

> the way that Luke narrates the ascension of an eschatologically transformed, fleshly human being inevitably alters the life of... God and forever breaks the bounds of any cosmology, ancient or modern, that portrays the gap that needs overcoming between God and humanity as primarily ontological rather than hamartiological.[20]

Second, the two white-robed interpreters tell the disciples that Jesus' ascension presages his return from heaven to earth (Acts 1.11).[21] This return to earth will be the time of cosmic renewal and restoration promised in Scripture (Acts 3.20-21) as well as of judgement (Acts 17.31). The cloud also became emblematic of the return of Jesus, as he was to come from the presence of God which the cloud symbolizes (cf. 1 Thess. 4.17; Rev. 1.7; 14.14-16). It is possible that this parousia symbolism may have further encouraged Luke to report the cloud as enveloping Jesus.

Third, heaven's gift, the Holy Spirit, flows from Jesus' exaltation to God's right hand (Acts 2.33). Heaven is open (Acts 2.2 speaks of a sound coming 'from heaven') and the Spirit is poured upon God's people as a result of Jesus' exaltation, which itself marks him as Lord of the Spirit (Acts 2.36).[22] The futuristic present ἀποστέλλω (Lk. 24.49) and the emphatic ἐγὼ show that Jesus himself will send the Holy Spirit as 'power from on high' (cf. Acts 1.5). The

17. Cf. the thoughtful argument of Strelan (*Strange*, p. 36) for early Christian appropriation of Pss. 8, 46 to connect Jesus' exaltation with reigning, as well as his helpful tracing of references to clouds connoting God's presence (pp. 37–8).

18. Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 345.

19. This is the diametrical opposite of the puzzling view of Franklin, *Christ*, p. 35, that it was the ascension rather than the resurrection which marked Jesus out as 'other than one of the prophets'.

20. A. Johnson, 'Resurrection, Ascension and the Developing Portrait of the God of Israel in Acts', *SJT* 57 (2004), 146–62 (147); see also D. Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology* (SNTSMS 89; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 180–92.

21. Torrance, *Resurrection*, pp. 150–8.

22. M. Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke–Acts* (JPTSup, 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 278; M. Turner, '"Trinitarian" Pneumatology in the New Testament? – Towards an Explanation of the Worship of Jesus', *AsTJ* 57 (2003), 167–86 (178); Buckwalter, *Character*, pp. 194–6.

Spirit here and in Acts 2.33-36 is the executive power of the exalted Jesus, by which he exercises his sovereignty over the world.[23] This same Spirit will be the means of empowering the believers for the task of calling creation back to God as they witness to Jesus (Acts 1.8),[24] in preparation for the day of Jesus' return.

Fourth, the heavenly Jesus will welcome and receive believers. This seems to be the significance of the appearance of Jesus to Stephen (Acts 7.55-56). Jesus is named as 'the son of man' (v. 56), uniquely outside the Gospels. He has fulfilled Dan. 7.13 and therefore has received the universal jurisdiction given to the son of man. Stephen's murderers recognize this (to them) blasphemous claim by refusing to hear it further and by stoning Stephen (vv. 57-58). Daniel 7 was, of course, addressed to a martyr context of the people of God suffering against the pagans, portrayed as wild beasts (vv. 2-8), immediately before the Ancient of Days enters the scene to find in favour of his people.[25] It is thus particularly appropriate that Daniel 7 is alluded to here.[26]

Fifth, Stephen provides an example of a wider category of Jesus' appearances and actions from heaven. These flow from Jesus' role at God's right hand as God's 'chief executive agent' – Luke has no 'absentee christology'.[27] Hence Jesus appears from heaven to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and exercises his power by striking him blind (Acts 9.8). Jesus is not absent from earth, for he is identified with the believers whom Saul is persecuting – to persecute them is to persecute Jesus himself (Acts 9.5). The Jesus who reigns with the Father is also the Jesus who suffers with his people, thereby sharing God's own ability to be present in many locations at once – and this illustrates our human difficulty with using the language of 'presence' and 'absence' in relation to the exalted Jesus.[28]

Not only does Jesus meet Saul directly, but he goes on to prepare for Saul's integration into the believing community by speaking to Ananias (Acts 9.10-16).

23. See, much more fully, Turner, *Power*, pp. 290–315.

24. I here take 'the end of the earth' as a reference to 'everywhere', in tune with the echo of Isa. 49.6, with, *inter alia*, L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 26–7. Note also that the crowd at Pentecost come 'from every nation *under heaven*' (Acts 2.5) – while all of these are Jews, the choice of term hints at the universality of the concerns of God.

25. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 291–7.

26. C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 17.

27. See Turner, *Power*, pp. 295–6 for the point and the specific phrases, *contra* (famously) H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), *passim*, esp. p. 204.

28. I owe this point to an unpublished paper presented by Prof. Beverly Gaventa to the Book of Acts Section at the SBL Annual Meeting of November 2003; I gratefully acknowledge her kindness in providing me with a copy.

The exalted Jesus stage-manages events to his own ends, and thus exercises his sovereignty over the universe. Similarly, it is Jesus who pours out the Spirit (Acts 2.33). It is Jesus who heals Aeneas (Acts 9.34) and, when other healings take place in the name of Jesus, the name stands for his person too (e.g. Acts 3.6, 16; 4.7, 17, 30)[29] and shows his present, earthly exercise of power: 'What believers do in Jesus' name is in effect being done by Jesus himself'.[30] That power is also seen in deliverance from evil spirits (Acts 16.18 and, comically, 19.13, 17).[31] Indeed, so powerful is Jesus' name that it is the unique and sole instrument of salvation (Acts 4.12), so that new believers are baptized into Jesus' name (Acts 2.38; cf. 10.43; 22.16) and proclamation of the message is proclamation of the name of Jesus (Acts 9.15, 27, 28). Prayer, too, is calling upon the name of Jesus (Acts 9.14, 21).

Sixth, the ascension of Jesus, his piercing the barrier between earth and heaven, means that heaven is open to earth. To be sure, heaven has been invading earth in and through the ministry of the earthly Jesus, but the flurry of angelic activity in the early chapters of Acts is unprecedented, directing, saving and emboldening believers and bringing God's judgement to Herod (Acts 1.10-11; 5.19; 8.26; 10.3; 12.7-11, 23; cf. 27.23-24). The repeated coming and action of the Holy Spirit is a further important instance of heaven invading earth (e.g. Acts 2.1-4; 4.8, 31; 6.10; 7.55; 8.17; 9.17; 10.44; 11.28; 13.2, 9, 52), as are the healings and exorcisms which take place. The exorcisms, in particular, drive back the occupying forces of evil and free people from bondage to belong to God's people (e.g. Acts 5.16; 8.7; 16.16-18; 19.12). 'Signs and wonders' occur at the beachheads of the invasion (e.g. Acts 2.22, 43; 4.30; 5.12; 6.8; 14.3; 15.12). Those who outwardly join God's renewed people, but who lie to the heavenly Spirit, are judged (Acts 5.1-11). Further, God's word is an active agent within the mission of God (Acts 6.7; 12.24; 13.48-49; 20.32),[32] and acts as a further agent of God's heavenly invasion of earth (cf. Isa. 55.10-11). In contrast with previous times, both in the OT and in the ministry of Jesus, heaven is now 'open for business' on a permanent basis.

Space Invaders: Heaven Coming to Earth

We have discovered thus far that the exaltation of Jesus, visually represented and culminated in the ascension, initiates a new chapter in the life of heaven and earth. There is now a human being reigning alongside God, and earth is open to heaven in a fresh way. How far does Luke's Gospel prepare for this?

29. J. A. Ziesler, 'The Name of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles', *JSNT* 4 (1974), 28–41 (35–37).

30. Buckwalter, *Character*, p. 184; see pp. 182–4 for a helpful discussion.

31. J. Goldingay, 'Are They Comic Acts?', *EvQ* 69 (1997), 99–107 (102–104).

32. See the valuable discussion in D. W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), pp. 160–7.

The time of Jesus' birth bristles with divine activity. God sends angels to announce both the birth of John, the forerunner of Jesus, and Jesus himself (Lk. 1.11-20, 26–38; 2.8-14). The Holy Spirit inspires speech to announce what God is now doing (Lk. 1.41-45, 67–79; 2.25-32). Most notably of all, the Spirit causes Mary to become pregnant (Lk. 1.35),[33] a fresh creative act which reflects God's desire to intervene anew in his universe in and through Jesus.

At Jesus' baptism the apocalyptic expression ἀνεῳχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανόν 'the heaven was opened' (Lk. 3.21) presages a significant disclosure from God.[34] Here, 'after a period of apparent inactivity God himself comes down to act in power'.[35] Jesus' vision of the Spirit's descent is interpreted by the heavenly voice, echoing Ps. 2.7 and Isa. 42.1. Jesus is empowered by the Spirit for his messianic task as 'great David's greater son'.[36] Luke repeatedly underlines Jesus' empowerment by the Spirit, for Jesus returns from Jordan 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and is then 'led by the Spirit' (Lk. 4.1). Jesus emerges from the temptations 'in the power of the Spirit' (Lk. 4.14), and announces in Nazareth that he is the one anointed with the Lord's Spirit for his mission (Lk. 4.18-19, quoting Isa. 61.1-2; 58.6).[37] This mission is God's work through Jesus, so that his exorcisms are to be understood as demonstrating the power of God (Lk. 11.20) – his ministry is progressively bringing down Satan's empire (Lk. 10.18).[38] Jesus' healing ministry similarly restores people to full participation in the people of God, notably a man with leprosy (Lk. 5.12-14); the woman who was haemorrhaging for 12 years (Lk. 8.43-48), who would be unclean because of her bleeding; and the woman who had been bent over for 18 years because of a spirit (Lk. 13.10-17), whom Jesus regards as a 'daughter of Abraham' (v. 16) and thus a member of God's people.

Not only is Jesus himself empowered by God through the Spirit, but we already know from John that the coming one is also the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 3.16) – Jesus is thus pivotal to God's purpose to open

33. With Turner, *Power*, pp. 155–60; *contra* R. P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke–Acts* (JPTSup 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 111–16.

34. Cf. Acts 10.11; Jn 1.51; Rev. 4.1; 19.11; and Isa. 64.1; Ezek. 1.1; *T. Levi* 2.6; 2 Bar. 22.1.

35. Marshall, *Gospel*, p. 152.

36. See discussion in Turner, *Power*, pp. 197–201, *contra* J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM/Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), pp. 23–37; Menzies, *Empowered*, pp. 132–9.

37. Discussion in Turner, *Power*, pp. 213-64.

38. The image of Satan falling ὡς ἀστραπὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ 'as lightning from heaven' likely continues an echo of Isaiah 14 found in Lk. 10.15. 10.15 applies the Isaianic imagery of being exalted to heaven and being thrown down to Hades (Isa. 14.11, 13-15) to Capernaum which rejects Jesus. So L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 169; full discussion in S. R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 46–57.

heaven to earth afresh by enabling the Spirit to come. Luke makes it clear that he sees the fulfilment of this promise at Pentecost by Jesus' statement that 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now' (Acts 1.5). Thus the beginnings of Jesus' ministry point forward to the time when the believers will be equipped to serve God by calling all in creation back to him.

When we focus on Jesus' death and resurrection, non-earthly beings and phenomena are again present.[39] The darkness at the cross (Lk. 23.44-45a) suggests that creation is turning its back on the suffering Messiah, Jesus.[40] Even God is turning away from Jesus as he suffers, for darkness symbolizes both God's absence and the presence and dominance of evil, just as light symbolizes God's presence.[41]

In the midst of the darkness the Temple curtain is torn in two (Lk. 23.45b). Readers frequently see this incident through the eyes of Heb. 10.20, which pictures Jesus opening a new way to God through the curtain, and thus interpret the tearing of the curtain as symbolizing access to God.[42] However, it seems likely that the tearing may rather focus on the emptiness of the Holy of Holies, to demonstrate that this is not where God is to be found (cf. Ezek. 10; *2 Baruch* 6.7; 8.2), and thus this event portends the ultimate destruction of the Temple.[43] This likelihood is increased by two features of Acts. First, Stephen's speech (Acts 7) is critical of the elevation of the Temple as *the* place where God is known, although not of its foundation or existence. Stephen's speech claims that the Temple's time is over, for God is active and available apart from the Temple – he is not limited to this particular holy space (Acts 7.48).[44] Second, God makes himself known to people in Acts away from the holy space of the Temple, such as in the desert to a eunuch (8.26-40), in an unclean Gentile household in Joppa (10.1-48), and in many places outside the land of Palestine during Paul's travels.[45] The Temple, whose destruction Jesus has prophesied

39. It is textually unlikely that the angel in Gethsemane (Lk. 22.43-44) is original (*TCGNT*², p. 151), so it is omitted from discussion here.

40. Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 14.12.3 §309, a comment from a letter of Mark Antony to Hyrcanus concerning his opponents in battle: 'the sun turned away his light from us, as unwilling to view the horrid crime they were guilty of in the case of Caesar'.

41. Cf. Lk. 22.53 and note the contrast with Lk. 1.79, where Jesus' birth is depicted as the dawn rising (so R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* [ABRL London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994], 2:1042); cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Luke* (AB 28; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981, 1985), 2:1518–19; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 825.

42. See the useful enumeration of possibilities in Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1157.

43. Marshall, *Gospel*, p. 875; Brown, *Death*, 2:1101–06.

44. S. Walton, 'A Tale of Two Perspectives? The Temple in Acts', in T. Desmond Alexander and S. J. Gathercole (eds.), *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), pp. 135–49 (138–43).

45. Walton, 'Tale', pp. 146–8.

(Lk. 21.6), becomes functionally redundant, for access to God is through Jesus and by the Spirit.[46]

At the tomb of Jesus, the women meet two men in dazzling clothes, who are angels and announce Jesus' resurrection (Lk. 24.4-5, 23). These angels form an *inclusio* with the angels who announce Jesus' birth in Luke 1–2, and provide heaven's commentary on the empty tomb.

Luke's Gospel prepares for the fuller picture seen in Acts by portraying phenomena which show that heaven is entering the earthly realm to reclaim the world for its Creator. The angels who surround the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry will be active in the church's ministry. The same Spirit who empowered Jesus for his messianic task will empower his followers for their missionary task. The cosmological change of Jesus' presence in heaven at God's right hand produces a theological change in how God is to be seen, understood and known – it is now through Jesus and by the Spirit that he is to be known, and that by the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Acts 1.8).

Space(d) Out? Challenging Other Cosmologies

Finally, we briefly consider some places where there appears to be dialogue between a Christian cosmology and other cosmologies.

We have already noticed Stephen's speech (Acts 7), for here Stephen implicitly critiques a cosmology which gives a unique and special place to the Jerusalem Temple as *the* earthly place of access to God. Instead, Stephen asserts, God has made himself known in pagan lands (e.g., vv. 2, 9, 29-34, 44). He presents the Temple's status as ambiguous, in tune with the ambiguity in the dedication of the Temple (1 Kgs 8.15-53, esp. 27).[47] When the Sanhedrin respond in rage to the suggestion that they oppose the Holy Spirit (vv. 51-54), Stephen's vision of Jesus, the Son of Man, vindicated and exalted to God's right hand (vv. 55-56), announces that it is through Jesus that access to God is now found – hence Stephen's prayer is for Jesus to receive him (v. 59). The latter point combines the claims that it is Jesus who receives people into heaven – normally God's prerogative – and that it is appropriate to pray to Jesus, rather than God alone.

Second, this cosmology critiques the claimed place of Caesar in the Roman empire. Rather than Caesar being the one with universal jurisdiction and worthy of worship, Jesus should receive the highest honours.[48] This theme underlies a

46. Cf. Green, *Luke*, pp. 825–6, who seeks to combine the best of both positions.

47. Walton, 'Tale', pp. 141–2.

48. E.g. Julius Caesar is described as 'the god made manifest' (*SIG*³ §760) and Claudius as 'god who is saviour and benefactor' (*IGRR* IV §584); more fully, see the listing of evidence in S. Walton, 'The State They Were In: Luke's View of the Roman Empire', in Peter Oakes (ed.), *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 1–41 (26–8); Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK, 17th edn; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), p. 434 with n. 175.

number of events and speeches in Acts, not least 17.7, where Jesus is recognized as being 'another king' in place of Caesar.

Third, this cosmology engages highly critically with pagan cosmologies which see a multiplicity of gods controlling various elements of the universe. Paul engages in Lystra with uneducated pagans (Acts 14.11-18) and in Athens with highly educated pagans (Acts 17.16-31) who hold such views. It is interesting that, in Lystra, Paul does not speak explicitly of Jesus in response to the crowds' desire to offer sacrifice to him and Barnabas, although our expectation as Luke's readers is that when Paul speaks (14.9), it is about Jesus. Paul critiques paganism by focusing on the oneness of the true God as Creator and implicitly that he alone should be worshipped (14.15-17).

In Athens,[49] by contrast, Paul explicitly speaks about Jesus and his resurrection (and thus, presumably, his exaltation), and this provokes the invitation to the Areopagus (17.18).[50] Paul engages with Stoics and Epicureans (17.18)[51] and both held cosmologies different to the Christian one.[52]

The Stoics collapsed god and the universe into one in pantheistic fashion; however, it seems likely that at least some Stoic thinkers also deified natural forces: Jupiter was the sky-god, Neptune controlled the sea, and so on. Stoics were materialistic, and believed there to be no real realm outside the visible universe. They were highly deterministic, and used augury and haruspicy to seek what the gods were going to do, but did not regard the gods as personally 'knowable' by humans. Against Stoicism, Paul insists that the Creator is distinct from his creation (v. 24), and that God is knowable (v. 27). And, rather than the gods having control of particular elements or lands, the true God allocated where all peoples lived (v. 26). It is a mistake to identify elements within creation for worship, for this is idolatry (vv. 24-25, 28).[53] Paul asserts firmly that the way that God is known is through Jesus, whom God has raised from the

49. For very useful discussions, see E. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 2:1169–80; B. W. Winter, 'On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18-20', *TynBul* 47 (1996), 71–90.

50. If Winter's reconstruction is correct, the invitation was to offer grounds for building a temple to Jesus in Athens (Winter, 'Gods', esp. pp. 71–80, 87–9). If so, Paul's speech is particularly acute, for he rejects the premise that gods require temples, and asserts that, rather than humans building a temple for God, the one true God has created the world where he should be worshipped.

51. See B. W. Winter, 'Introducing the Athenians to God: Paul's Failed Apologetic in Acts 17?', *Them* 31 (2005), 38–59 (48–57).

52. For a helpful overview of the various positions held in the ancient world, see Cicero, *Nat. d.*, written around the middle of the first century BC, and identifying the Stoics, the Epicureans and the sceptical Academicians. See also the summary essay by Edward Adams in this volume.

53. If Paul asserted this in Ephesus, it is easy to see why the silversmiths, who made souvenir models of the temple of Artemis, would be upset (Acts 19.23-29)! It is possible that 'pure' Stoicism rejects idols; if so, Paul is critiquing a popularized version of Stoicism (although see Winter, 'Athenians', p. 54 for a contrary view).

dead and who will be the one who will judge all on the Day (v. 31). One can see why Stoics would be doubtful of the resurrection (v. 32a), and also why it is the climax and centrepiece of Paul's speech, for it is Jesus' exaltation by God which gives Jesus the status and right to judge.

The Epicureans shared the Stoics' materialism and rejected ideas of life after death. They portrayed the gods in human form since they believed human form to be the most beautiful. However, the gods were uninterested in human affairs, so there was no point in offering sacrifice, for the gods would not involve themselves in earthly life. Worship was offered, but only to change the worshipper. Against this backcloth, Paul argues not only that God is the Creator, but that he desires to know his creatures and be known by them (vv. 24, 27). While Paul makes common ground with the Epicureans in presenting God as not needing humans (v. 25), he is critical in claiming that God nevertheless is interested in his creation and wants people to respond to him through Jesus (vv. 30-31).

Paul's response, after building common ground with his interlocutors, is to focus on Jesus and his exaltation, via resurrection, to the place of judgement over the cosmos (v. 31). As elsewhere in Acts, the evangelism of the earliest believers centres on how God is now knowable through Jesus. The risen Jesus has ascended to heaven to reside at God's right hand, thus transforming both cosmological and theological perspectives: he is now the pathway for his people to join him. Heaven is indeed open – to everyone who comes to God through Jesus.

5

Light of the World: Cosmology and the Johannine Literature

Edward W. Klink III

1. *Introduction: The Light of the World*

John begins at the beginning of history and time itself, 'in the beginning'. This phrase is more than just an inter-textual link to the Genesis narrative of the First Testament, but locates the entire Johannine narrative in a cosmological event rooted in the beginning of life, or as 1 John declares, the 'word of life' (1 Jn 1.1). The goal of this chapter is to explore the cosmology of the Johannine literature,[1] moving beyond an analysis of the thematic-theological character of the cosmic motif and into the cosmic drama foundational to the Johannine corpus.

2. *Cosmological Language in the Johannine Literature*

Our study must begin in the cosmological language in the Johannine literature. The language that fits this criterion is subjective as to how it is used and conceived within the document itself. Even more, this definition of language cannot be forced onto words alone, but must rest on the larger structure of the document(s). But it is at the level of words that we must begin.

2.1. *World*

The word cosmos (κόσμος) appears 102 times in the Johannine literature. The word appears in the Gospel of John 78 times, over five times more frequently than it does in the Synoptics (14). Even more, the frequency of use in only the Gospel and Letters is two and one half times that of the entire remainder of the New Testament (184).[2] While the Hebrew understanding of 'universe' is

1. By 'Johannine literature' we mean the Gospel and the three Letters. Although Revelation is traditionally considered to be Johannine, for the purpose of this volume it is being treated separately. Thus, any statistic or reference to the Johannine literature excludes Revelation.

2. N. H. Cassem, 'A Grammatical and Contextual Inventory of the Use of κόσμος in the Johannine Corpus with Some Implications for Johannine Cosmic Theology', *NTS* 19 (1972), 84–91 (81).

to be found in the words 'heaven and earth', Greek found in cosmos a word 'to give expression to the Hellenic appreciation of the order in the universe'.[3] In this sense cosmos carries the connotation of the physical universe. John clearly understands this usage of cosmos, for in Jn 17.5 Jesus asks the Father, 'glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed'. Another example is in Jn 21.25 where the fourth evangelist ends the Gospel with the statement that 'the world itself could not contain the books that would be written'. In both these instances cosmos is certainly creation, the physical universe.

Cosmos need not be limited to the physical universe, however, for it can also refer to the universe as a personal entity, as is common in Jewish literature (Gen. 1.26; Sir. 17.2), or more directly, to humanity as a group. This understanding of cosmos is relational in nature. A clear example of this usage is in Jn 1.10 where cosmos is used 3 times: 'He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him'. The first and second instances of cosmos refer to the physical universe, the created order, but the third instance functions in a relational sense. Even the word translated 'know' (ἔγνω) is characteristically used in John of human knowledge of the divine persons and of the relationship amongst those persons.[4] This one verse presents an excellent contrast in the Johannine usage of cosmos, allowing the term to function as the physical, created universe as well as the living, relational world, its anthropomorphic self. In this way, what we call mankind or humanity may be called 'the world'.[5]

The relational sense of cosmos in the Johannine literature generates the largest scholarly confusion. Older descriptions of Johannine dualism[6] combined with more recent sociological assumptions of a sectarian-like Johannine community have led to the reconstruction of an introspective group which views itself in isolation from 'this world'.[7] More recent Johannine research has advocated the more complex relational nature of cosmos. The cosmos is the place or realm

3. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 508.

4. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 139.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 509.

6. This is due in no small part to the influence of Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols; trans. Kendrick Grobel; London: SCM Press, 1951, 1955), 2:21.

7. See, for example, J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 206–8, who reads the term as dualistic opposition. Cf. R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 63–6; J. H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); B. J. Malina, 'John's: The Maverick Christian Group: The Evidence of Sociolinguistics', *BTB* 24 (1994), 167–82; B. J. Malina and R. L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), pp. 245ff.

where God is at work, the place that is the main focus of God's attention.[8] Rensberger alludes to it as a 'dimension of encounter' between God and man.[9] Köstenberger describes it as 'a dark place that is alienated from God but nevertheless remains an object of his love'.[10] But perhaps the best description is given by Keener: 'The world is thus the arena of the light's salvific invasion of darkness ... "the lost" that Jesus came to seek and to save'.[11] The language of evil that pervades the Gospel's depiction of the cosmos does not classify it in a completely negative sense; although those who remain in the darkness remain negative, out of this same 'dark world' come those who Jesus came to save.[12] This more recent understanding of the Johannine cosmos views the term as more relationally complex than previous descriptions of Johannine dualism. It appears that the personification of the cosmos in the Johannine literature is the portrait of a class of people.

2.2. *Orientational Dualism: Above and Below*

John's symbolic dualism is most noted in his use of bipolar terminology.[13] Although unique in the Gospels, it might even be argued that his bipolar terminology is an aperture to the Gospel's *Weltanschauung*. The strangeness of this bipolar, dualistic language has often led interpreters to reflect more on its societal function than on its cosmic function. Our examination of this terminology will explore its cosmological dimension.

While the dualism in the Synoptics is primarily horizontal – this age and the age to come, the dualism of John is primarily vertical – a contrast between the world above and the world below.[14] In his dialogue with Nathanael Jesus declares he will see 'heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man' (1.51). Since the time of Augustine exegetes have seen a connection between this verse and Gen. 28.12, where in a dream

8. M. Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 69; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), p. 155. A. T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), p. 260, similarly describes this realm as 'cosmic'.

9. D. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), p. 137.

10. A. J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 187.

11. C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:329.

12. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 509. See also S. B. Marrow, 'Κόσμος in John', *CBQ* 64 (2002), 90–102.

13. Our use of 'orientational' and 'ontological' to describe John's dualism is taken from G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

14. Conceptually this would include language of heaven and earth. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 347.

Jacob sees a ladder stretching from earth to heaven. Amidst all the theories of intertextual explanation, the vision must mean that Jesus is the point of contact between heaven and earth.[15] Jesus himself is the connection between the heavenly reality and earth; the locus of the 'traffic' that brings heaven's blessing to humanity, the living temple of God (2.19).[16]

Yet this bipolar motif is not merely unifying, but is also one of contrast and division. In Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus, he explains that 'no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above' (3.3). The term ἄνωθεν is important here, for it can be translated both temporally as 'again', or spatially as 'from above'. Nicodemus understands the term in its temporal sense, asking of the possibility of a second birth, but Jesus clearly has the spatial sense in mind. The double meaning of the term seems to be used here as part of the technique of misunderstanding.[17] For, as Jesus explains: 'If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man' (3.12-13). Jesus now explains his earlier comment in an oriented sense with himself as the object. Jesus uses Nicodemus' misunderstanding of the double meaning to reference both spaces: earthly and heavenly (v. 12). Similar to 1.51, in v. 13 Jesus describes himself as the Son of Man who has ascended and descended, not merely 'from above', but this time 'from heaven'. In this way, the Johannine dualism, 'from above/from below', functions to describe the heavenly journey of Jesus. But this heavenly journey is a mark of distinction: 'The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all' (3.31). As Wayne Meeks explains, this motif in the Gospel 'points to contrast, foreignness, division, judgment. Only within that dominant structure of estrangement and difference is developed the counterpoint of unity...'.[18] Jesus is 'from above'. This is an important realization for the Fourth Gospel. As Jesus explains in 8.23, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world'. While there is this contrasting dualism, it must be noted that Jesus is not completely isolated from

15. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, pp. 88–91.

16. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), p. 28.

17. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 130. While the double meaning in 3.3 is collaborated by Nicodemus' confusion, the remainder of the Nicodemus dialogue clearly expresses the spatial sense (see 3.31), as well as the two other uses of the term (19.11, 23). See also R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 135–6, n.4; and S. Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2.120; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000).

18. W. Meeks, 'The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism', *JBL* 91 (1972), 44–72 (67). Unfortunately, Meeks explains this bipolarity entirely by the narrative's ecclesiological tale, which distorts the essence of the motif.

'this world'. Rather, John's language 'of derivation is itself a way of making an anthropological statement... What the Gospel... asks from the reader is not the mind's assent to a dualistic worldview but a decision about one's existence'.[19] This bipolarity is, as expressed by Bultmann, a 'dualism of decision'.[20] At the very point of division between the two sides of the bipolarity there is a strong participatory sense. In this way, the dualism has an implicit sense of movement. The contrast between 'from above' and 'from below' has a relational sense that creates a drama. This orientational contrast is a dramatic 'coming into the world' (1.9).

2.3. *Ontological Dualism: Light and Darkness, Flesh and Spirit, Truth and Falsehood*

The Fourth Evangelist uses numerous ontological dualisms, or bipolarities, to communicate his message.[21] Our examination can only summarize the cosmic function of some of the primary dualisms.

Light and Darkness. The term 'light' appears 29 times in the Johannine literature (23 in the Gospel); the term 'darkness' appears 14 times. The physical phenomena of light and darkness are easily adapted to symbolism. The symbolic use of light/dark was common in the Old Testament, yet it always remained only a poetic symbol for good and evil (e.g., Job 30.26).[22] Even in the writings at Qumran this symbolism has taken on a new dimension, 'for in the Dead Sea Scrolls light and darkness have become two moral principles locked in struggle for domination over mankind'.[23] The reality of light/dark is even more prominent in Johannine thought, where God himself is described as light and in him there is no darkness (1 Jn 1.5). Even more, John describes the coming of Jesus as light shining into darkness (Jn 1.5), for he is the 'light of men' (Jn 1.4)

19. L. E. Keck, 'Derivation as Destiny: "Of-ness" in Johannine Christology, Anthropology, and Soteriology', in R. A. Culpepper and C. C. Black (eds), *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), pp. 274–88 (284). For a fixed dualism see J. A. Trumbower, *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).

20. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:21.

21. Helpful here is J. Krašovec, *Antithetical Structure in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), p. 5, who explains that 'opposite concepts do not serve to create a contrast of thought but a unity of thought – a totality'.

22. See E. Achtemeier, 'Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. The Biblical Understanding of Light and Darkness', *Interpretation* 17 (1963), 439–49.

23. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 515. For a recent evaluation of the dualism common to John and Qumran see D. E. Aune, 'Dualism in the Fourth Gospel and the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reassessment of the Problem', in D. E. Aune, T. Seland and J. Henning Ulrichsen (eds), *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen* (NovTSup 106; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 281–303.

and the 'light of the world' and the 'light of life' (Jn 8.12). Those who desire to become his children must not walk in darkness (Jn 8.12; 1 Jn 1.6) but must walk in the light – as he is in the light (1 Jn 1.7). Such language does two things. First, it describes the coming of Jesus as light coming into darkness. Such cosmic language reflects the force and type of coming witnessed in the rest of the Johannine literature. The language of light and dark reflects a cosmic battle and a cosmic reality. Second, the ontological dualism of light/dark 'shapes the way readers see themselves in relation to God and the world'.[24] The contrasting nature of this bipolarity is how John expresses its message.

Flesh and Spirit. This dualism is less prominent than light/darkness. As stated in the Prologue, human life is 'born... of the will of the flesh' (1.13). Although the flesh is not sinful, for the Word became flesh (1.14), it is synonymous with humanity and is, therefore, limited to the lower or lesser realm. For 'flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit' (Jn 3.6). This is clearly stated by Jesus in Jn 6.63: 'It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life'. Life in God is life in the Spirit. In many ways the flesh/spirit bipolarity corresponds to the orientational dualism of 'from above/from below'. Spirit is both an improvement to flesh, but it is also what connects one to the realm of God (Jn 4.24).

Truth and Falsehood. The bipolarity of truth and falsehood is intimately connected to the bipolarity of light and darkness. While there is often disagreement concerning a Hebrew or Greek understanding of truth – the former carries the sense of reliable and trustworthy whereas the latter carries the sense of things unveiled or not concealed – the debate is futile. 'Truth' is reflected in both senses in John. All three members of the trinity are described in the Fourth Gospel as true: 'the only true God' (17.3), Jesus is 'the Truth' (14.6), and 'the Spirit of Truth' (16.13). Yet truth is also characteristic of the Christian (1 Jn 1.6), and even more, it is a way of life (1 Jn 1.8). The arrival of Jesus is the arrival of truth (1.17). Jesus is truth because he embodies the revelation of God – 'he himself "narrates" God'[25] (1.18) and is a perfect reflection and conjoiner of the reality of God. Bultmann explains well this idea of truth as reality:

> The basic meaning of 'truth' in John is God's reality, which, since God is creator is the only true reality. The emancipating knowledge of the truth (8.32) is not the rational knowledge of the reality of that-which-is in general... No, this knowledge of the truth is the knowledge, granted to men of faith, of God's reality; it frees one of sins (8.32-34). True, ἀλήθεια does have the formal meaning of 'truth' when it is said that Jesus tells the truth (8.45), or that the Spirit guides us into all truth (16.13). But the truth into

24. C. R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, and Community* (2nd edn; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 172.

25. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 491.

> which the Spirit guides is factually the reality of God; and Jesus does not merely *tell* the truth but also *is* the truth (14.6). So truth is not the teaching about God transmitted by Jesus but is God's very reality revealing itself – occurring! – in Jesus.[26]

The opposite side of the bipolarity, falsehood, is simply anything that is counter to God and his reality – anything counter to Jesus. Truth, then, is something that exists within the Christian (1 Jn 1.8; 2.4) and is a reality to which a Christian belongs (1 Jn 3.19). And the source of this truth is the Father, revealing himself through the Son (1.14).

2.4. *Life and Death*

Although the bipolarity of life and death might best be classified along with the other ontological metaphors, its importance in the Fourth Gospel justifies a separate treatment. Over one-third of the uses of the word 'life' in the New Testament come from the Johannine literature. The Fourth Gospel's declaration of purpose even centres not merely on the Son of God, but on the life that he brings: 'But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name' (20.31). The theme of 'life' flows through the entire Gospel. God himself is called 'the living Father' (Jn 6.57); he 'has life in himself' (Jn 5.26); he 'raises the dead and gives them life' (Jn 5.21); he even gives life to the son (Jn 6.57). The Son is the creator of life (Jn 1.3), so much so that the Gospel declares 'in him was life' (1.4). Even more, Jesus is described as the life itself: 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die' (Jn 11.25-26). It is here that the bipolarity of life and death is made clear.[27]

Life in John does not merely refer to physical life, for John uses ψυχή for that life to which death is a terminus (Jn 10.11; 15.13; 3 Jn 2).[28] Life is what the Gospel message offers to the believer. As Floyd Filson has argued, the Gospel could have been called 'the Gospel of Life'.[29] John appears to use 'life' in a related manner to use of the 'kingdom of God' in the Synoptics. If the 'kingdom of God' denotes the almighty power of God as sovereign Lord of the universe and his ability to save his people, 'life' is the blessed existence under that saving sovereignty, with all the ensuing consequences.[30] This blessed

26. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:18–19.

27. It is worth noting that the negative element in these bipolarities is ontologically deficient, or more accurately, a non-entity (e.g., falsehood – an absence of truth; darkness – an absence of light; death – an absence of life).

28. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 506.

29. F. V. Filson, 'The Gospel of Life: A Study of the Gospel of John', in W. Klassen and G. F. Snyder (eds), *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), pp. 112–13.

30. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 2–3.

existence occurs not only in the future (eternal life), but is even realized in the present. For as Jesus explains concerning the reality of this bipolarity: 'anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life' (Jn 5.24). Life begins in the present for John; and 'eternal life' 'inevitably calls to mind the future that flows from the present'.[31] The juxtaposition of the present and future aspects of this bipolarity has baffled interpreters, forcing them into mass confusion concerning the eschatology of the Gospel.[32] But it is exactly at this point, at the intersection of the present and the future, that John's portrait of 'life' begins to take on its cosmic scope. The reality of the Word is past, present, and future. It is not bound up by geography, for it made the world, nor is it bound up in time, for it came to the world 'from above'. The Gospel portrays the intervention of God into human history, an event that can bring real life. It is in this way that the concept of 'life' in the Fourth Gospel bears an innate narratival sense. Life in John is a living event, not a thing. It is real and relational – rooted in communion of God and man.[33] It is rooted in eternity; it is rooted in the one who is called 'the Way, the Truth and the Life' (14.6).

2.5. *Conceptual Emplotment: The Narrative Structure of Concepts*

Our study of cosmology in the Johannine literature began at the level of words or concepts, but it cannot remain there. As we hinted above, while there is warrant for an examination of words or themes in John that have cosmological freight, such studies often divorce the words or themes from the macro-level of the narrative.[34] The words or phrases must be located within the story told by the narrative. Even more, the words and concepts examined above were narratological in nature. The terms implicitly moved in the direction of story; only by their innate participatory sense could the terms be understood to have any meaning. In this way, the goal of this study is to examine not merely John's cosmological language but the cosmological motif rooted in the entire Johannine corpus.[35] Our goal, then, is to engage the 'emplotted' cosmology of the

31. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

32. See, for example, Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2: 49–59.

33. As described by B. D. McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2006), p. 37, the Gospel of John depicts 'life' as 'an interactive relationship with the only true God and with Jesus Christ'.

34. See, for example, Cassem, 'κόσμος in the Johannine Corpus', which defines its 'cosmic theology' in terminology alone, with no mention of the larger cosmic functions of the narrative, although Cassem admits that 'the simple "inventory" approach of this type of paper provides basic data upon which a developed Johannine cosmic theology can be based' (p. 90).

35. This type of analysis requires a sense of the narrative's identity, or maybe something Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (trans. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), called emplotment, whereby the narrative configuration itself gives meaning to ideas and events. In this way, an idea or even an event 'gets its definition from its

Johannine literature. Our starting assumption is that the similar introductory language of cosmic beginnings in John and 1 John unite the Gospel with the letters by a common narrative emplotment – a common world-construction,[36] even if the relationship between the two is uncertain. We will begin by examining the Gospel of John.

3. *The Gospel of John*

The Cosmic Drama. The spiritual nature of the Fourth Gospel has long distinguished this Gospel from the Synoptics. People speak of two different, though related,[37] 'tales' functioning within the narrative.[38] The first, the historical tale, is where the Jesus in the narrative is taken to be the character Jesus in the story. The second, the ecclesiological tale, is what the narrative tells (reveals) because of its historical situatedness.[39] In fact, with the amount of literature on the Johannine community in recent decades, along with the lack of hope for finding a historical Jesus in John, it might be said that the narrative has been read primarily for its ecclesiological tale.

These two tales, however, are not comprehensive of the narrative tale(s). While the narrative is clearly reflecting on history and church, it also has its focus on something that goes well beyond the temporal and geographical. The Gospel of John is clearly telling what Adele Reinhartz calls a cosmological tale.[40] This cosmological tale does not begin with Jesus or a virgin, but with God 'in the beginning'. Nor does it end with the disheartened disciples, who await the Holy Spirit. Rather, it carries forward into the new phase, guided by the Paraclete. As Reinhartz explains:

contribution to the development of the plot. A story, too, must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them into an intelligible whole, of a sort such that we can always ask what is the "thought" of this story' (p. 65).

36. This language is taken from E. Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), p. 3. See also P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1967).

37. According to Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, pp. 31–4, 89, it is the Beloved Disciple that connects the historical tale with the ecclesiological tale. In essence, Jesus' intimate disciple in the historical tale was the leader of the Johannine community in the ecclesiological tale.

38. This use of 'tale' to refer to the Johannine narrative is taken from A. Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (SBLMS 45; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

39. This second tale has been made almost paradigmatic by J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd edn (NTL; Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003). For a critique of the abuses of the ecclesiological tale see E. W. Klink III, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John* (SNTSMS 141; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

40. Reinhartz, *The Word in the World*.

> The cosmological tale intersects and parallels the historical and ecclesiological tales at many points. Indeed, it may be said that the cosmological tale provided the narrative framework into which the other tales are set. The two- to three-year span of Jesus' earthly mission – the 'story time' of the historical tale – and the period of the Johannine church – 'the story time' of the ecclesiological tale – are placed in a continuum of the Word's pre-existence with God and the eventual return of the Word and his disciples to God's realm, that is, the 'story time' of the cosmological tale.[41]

Thus, the cosmological tale or 'cosmic drama'[42] provides the overarching framework of the Gospel narrative – including all temporal, geographic, and theological senses. Rather than compiling the various cosmic themes, what is needed is an examination of the various acts of this cosmic drama.

Our point of contact with this cosmic drama is based upon a literary-rhetorical reading of the plot of the Fourth Gospel. While several have examined the plot of John, most have used strictly internal evidence with an emphasis on thematic-theological criteria.[43] Using the work of Fernando Segovia, this chapter will posit a plot of the Fourth Gospel that also includes an examination of the generic conventions of plot common to ancient biographies.[44] Beginning with the assumption that the Fourth Gospel is a form of ancient biography, it is common to expect a three-fold structural framework for a biography: a beginning narrative of origins and youth, a central and extended narrative of the public life or career of the hero, and a concluding narrative of death and lasting significance.[45] Thus, using the three-fold structure common to ancient

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

42. Although the use of 'tale' by Reinhartz is useful, this essay prefers the term 'drama'. The reason is more theological than literary, for while 'tale' implies a more straightforward report of events or facts, 'drama' carries a greater sense of performance. For a discussion of the theological sense of 'drama' see K. J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004), who explains that in a drama 'the actor/audience boundary was blurred; all humans were players before God... the audience is part of the action' (p. 37). Cf. the different use of 'drama' by Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 35ff.

43. For a history of previous approaches and methods to the plot of John see F. F. Segovia, 'The Journey(s) of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel', *Semeia* 53 (1991), 26–31. For a fuller theoretical discussion see R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); and J. L. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (SBLDS 82; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

44. Segovia, 'The Journey(s) of the Word of God', pp. 32–5.

45. For a discussion of the basic conventions of ancient biographies see, among others, J. Fairweather, 'Fiction in the Biographies of Ancient Writers', *Ancient Society* 5 (1974), 266–75; P. Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 45–64; and R. A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

biography, as well as an explicit awareness of the overarching cosmic drama, the Gospel of John can be divided into three sections: (1) narrative of cosmic origins (1.1-18); (2) narrative of cosmic career (1.19–17.26); and (3) narrative of cosmic significance (18.1–21.25).[46] In this way, we are now prepared to examine the three acts of the cosmic drama in the Gospel of John.

3.1. *Narrative of Cosmic Origins (1.1-18)*

The narrative of origins served as the beginning frame for the depiction of the career of the subject of the biography. But this narrative of origins is quite unusual, for 'it contains no standard account of Jesus' ancestors, birth, or youth; in fact, no information whatsoever of this kind is given'.[47] The genealogies in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are more conducive to a standard narrative of origins. But this is exactly where one misreads John – at the point of comparison. Certainly one might compare the Prologue to a Logos, Torah, or Wisdom tradition or to Philo or the Gospel of Thomas,[48] but the thrust of the Prologue is the cosmic origin of Jesus. For where the Prologue falls short concerning normal origin accounts, 'it goes well beyond the usual attribution of divine parentage granted to a son of god as such and bestows on Jesus a very high degree of divinity' – the Son of the God of the cosmos.[49] Thus, this narrative of origins signifies not simply a beginning, but an introduction to the subject at hand. It does not expound the main points, but introduces them – it reveals John's purpose, intentions, and interest.[50] It is the starting point from which the rest of the Gospel must be read. For John, the starting point for understanding Jesus is the origin of the world itself. Amidst debates concerning the literary structure of the Prologue, this essay will assume a three-part structure in the form of an inclusion (A B A): (1) The Word and God (vv. 1-2); (2) The Word and the World (vv. 3-17); (3) The Word and God (v. 18).[51]

The Word and God (1.1-2). At the centre of the universe, both in time and space, being God in participation and essence, was the Son, the Word of God. This biography of Jesus is set in relation to the God of eternity, the Lord of all ages and Creator of all.[52]

46. It is important to note with Segovia, 'The Journey(s) of the Word of God', that 'This proposed demarcation is not entirely free of difficulties; indeed, a number of other options can be reasonably advanced as well' (p. 35).

47. Segovia, 'The Journey(s) of the Word of God', p. 36.

48. For a recent discussion of these readings of the Prologue see J. Painter, 'Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John?', in Aune *et al. Neotestamentica et Philonica*, pp. 179–201.

49. Segovia, 'The Journey(s) of the Word of God', p. 36.

50. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1: 338.

51. This structure is taken from F. F. Segovia, 'John 1:1-18 as Entrée into Johannine Reality: Representation and Ramifications', in J. Painter, R. A. Culpepper and F. F. Segovia (eds), *Word, Theology, and Community in John* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), pp. 33–64.

52. Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 16.

The Word and the World (1.3-17). The Word relates to the World in three different relations: creation (v. 3), humanity (vv. 4-13), children of God (vv. 14-17). The Word is the creator of all things; the apriority; the source of sources; the origin of origins. The creation of the world is itself revelatory; creation itself bears the stamp of the Word (1.3).[53] The Son is the origin of life, and the life that he gives is light to humanity. This is the ontology of Light and Life (1.4). But this light is not stagnant, for it is in motion, coming to and victoriously shining upon the dark world (1.5). The first glimpse of this light was made by God's appointed witness, John the Baptist. This witness not only bears testimony to the light, but confirms its cosmic origin. Far from being the light, he served as its first witness (1.6-8). And the human witness is this: the Light of the World is coming. While some rejected the light, as darkness does, others received him and were given the right to become children of God. These children are not given worldly life, but are given the Word of Life. The God of the universe has acted on their behalf (1.9-13).[54] All of this occurred because the Word, the narrative of God, who came to the World. He was attested as the Word in flesh by John, and as the new Moses who bestows upon his children grace and truth (1.14-17).

The Word and God (1.18). The role of the Word is to 'show' God. As the narrative of God, Jesus is the ultimate disclosure of God. The Son of God reflects the very essence of the God of the cosmos. To know the Son is to know the Father – an important reality for children of God. The Light of the World is shining from the source of the cosmos itself. The cosmic drama is the story of union between God and humanity through the Word of Life.

3.2. *Narrative of Cosmic Career (1.19–17.26)*

Following the three-fold structural division of ancient biographies, the narrative of origins is followed by a more extended narrative of the character's public life or career. Yet, the narrative of origins is not forgotten. Bultmann declared that the Prologue

> ... is fully comprehensible only to the man who knows the whole Gospel. It is only when the circle is complete, and the 'Son' has returned to the δόξα which the love of the 'Father' has prepared for him πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (17.24), only when the reader has been led back out of the temporal sphere into the eternal, that he can judge conclusively in what sense the Prologue leads out of the eternal into the temporal.[55]

In the same way, the narrative of career is only comprehensible when one understands the Prologue's narrative of origins. While a full examination of this narrative segment is beyond the scope of this essay, a few aspects are

53. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 25.
54. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 126.
55. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, p. 13.

important to highlight. First, the journey motif is the dominant feature of John's narrative of career. While biographies of holy men generally follow a topical rather than chronological development, the Fourth Gospel portrays Jesus with a chronological type of presentation.[56] The importance of this cannot be overstated. There is evidence that in ancient biographies the subject's career, or ἀκμή (*akmē*), was the most important and productive part of the subject's life and the sum total of his life work.[57] 'During the period of *akmē*, the hero is at the height of his productive powers and performs his most significant deeds. His character has reached its most mature stage'.[58] The difference between a topical and chronological presentation of *akmē* is the ability the biographer has to emphasize the various parts of the subject, and even more, his activities. 'The gradual unfolding of character through successful deeds gave [the hero] that unity and dramatic quality...'[59] It is not just the person of Jesus that the Gospel portrays, but also his mission, his coming εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

Second, the emplotment of this journey motif is controlled by the cosmic drama described in the Prologue. The narrative of career can be divided into numerous journeys of Jesus,[60] all of which work within the original cosmic journey. The narrative's focus on the final journey of Jesus to Jerusalem (12.12ff.) and a unique focus on the 'hour', with all the dramatic tension that creates, explain that 'the initial events of the journey proper clearly show that this final visit is undertaken with the appointed end of the mission in full view...'.[61] Even more, rather than the opponents being human forces, John reveals that the battle involves cosmic forces – the devil/Satan (13.1-3, 27). The career of the Word-in-flesh is rooted in the cosmic drama of the Word of God.

3.3. *Narrative of Cosmic Significance (18.1–21.25)*

The third of the three-fold structural divisions of ancient biographies, the narrative of death and lasting significance, frames the narrative of career and brings conclusion to the biographical presentation. The narrative of significance provides a proper conclusion to the life and mission of the subject. Three aspects are important for this essay. First, the narrative of significance portrays the completion of the mission of the Word. This narrative division highlights 'the hour' – the reason for the Word's coming (12.27). For as Jesus had earlier declared: 'when I am lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all people to myself' (12.32). Such language describes both the act of crucifixion and the final status

56. Segovia, 'The Journey(s) of the Word of God', p. 38.

57. G. H. Polman, 'Chronological Biography and AKME in Plutarch', *Classical Philology* 69 (1974), 169–77.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

59. *Ibid.*

60. As argued by Segovia, 'The Journey(s) of the Word of God', pp. 37–45.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

of the exalted redeemer. Jesus is both crucified and exalted; this is the last phase of his mission. And this mission has cosmic results: 'Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out' (12.31). The cosmic battle is over; the resurrected Lord is victorious.

Second, while the mission of the Son of God is complete, the mission of the children of God is just beginning. The mission of the Son takes its departure from 3.16. The Father is the origin and goal of the missionary enterprise, the unsent sender of the Son.[62] The Father's sending of the Son shows his supreme love for humanity. The Son, the sent one, is not to do his own will but the will of the sender, to do his works and to speak his words, and to be accountable to the sender (4.34; 5.19-20, 36; 9.4). The 'sent one' has the responsibility of representing his sender (5.19-23; 12.44-45; 13.20; 14.9b). This unique relationship between the Father and the Son, the 'sender' and the 'sent one', is duplicated later between Jesus and his disciples. While every other mission is derivative of the Son's, 'John makes clear that Jesus' mission... was not to stand alone; it was to be continued in the mission of his followers' (cf. 4.38; 15.8, 16, 27; 17.18; 20.19-23).[63] And this mission of God's children is a cosmic mission, requiring protection from the 'evil one' (17.15), with the goal that 'the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me' (17.23).

Third, if the narrative of origins describes the Word's coming into the world, the narrative of significance describes the Word's departure from the world. As Jesus tells Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"' (20.17). The ascension passages make clear 'that this departure from the world is a return to the situation Jesus enjoyed before entering the world. As such it completes the circle of activity that began with his pre-existent creation'.[64] In this way, the mission of the Word is completed. But this is not the end of the cosmic drama, for its significance is carried forth in three ways. First, the mission of the Son is continued by his disciples: 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you' (20.21). Second, the coming of the Paraclete will continue the mission of Jesus by teaching the followers and reminding them of the word of the Word (14.26), by testifying about the Word (15.26); and by convicting the world (16.8). Finally, the Word himself will return for the children of God and take them 'home'.[65] In this way, while the Son has won a cosmic victory and completed his mission, the cosmic drama is ongoing for anyone who has

62. T. Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42* (WUNT 2.31; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1998), p. 23.

63. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 141.

64. Reinhartz, *The Word in the World*, p. 24.

65. *Ibid.*

received the Word and become a child of God. The participatory nature of the drama continues for the readers of John.

4. *The Letters of John*

Although most commentaries of the Johannine letters focus on the ecclesiological tale and the 'Johannine community',[66] the letters are best viewed as continuing the cosmic drama of the Fourth Gospel. In fact, because the cosmic drama focuses on the life and ministry of the (historical) Word, it matters not if the letters were written before or after the Gospel, for in the chronology of the cosmic drama the letters speak to the continuing mission of the children of God. This continuing mission is still concerned with the relationship of the children to God, and the need for the world to know God: 'he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 Jn 2.2). Issues for these children of God are very much related to the word of the Word: to be 'of God' is to be doing righteousness (1 Jn 4.7) – for knowing him is obeying him (1 Jn 2.3); reflecting the 'true light' (1 Jn 2.8); remaining separate from the world (1 Jn 2.15); 'abiding' in God (1 Jn 2.24); relying on the Spirit (1 Jn 4.2, 13); and living in the hope of the Son's return (1 Jn 2.25, 28). In this post-Jesus stage in the cosmic drama, the same Johannine cosmic dualisms, the 'world' and 'light/darkness' are used to describe the situation of the readers. The battle is ongoing but the two sides are known: 'We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one' (1 Jn 5.19). And the reason for this cosmic enmity is the world's rejection of the Son: 'The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him' (1 Jn 3.1). But there is no cause for fear, 'for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith' (1 Jn 5.4). This is life in the 'Word of Life'.

It is in the letters of John that the oddities of the Fourth Gospel are made understandable. The cosmic drama not only contextualizes so much of John's so-called 'spiritual' language, but also reflects upon his 'realized' eschatology. Rather than locating John's eschatological language as either present or future, the cosmic drama allows for an incarnational tension of present and future, just as the Word, the God of the universe, ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν (1.14). The cosmic drama requires the reader to see the Johannine reality as the overlap between God and humanity. And it is this reality that is portrayed in the Johannine letters, written to the children of God who continue the mission of the Word.

It is in this way that Bultmann's 'dualism of decision' explains the rhetorical function of the Johannine corpus. John clearly creates and divides its readers into two classes of people. But this dualism of belief is not between 'groups'.

66. See, for example, J. Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Rather, it involves all who see the Light of the World and receive the Word of Life. This concept, so pertinent in the Johannine literature, has potential for assisting our understanding of the identity formation of early Christians. According to Judith Lieu, the identity of Christians as a 'third race' was confirmed by the use of the term 'the world'. As Lieu explains:

> Although it has its roots in the Jewish eschatological contrast between 'this world' and 'the world to come', this opposition to 'the world' is characteristically, although not exclusively, Christian. Within the NT it is most developed in the Johannine literature where it has often been dubbed 'sectarian', yet in principle it may become a fundamental organizing point for Christian self-identity, capable of multiple expressions. This is the language of internal identity-formation, not of external visible perception.[67]

The story or 'tale' of the Johannine literature, therefore, is not merely historical or ecclesiological, but cosmological. It is the internal perception of one's status before God – with dramatic implications for all of life. It is life in the Word, the Son of God, and an existence as the children of God, receiving from his fullness grace upon grace (1.16).

5. *Conclusion: Cosmology and the Johannine Literature*

The enigma of John is not where he ends but where he begins. The three other Gospels take the reader to the cross; John is no different. But while those same three Gospels start the reader in Jewish Palestine, John starts the reader at the beginning of time itself, at the very centre of the cosmos. For him, only a cosmic perspective on Jesus, even more, a cosmic perspective on the entire Christian faith, can fully express what it means to be Christian. It is in this way that John's cosmology, though bewildering to the historian and ambiguous to the theologian, is perfectly suited to explain the life and mission of Jesus from Nazareth. Rather than positing Johannine cosmology as a mere theological or sociological motif, this chapter has argued that John's cosmic drama serves as the overriding story of the Johannine Jesus and the Johannine faith. The Johannine literature proclaims a cosmic drama about the Light of the World as the Word of Life. The reality of this truth has nothing less than cosmic ramifications.[68]

67. J. Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (Study of the New Testament and Its World; London: T&T Clark, 2002), p. 188. Cf. V. L. Wimbush, ' "...Not of this World..." Early Christianities as Rhetorical and Social Formation', in E. A. Castelli and H. Taussig (eds), *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton Mack* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), pp. 23–36.

68. Thanks are due to the Biola University Faculty Research and Development Grant Program for providing release time in early 2007, during which some of the research for this essay was accomplished.

6

PAUL'S COSMOLOGY: THE WITNESS OF ROMANS, 1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS, AND GALATIANS

Joel White

Our topic calls at the outset for a clear definition of cosmology. When I talk about Paul's cosmology I mean his understanding of the structure and mechanics of the cosmos (i.e., the physical universe)[1] on the one hand and of its origin and purpose on the other. Since the Enlightenment attempts have been made to limit the scope of cosmology to the first part of this definition.[2] This preference underscores the fact that the perceived task of cosmology varies according to one's world view. The modern understanding of cosmology as a sort of 'anatomy and physiology' of the universe reflects the naturalistic paradigm of the post-Enlightenment West.[3] From the perspective of the ancient world, however, questions concerning the structure and workings of the cosmos cannot be separated from questions concerning its origin,[4] and within an early Jewish world view, the question of the purpose of the cosmos must be considered paramount.

Our task is to analyse Paul's cosmology, particularly as it surfaces in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians and Galatians, and to discover how this may have influenced his theology. A moment's reflection should make it clear that the task is fraught with pitfalls. There is, first of all, the danger of constructing a grand and all-encompassing paradigm – cosmology is, after all, rather heady stuff – that is internally coherent but hard to actually anchor in the rough and tumble language of Paul's letters. We must not forget, in the thick of our theorizing, that we are not really 'constructing Paul's world', with the beguiling promise of penetrating insight into Paul's theology that phrase implies.[5] Rather

1. Unless otherwise noted, I will use the English word 'cosmos' in this restricted sense below.

2. Cf. W. Gantke, 'Welt/Weltanschauung/Weltbild IV.1 Religionsgeschichtlich', *TRE* 35: 562.

3. Cf. W. Sparn, 'Welt/Weltanschauung/Weltbild IV.4 Kirchengeschichtlich', *TRE* 35: 595–8.

4. Cf. R. A. Oden, Jr., 'Cosmology, Cosmogony', *ABD* 1: 1162.

5. Peter Berger introduced the concept of 'world construction' to delineate the process by which human beings produce society in *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), pp. 3–28; but of course both he and those who make use of the concept are aware of its

we are attempting the more circumspect task of articulating his cosmology on the basis of – it must be readily admitted – sparse evidence and of determining its specific role in the formulation of his theology. It is, in fact, not immediately apparent at the outset that we have enough evidence to fruitfully complete the task, at least with regard to Paul's understanding of the structure and mechanics of the cosmos. Paul offers us little in the way of direct descriptive language about the world.

Even when Paul does employ cosmological terminology – 'the third heaven' in 2 Corinthians 12, for instance (on which see below) – we have to be aware of a second danger: that of mistaking Paul's symbolic universe for his actual understanding of the structure and mechanics of the physical universe. Even today, cosmological language is seldom used merely for drawing up blueprints of what moderns call 'the natural world'. More often, it serves metaphysical ends. Tenacious talk of the sun rising and setting, for instance, betrays the need, even in our post-Copernican world, to comprehend the universe as a meaningful context for human life. It is, however, quite useless as an indicator of modern Western conceptions of the physical universe.

Another danger lurks in the misuse of word studies. Outlining Paul's cosmology entails much more than analysing all texts that contain the term κόσμος and synthesizing the results.[6] For one thing, the term seldom denotes anything that, strictly speaking, pertains to cosmology (as defined above) in the letters under examination here. Only in three texts does it refer to the physical earth or universe per se (Rom. 1.20; 4.13; probably 1 Cor. 3.22[7]). In a handful of other passages it refers to the created order (i.e., the way the world was designed to work; Rom. 5.12, 13; 1 Cor. 8.4;[8] 14.10; Gal. 4.3). While these are clearly of

metaphorical nature. Cf. E. Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), pp. 3–6.

6. The noun appears 9 times in Romans (1.8, 20; 3.6, 19; 4.13; 5.12, 13; 11.12, 15), 21 times in 1 Corinthians (1.20, 21, 27 [2×], 28; 2.12; 3.19, 22; 4.9, 13; 5.10 [2×]; 6.2 [2×]; 7.31 [2×], 33, 34; 8.4; 11.32; 14.10), 3 times in 2 Corinthians (1.12; 5.19; 7.10), and 3 times in Galatians (4.3; 6.14[2×]). Cf. H. Balz, 'κόσμος', *EDNT* 1:310.

7. So also Hermann Sasse, 'κόσμος', *TDNT* 3:884. Many commentators take the term here to refer more narrowly to humanity or humanity and angelic beings.

8. Most scholars treat κόσμος in 1 Cor. 8.4 as a reference to the physical world. If, however, the phrase οὐδὲν εἴδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ is a Corinthian slogan, as most commentators believe, and if, further, οὐδὲν is understood as a predicate ('an idol is nothing in the world'), rather than as an attributive ('there is no idol in the world'), then the sense of the phrase would more naturally be something like 'an idol is of no consequence in the nature of things'. This seems to me to be more in line with the Corinthians' position. Conversely, for either Paul or the Corinthians to say 'there is no idol in the created world', when the ancient world was chock full of them and when they actually meant 'there are no other gods in the created world' strikes me as somewhat odd. Most scholars argue for an attributive use of οὐδὲν because of the parallel clause οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς, in which οὐδεὶς is clearly used attributively. They overlook the fact that Paul is not freely constructing a parallelism here, but rather quoting the Corinthians, on the one hand, and

interest for this study, those occurrences where the term is used in a sociological sense to denote the structure and workings of human society (1 Cor. 7.31, 33, 34; Gal. 6.14) or in an anthropological sense to denote the sum of humanity (all other occurrences) are relevant only to the extent that they can be shown to be something more than well-established synecdochal extensions of the term. Similar caveats obtain for other 'cosmological' terms such as γή and οὐρανός and all the more for terms such as οἰκουμένη, which is often discussed because of its paradigmatic relationship to κόσμος. The mere presence of cosmological terminology in a given text does not necessarily indicate that Paul is really describing the physical world.

A final danger involves the palpable blurring of the lines between cosmology and eschatology in many scholarly discussions of New Testament cosmology. These often take up topics such as two-age dualism or terms such as αἰών, for example.[9] This is understandable since cosmology and eschatology so clearly impinge upon each other in early Jewish apocalyptic texts. Still, while it is certainly true that apocalyptic eschatology cannot be understood without a solid grasp of early Jewish cosmology, since the former follows from certain fundamental beliefs presupposed in the latter (e.g. that God created the world), one would be hard pressed to convincingly argue the reverse. Cosmology, in other words, is foundational to eschatology. This is not to deny that Paul's cosmology, like the rest of his theology, expresses itself within an apocalyptic narrative structure that has a distinctly eschatological focus.[10] If *Heilsgeschichte* is the story of God pursuing and attaining his purposes within history, the cosmos is the stage on which the story is acted out. Nevertheless, precisely because we are attempting to isolate the specific contribution of cosmological conceptions to Paul's theology, we must strive, at least initially, to delineate these without reference to eschatological concepts and terms.

It is, however, important to remember that Paul nowhere discusses his cosmology per se. It surfaces here and there in his treatment of other topics, but it is more presupposed than articulated. It is, above all, part of the warp and woof of the biblical metanarrative which shapes his thinking. This means that the best way to describe Paul's cosmology is in terms of its narrative flow. That is just as well since considerations of space do not allow for an exhaustive exegesis of all texts that impinge on the topic of cosmology in Paul's early letters. Instead we will

alluding to the Shema, on the other (on which, see below), so that the nuance of οὐδὲν/οὐδεὶς is predetermined in each case by the quoted pre-text rather than the present context.

9. Cf. R. Bultmann's treatment of the term κόσμος in *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 9th edn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), pp. 254–60, esp. 256–7, where Bultmann virtually equates the term with αἰών and perceives κόσμος as per se a negative theological concept denoting ruin. For a critique cf. Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 13–18.

10. I am in general agreement with J. C. Beker's thesis that Paul's theology is essentially apocalyptic in nature. Cf. *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), esp. pp. 135–81.

proceed thematically, discussing first of all Paul's understanding of the structure of the world, then describing in broad strokes what I will call Paul's 'cosmological narrative' and assessing its impact on Paul's theology along the way.

We cannot say with any precision how Paul understood the structure of the physical universe. As an Eastern Mediterranean Jew of the first century CE, he would likely have been exposed to OT, Hellenistic and Mesopotamian cosmologies, at the very least, and his concept of the cosmos may well have been less precise than that of modern Westerners. The evidence seems to indicate that there was no unified cosmology in early Judaism.[11] We can nonetheless make a few broad generalizations about Paul's cosmology. In Phil. 2.11 he speaks of three distinct realms which are inhabited by sentient beings: the heavenly, the earthly and the subterranean (ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων). This is, of course, very much in line with the Old Testament conception of heaven as the dwelling place of the angels, earth as the habitat of the living, and Sheol as the realm of the dead.[12] 1 Cor. 15.40 would seem to confirm that Paul thinks of these as real places characterized by different physical conditions and therefore requiring different bodies: heavenly bodies (σώματα ἐπουράνια) for the heavenly realm and earthly bodies (σώματα ἐπίγεια) for the earthly realm.[13] Paul also speaks in 2 Cor. 12.2-3 of being transported to the 'third heaven', but it is probably best not to regard this as proof that Paul shared the apocalyptic conception of a stratified heaven.[14] He may be doing nothing more

11. The competing cosmologies of the ancient world left their mark on the calendrical controversies that characterized much of early Judaism (on which, see below). Cf. R. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian: Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 98–110. Even individuals may not have conceptualized the universe in terms of a unified cosmology. Philo, for instance, seems to have worked at various points with different cosmological models. Cf. A. Scriba, 'Welt/Weltanschauung/Weltbild IV.4 Neues Testament', *TRE* 35: 582–3.

12. Cf. J. Guhrt, 'Earth', *NIDNTT* 1:523.

13. Although commentators generally assume that σώματα ἐπουράνια in 1 Cor. 15.40 refers exclusively to the sun, moon and stars mentioned in 1 Cor. 15.41 due to the link established by δόξα in both verses, I am inclined to see a reference to the resurrection bodies of believers and to view 1 Cor. 15.41 as a parenthetical analogy establishing the fact that there are different levels of luminosity – the exact sense of the term δόξα here is a matter of much discussion – between the heavenly lights. The following considerations lead me to question the scholarly consensus here: (1) the analogy makes the most sense in the context of an argument concerning the nature of resurrection bodies when interpreted against the background of Dan. 12.2-3, one of the few explicit OT references to the resurrection of the dead, in which the resurrected righteous are compared to stars. Cf. R. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1997), p. 271. (2) The argument in 1 Cor. 15.42-44 continues to highlight the contrast between the pre- and post-resurrection body (σῶμα is the subject of the passive verbs in 1 Cor. 15.42-43, as 1 Cor. 15.44 makes clear) and it is explicitly affirmed that the latter is 'raised in glory' (cf. 1 Cor. 15.43: ἐγείρεται ἐν δοξῃ). (3) Those belonging to Christ are referred to as 'the heavenly ones (οἱ ἐπουράνιοι) in 1 Cor. 15.48 and are explicitly said to bear the image of 'the heavenly one' (τοῦ ἐπουρανίου).

14. A seven-tiered heaven is more frequent in Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature

than borrowing the language of visionary transport to embellish his description of his mystical experience. Thus, the few clues that Paul gives us lead to the conclusion that his image of the cosmos was shaped by the OT conception of a tripartite universe. More we cannot say with any degree of certainty.

We turn now to Paul's cosmological narrative, which can be adequately described in terms of nine tenets I believe Paul would have affirmed:

1. *God created the cosmos*. Paul adheres, of course, to the fundamental truth of the OT that God made 'the heavens and the earth' (השמים והארץ), a Semitic merism denoting the entire universe[15] (cf. Gen. 1.1; 14.19, 22; Exod. 20.11; 31.17; 2 Kgs 19.15; 2 Chron. 2.12; Pss. 115.5; 121.2; 124.8; 134.3; 146.6; Isa. 37.16; Jer. 32.17). He describes God as the 'creator' (Rom. 1.25; see also Eph. 3.9), and asserts in credal statements that 'all things are from him' (Rom. 11.36: ἐξ αὐτοῦ... τὰ πάντα; 1 Cor. 8.6: ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα), with τὰ πάντα serving as the functional equivalent of the merism 'heaven and earth' (cf. Acts 17.24; Col. 1.16). The ἐξ αὐτοῦ / ἐξ οὗ construction contrasts with Hellenistic formulations that combine ἐξ with previously existing matter (ὕλη).[16] Paul thereby implicitly affirms *creatio ex nihilo*, thus aligning himself with an established tenet of early Jewish theology, especially in Hellenistic Jewish circles (cf. e.g. 2 Macc. 7.28; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4.187).[17] This doctrine is also presupposed in Paul's characterization of God in 2 Cor. 4.6 as 'the one who says "light shall shine forth out of darkness"' (ὁ εἰπών ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμψει), and it is explicitly affirmed in Rom. 4.17 where he describes God as the one who 'calls things not existing into existence' (καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα).

2. *Christ is the agent of creation of the cosmos*. In his discussion of the issue of meat that had previously been offered to idols (1 Cor. 8.1–11.1) Paul ascribes to Christ a unique role in the creation of the world. In 1 Cor. 8.4 he first of all expresses his general agreement with the Corinthians that 'an idol is of no consequence in the nature of things' (cf. n. 8) and that 'there is no God but one', the central affirmation of Jewish monotheism. There may be other 'so-called gods', he concedes in 1 Cor. 8.5, 'but' he continues in 1 Cor. 8.6, 'for us there is one God the Father (εἷς θεός ὁ πατήρ), from whom all things exist, and we exist for him, *and* one Lord Jesus Christ (εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός), through whom all things exist, and we exist through him'. In this dramatic christological

(cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 35.2; *Apoc. Ab.* 19.4; *2 En.* [shorter recension] 20.1; *Ascen. Isa.* 9.1), but the first Greek recension of *T. Levi* 2–3 (second century BCE) describes a three-tiered heaven. Cf. A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 26. The 'third heaven' and 'paradise' designate the same, rather than different levels of heaven (cf. *2 En.* 8.1; *Apoc. Mos.* 37.5). The repetition is stylistic.

15. Cf. G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Milton Keynes: Word, 1987), p. 15.

16. Cf. W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1Kor 6,12–11,16)* (EKK VII/2; Solothurn; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benzinger; Neukirchener, 1995), p. 242; E. Schnabel, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (HTA; Wuppertal; Giessen: Brockhaus; Brunnen, 2006), p. 448.

17. Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), p. 218.

modification of the Shema[18] (Deut. 6.4: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord' [ἄκουε Ισραηλ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστιν]), Paul has creatively assigned the terms θεός and κύριος, which in their original context had one and the same referent, to two separate referents: θεός now refers to God the Father and κύριος now refers to Christ.[19] Paul's high Christology (cf. Rom. 9.5; Phil. 2.6-11) demanded that room be made for Christ within the OT's definitive statement of God's fundamental unity. This has, of course, unavoidable implications for the doctrine of God as creator. Paul is fully aware of these and, indeed, is eager to exploit them: God the Father remains the effective cause of creation (ἐξ οὗ), but Christ has become the agent by means of whom (δι' οὗ) God brings everything into existence.

3. *God created the cosmos in order to bring glory to himself.* This OT perspective (cf. Num. 14.21; Pss. 57.6; 72.18-19; Hab. 2.14) is shared by Paul. Rom. 11.36a not only describes God as the effective cause and mediator of creation (here Paul is stressing the unity of God's purposes and does not delineate separate roles for God and Christ in creation), but also as its ultimate goal: 'All things exist from and through and *for* him' (ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα). That this is to be understood in terms of God's ultimate glory is made clear by the doxology that follows in Rom. 11.36b: 'To him be glory forever, amen'. That Paul perceives the goal of creation to be the glory of God is also implicit in Rom. 1.20-25. In his indictment of humanity due to its disregard for the revelation of God in nature, Paul clearly assumes, on the basis of his understanding of the OT creation account,[20] that the world was designed to facilitate the worship of God. Indeed, he states as much three times in the course of this short passage. First, in Rom. 1.20-21 he argues that human beings are without excuse because although creation reveals God's incomparable glory, this did not bring about the appropriate response: 'Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor thanked him' (γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ηὐχαρίστησαν). Second, in Rom. 1.23 Paul charges humanity with 'exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God' (ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ) for images of people and various animals. Thus the glory that was rightly God's was offered to idols. Third, Paul reiterates his indictment against idolatry in Rom. 1.25, declaring that human beings exchanged truth for a lie and 'worshipped and served created things rather than the creator' (ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα). Together these statements reveal Paul's conviction that the world was created with a specific purpose: to direct the minds and hearts of human beings to their creator so that they might worship and glorify him.

18. So also Schnabel, *Korinther*, p. 449.

19. So also recently G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), p. 90.

20. Cf. Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 153–4.

4. *The cosmos imparts enough information to human beings to make them aware of their obligation to worship God.* Paul argues in Rom. 1.20-25 that even the Gentiles, who do not possess the Torah, cannot claim ignorance with regard to this obligation since 'what can be known about God (γνόντες τὸν θεὸν)[21] is manifest among them' (Rom. 1.19). Paul explains what he means more precisely in Rom. 1.20a: 'the unseen things of God, that is, his eternal power and deity, have been seen and understood by means of the things he has made from the creation of the world'. Though the language Paul employs here has strong affinities with Stoic thought, any Greek philosophical influence is probably mediated via the Jewish wisdom tradition (cf. esp. Wis. 13.3-9).[22] It is less likely that Paul is directly 'appropriat[ing] the Stoic notions of the world's inherent rationality and orderliness'.[23] Indeed, the very fact that he uses the phrase 'from the creation of the world' (ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου) points up a crucial difference over against the Stoic concept of an eternally existing, self-sustaining cosmos. Neither is Paul arguing that creation imparts exhaustive or even saving knowledge of God.[24] And though commentators generally understand 'the unseen things of God' (τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ) to refer to God's 'invisible attributes',[25] I am not convinced that Paul has in mind a list of divine characteristics in the abstract, of the sort one commonly finds in systematic theologies. Rather, Paul delimits the scope of τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ by describing it as 'his eternal power and deity' (ἥ ἀΐδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις και θειότης).[26] Perhaps δύναμις serves as an example of one specific attribute while θειότης functions as a catch-all word denoting all other possible divine characteristics.[27] However, the possibility that the doublet is a hendiadys should also be considered, in which case the second term should be viewed as an extension of the first.[28] If so, then Paul would be referring to 'the eternal power of his deity', the implication being that Paul is not thinking of particular attributes of God at all, but rather of God's inexhaustible power and inestimable worth. Thus we find ourselves at the very heart of the OT concept of glory and very close indeed to OT traditions that discern in creation a profound revelatory moment with respect to that very glory of God (cf. Pss. 8.1, 5; 19.1-6; 104 esp. v. 31).

21. E. Käsemann, *An die Römer* (HNT 8a; 2nd edn; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974), p. 35, argues convincingly for this sense of the phrase.

22. Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, pp. 57–8.

23. So Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 163.

24. Cf. T. Schreiner, *Romans* (ECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 85–6.

25. Cf. e.g. D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 104.

26. C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 35, renders the doublet similarly: 'his eternal power, his very Godhead'.

27. Similarly J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 280.

28. Cf. K. Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (THKNT 6; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), p. 49.

5. *There is a divinely ordained hierarchy of relationships between God, humanity and the cosmos*. It is hard to know what Paul made of Greek and Hellenistic conceptions concerning the aesthetics of the universe.[29] As we saw above, his language betrays familiarity with them at times, but he does not indulge in the abstract cosmological speculation characteristic of the Greek philosophical tradition. He does not expound, like his younger contemporary Philo, on the rationality of design (cf. *Opif.* 20-25), beauty (cf. *Praem.* 41-42) and mathematical perfection (cf. *Opif.* 13-14; *Aet.* 26) of the created world, nor does he theorize, like Plato, about the organic correspondences between the cosmos and human beings (cf. *Tim.* 44d-45b) or between the cosmos and human society (cf. *Gorg.* 508a). The closest Paul comes to that sort of speculation is in 1 Cor. 14.10, where he draws comparisons between various sounds and languages, and in 1 Cor. 15.35-44, where he compares the resurrection body to seeds, various kinds of flesh, and the luminosity of heavenly bodies, respectively. Nothing in Paul's argument in either passage, however, suggests that he regards these as anything more than helpful analogies. Perhaps Paul's unique assessment of the cosmological implications of the Fall (see below) precluded idealized speculation about such correspondences.[30] In any case, Paul does not describe the order of the cosmos in terms of its internal structural cohesion.

One passage, however, yields some evidence, albeit indirect, that Paul conceived of a divinely ordained hierarchy of relationships as a part of the created order. We have already had occasion to mention Rom. 1.25, where Paul maintains that humanity offered worship to created beings instead of God, to whom it was rightfully due; 'they worshipped and served the creation rather than the creator' (ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα). Paul is probably consciously alluding to Deut. 4.19a here:[31] 'Do not look up at the heavens and, seeing the sun, moon, and stars, the entire host of heaven, bow down and serve them…' (LXX: προσκυνήσῃς αὐτοῖς καὶ λατρεύσῃς αὐτοῖς). If so, Paul may also have Deut. 4.19b in mind: '…all the things [i.e. the sun, moon and stars] which the Lord your God has *assigned* (or "allotted"; MT: חלק, LXX: ἀπονέμω) to all the peoples everywhere under heaven'. Clearly,

29. Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 64–7, identifies five features of Hellenistic cosmology that would have enjoyed widespread cultural dissemination and affirmation: (1) the cosmos is characterized by order; (2) the cosmos is marked by unity; (3) the cosmos is an object of beauty; (4) human beings are related to the cosmos as microcosm to macrocosm; (5) the cosmos is an object of praise. Paul certainly would have agreed with (1) and (2), though he would have modified them to account for the effects of sin. There is no reason to think he would have objected to (3), though he nowhere takes up the topic. His strong allegiance to Jewish monotheism would probably have led him to modify (4) and (5) to avoid their pantheistic presuppositions. See below.

30. Cf. Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 35–6.

31. Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:124.

Deut. 4.19 envisions a hierarchy in which humanity worships God and the cosmos serves humanity, particularly by enabling humanity to worship God properly. This becomes clear when we remember that from an OT cultic perspective the heavenly luminaries could be wrongly used as objects of worship, the very thing prohibited in Deut. 4.19, or rightly used to regulate the proper times for the worship of the one true God.[32] If this theology of worship forms the background for Paul's deliberations in Rom. 1.20-25, then he views idolatry, which he has in view here (cf. Rom. 1.23),[33] not merely as a displacement of the Creator from his rightful position at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of creation, but as a complete inversion of its proper order.

Paul also alludes to the subordinate role of the cosmos with respect to humanity in Rom. 8.20.[34] In a rather cryptic remark he states that 'creation was subjected to futility' (τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη) because of the Fall.[35] By 'creation' (κτίσις) Paul means the entire subhuman creation, essentially the equivalent of the modern concept of 'nature'.[36] The futility that Paul has in mind should probably be construed as creation's 'frustration of not being able properly to fulfill the purpose of its existence'.[37] Since the futility of creation is related to its 'bondage to decay' in Rom. 8.21, it seems likely that Paul understands the purpose that creation was originally ordained by God to fulfil to have been that of sustaining life, especially human life, so that humanity, in turn, could fulfil its role with respect to God.

6. *Sin has brought about the disruption of the divinely ordained hierarchy of relationships between God, humanity and the cosmos.* Paul does not comment on the origin of sin, except to acknowledge in Rom. 5.12 that it 'entered the

32. The reference to the sun, moon and stars being allotted to humanity calls to mind Gen. 1.14 which emphasizes that the heavenly luminaries were created not only to give light, but also for the determination of 'seasons, days and years' (מועדים ולימים ושנים). Early Jewish sources understood these terms to refer to the regulation of the calendar in order to insure that weekly Sabbaths ('days'), yearly festivals ('seasons'), and Sabbath and Jubilee years ('years') were held at the proper time. Cf. e.g. 1QS 1.13-15; *1 En.* 82.7-10; *Jub.* 2.8-10; also Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, p. 23; James C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 3–4.

33. Paul's description of idols in Rom. 1.23 contains allusions to Deut. 4.16-18.

34. In the discussion of Rom. 8.20 here and of Rom. 8.18-22 below, I am drawing on my analysis of the passage in J. White, *Die Erstlingsgabe im Neuen Testament* (TANZ 45; Tübingen: Francke, 2007), pp. 171–82.

35. It is generally agreed that Paul is interacting with Gen. 3.17-19 here. Cf. the references in White, *Erstlingsgabe*, p. 177, n. 561; as well as Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 174; and H. A. Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Nature in Romans 8:19-22 and Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (LBS; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), p. 189. Hahne's study was not yet available to me when I wrote my analysis of Rom. 8.18-22 in *Erstlingsgabe*. I find myself in substantial agreement with his exegesis throughout.

36. Cf. Hahne, *Corruption*, p. 180.

37. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:413.

world through one man' (δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν), thereby accepting its presence as an established fact of the postlapsarian world. That the introduction of sin into the world has disrupted the relationship between God and humanity is clearly one of Paul's major themes (and indeed of the Bible as a whole). I will not discuss it here except to note that from Paul's cosmological perspective, sin seriously interferes with the accomplishment of God's purpose in creating the world, which as we noted in tenet #3 involved bringing glory to himself. This he intended to accomplish by imparting his own glory to humanity (cf. Rom. 8.18, 21) and thereby multiplying it (cf. Rom. 8.29-30), but the universality of human sin calls this plan into question: 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3.23). As we will see, Paul's cosmological narrative concludes by providing an answer to this theodicy.

Paul's most unique contribution to NT cosmology, however, surfaces in Rom. 8.18-22.[38] I noted the positive presuppositions regarding the role of the cosmos in the created order that undergird Paul's statement in Rom. 8.20 above, but his concern in the larger passage, to which we now turn our attention, is to highlight the negative effect that sin has had on the cosmos. In Rom. 8.18 Paul states his thesis: Believers' present sufferings are insignificant compared to their future glory. I understand Rom. 8.19-25 as the first of three arguments supporting this thesis. It is designed to show the fundamental orientation of both creation (Rom. 8.19-22) and believers (Rom. 8.23-25) to the future glory that awaits the believers. In Rom. 8.19, a brief but complex sentence that utilizes three different figures of speech (personification, enallage and pleonasm), Paul expresses his conviction that 'the eager expectation of creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God' (ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαραδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται). The reason that Paul gives for creation's anticipation is, as we saw above, that 'creation was subjected to futility' (Rom. 8.20) and finds itself in 'bondage to decay' (Rom. 8.21), so that it can no longer fulfil its God-given purpose, that of sustaining (human) life, a perspective he may have gleaned from Isa. 24.1-6.[39] This is true because sin has entered the world, bringing about death (cf. Rom. 5.12; 8.10). Paul is quick to add in Rom. 8.20b that creation did not willingly relinquish its God-ordained task, but was constrained to do so by God himself (οὐχ ἑκοῦσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα). Paul is alluding, of course, to God's curse on the ground in Gen. 3.17, but he adds a note of hope (Rom. 8.20b: ἐφ' ἐλπίδι) not present in the Genesis account: God subjected creation to futil-

38. W. Bindemann, *Die Hoffnung der Schöpfung: Römer 8,18-27 und die Frage nach einer Theologie der Befreiung von Mensch und Natur* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1983), p. 175, notes that, although Paul draws on various apocalyptic motifs in this passage, it is, taken as a whole, without parallel.

39. Cf. Hahne, *Corruption*, p. 194.

ity with a view toward her future restoration when creation will be liberated from the bondage she presently endures (Rom. 8.21). Until then, however, the entire creation 'groans and suffers birth pangs' (Rom. 8.23: συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει). Here Paul uses a combination of OT and Jewish apocalyptic metaphors to intensify the sense of anticipation he has already ascribed to creation in Rom. 8.19. The cosmos has suffered the disastrous consequences of sin and yearns just as much as believers do (his point in Rom. 8.23-25) to be liberated from them.

Paul's congenial personification of the cosmos in Rom. 8.19-22 as a passive victim of sin awaiting redemption is not the whole story, however. There is also, so to speak, a dark side to the cosmos that has been unleashed by sin. Paul alludes to it in Gal. 4.3 where he speaks of the 'elements of the world' (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου; cf. Col. 2.8, 20),[40] and in Gal. 4.9 where he refers to the 'weak and impoverished elements' (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα). Scholarly discussion of the term has engendered many proposals concerning its background and meaning that we cannot take the time to discuss here.[41] The three major interpretive options take the term to mean either 'elements' in the physical sense of the term[42] or as an abstraction, denoting either something impersonal such as 'rudimentary principles of the world'[43] or something essentially demonic like 'elementary spiritual powers'.[44] In my opinion, the latter of the three is probably correct since Paul equates the 'weak and impoverished elements' in Gal. 4.9 with 'those that are by nature not gods' (τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς) in Gal. 4.8, to whom the Gentile believers in Galatia were formerly enslaved. He expresses his concern that those believers are in danger of 'turning back to them again' (πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν...; the same verb is used to describe the conversion of the believers in Thessalonica from idolatry to the worship of the 'living and true God' in 1 Thess. 1.9). Paul's language calls to mind his characterization of idols as 'so-called gods' (λεγόμενοι θεοι) in 1 Cor. 8.5, and later in 1 Corinthians Paul acknowledges the real existence of demons behind these idols (cf. 1 Cor. 10.20-21).[45] Thus, the term στοιχεῖα most likely denotes demonic powers of some sort and is roughly synonymous with more characteristically Pauline terms such as 'rulers', 'authorities', and

40. The term was probably coined by Paul. Cf. G. Delling, 'στοιχεῖον', *TDNT* 7: 666–87.

41. For an overview cf. P. T. O'Brien, 'A Note on the "Elements of the Universe" (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου)', in *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC 44; Waco: Word, 1982), pp. 129–32.

42. Cf. E. Schweitzer, 'Die "Elemente der Welt" Gal 4,3.9; Kol 2,8.20', in O. Bocher und K. Haacker (eds), *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift Gustav Stählin* (Wupppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), pp. 245–59.

43. Cf. e.g. Delling, 'στοιχεῖον', pp. 683–5; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990), pp. 165–6.

44. Cf. H. Lietzmann, *An die Galater* (2nd edn; HNT 10; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923), p. 24; H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 205, 215.

45. Cf. Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 230.

'powers' (ἀρχαὶ, ἐξουσίαι, δύναμεις; compare Rom. 8.38; 1 Cor. 15.24 with Eph. 1.21; 3.10; 6.10; Col. 1.16; 2.10, 15).

In what sense does Paul view these powers as 'elemental', and what is their relationship to the cosmos? Analysis of Paul's use of στοιχεῖα in Gal. 4.3, 9 yields intriguing answers to these questions. To begin with, it is clear that Paul has Jews in mind when he says in Gal. 4.3 that 'we were under the elements of the world', for he equates this state with being 'under the law' in Gal. 4.5. In Gal. 4.9, however, Paul clearly has Gentiles in view when he expresses his concern about their possible re-enslavement to the weak and impoverished elements. In Gal. 4.10 he describes this enslavement as 'keeping days and months and seasons and years' (ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς). As we noted above (cf. n. 38), the OT creation account assigns the heavenly luminaries the task of regulating sacred feasts and holidays. What Gen. 1.14 regards as an aid to the proper worship of God, however, evolved into a preoccupation in early Judaism with the cultic calendar. 'Calendar piety' moved to the very centre of Jewish religious life,[46] and celebrating the feasts on the correct days became the obsession of various groups in the Second Temple period, not to mention one of the main topics of intra-Jewish polemic.[47] Against this background Paul's vigorous rejection of the Judaizers' demand that Gentile believers in Galatia treat the cultic calendar as a matter of religious obligation makes sense. If Gentile believers were to accede to it, they would run the risk of 'putting themselves in bondage to the forces that control the calendar',[48] i.e., turning back to the gods behind the heavenly luminaries that they had formerly served.[49] It is, to be sure, nothing less than startling that Paul implicitly equates not only pagan worship of the heavenly lights but also legalistic observance of the Jewish cultic calendar with bondage to the στοιχεῖα. Still, it is readily understandable why Paul would make this bold rhetorical move, given his assumptions about the God-ordained purpose of creation as a catalyst to the worship of God in Rom. 1.20-25 (see above). He regards both Jewish calendar piety and pagan worship of the sun, moon, stars, and planets as a misuse of the heavenly luminaries since both detract from the worship of the one true God.

7. *God will restore the cosmos to its original purpose and role by recreating it.* We have already mentioned Paul's unique perspective on the predicament of creation in the postlapsarian world. We saw that Paul inferred from his reading

46. Cf. F. Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1974), pp. 298-301. The term 'calendar piety' translates Mussner's 'Kalendarfrömmigkeit' (cf. p. 299).

47. Cf. K. Koch and U. Glessmer, 'Neumonds-Neujahr oder Vollmonds-Neujahr? Zu spätisraelitischen Kalendar-Theologen', in *Antikes Judentum und Frühes Christentum* (FS Hartmut Stegemann; BZNW 97; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 116–17.

48. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 204.

49. Cf. Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, p. 302.

of Gen. 3.17 that the cosmos was 'subjected to futility' by God (cf. Rom. 8.20), but that he added a note of hope not detectable in the Genesis account. Paul describes the reason for his hope in Rom. 8.21: 'creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay' (αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς). Though his language is somewhat elusive at this point, there can be little doubt that he has in mind the Isaianic promise of the re-creation of the cosmos (cf. Isa. 43.18-19; 65.17; 66.22). In early Jewish texts 'new creation' (καινὴ κτίσις) became the standard term denoting this concept (cf. e.g. *Jub.* 4.26).[50] Paul uses it twice, once in 2 Cor. 5.17 to describe what happens at conversion and once in Gal. 6.15 to characterize what has replaced the all-important division between Jews and Gentiles. We will discuss the significance of those texts presently. Here we merely note that 2 Cor. 5.17 contains an unmistakable allusion to Isa. 43.18-19[51] and possibly 65.17,[52] highlighting the crucial role the concept of new creation plays in Paul's theology. It is this hope that informs Paul's expectation that the cosmos will be liberated from the bondage to decay.

Paul never describes the renewal of the cosmos per se, but it is readily apparent that he expected that it would result in the reconstitution of proper relationship between humanity and creation. In his discussion of the resurrection of the body in 1 Cor. 15.50-57 he envisions a transformed world in which believers' bodies will be incorruptible and immortal because death itself will have been overcome. Thus, his argument presupposes that creation will once again be enabled to fulfil its God-given role of sustaining human life indefinitely. Paul also foresees the re-establishment of humanity's dominion over the earth (cf. Gen. 1.28). In an intriguingly expansive interpretation of God's promise to give Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan in perpetuity (cf. Gen. 12.7; 13.15; 17.8), Paul argues in Rom. 4.15 that God had, in fact, promised to make Abraham the heir of the entire cosmos (τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου). Since he redefines Abraham's descendants to mean all who believe in the same manner as Abraham, whether circumcised or uncircumcised (Rom. 4.11-12), there can be little doubt that he views believers as the future heirs of the cosmos. They will no longer serve created things (cf. Rom. 1.25). In fact, the cosmos has already been put at their disposal (cf. 1 Cor. 3.22), thereby restoring humanity's authority over creation.[53] Even now believers are no longer subject to the

50. Cf. U. Mell, *Neue Schöpfung: eine traditionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Studie zu einem soteriologischen Grundsatz paulinischer Theologie* (BZNW 56; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), p. 254.

51. Cf. F. Wilk, *Die Bedeutung des Jesajabuches für Paulus* (FRLANT 179; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), pp. 276–7.

52. Gregory K. Beale, 'The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5–7 and its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1', *NTS* 35 (1989), 552–6.

53. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1968), p. 96.

elementary spirits, those demonic powers of the cosmos that were unleashed by sin and held them in bondage until the coming of Christ (cf. Rom. 8.38), and one day they will sit in judgement over them (cf. 1 Cor. 6.3).[54]

8. *The restoration of the cosmos has already begun with the resurrection of Christ.*[55] Just as Christ was the mediator of the original creation, so he is also the mediator of the new creation. For Paul, however, new creation is not something that he expected to take place only in the future. Rather it has already begun with the resurrection of Jesus. This is implied by Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15.45 that by virtue of his resurrection 'the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit' (ὁ ἔσχατος 'Αδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζῳοποιοῦν).[56] It follows, as well, from two standard beliefs of Jewish apocalyptic that Paul would have shared (cf. n. 10). First, resurrection is a unified concept; in early Judaism there is only 'the resurrection', not many individual resurrections (cf. Mk 12.23 par.; Lk. 14.14; Jn 5.29; 11.24; Acts 4.2). Therefore the resurrection of Jesus could not be viewed as an isolated event; rather, it was the beginning of *the* eschatological resurrection of the dead. Paul makes this connection explicit in his characterization of Christ as the 'firstfruits from among the dead' (ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων 1 Cor. 15.20).[57] Second, resurrection is inextricably linked to the concept of new creation (cf. Ezek. 36.16-30; 37.14).[58] That Paul associates resurrection with new creation is clear in Rom. 4.17, where he equates God's 'giving life to the dead' (ζῳοποιοῦντος τοὺς νεκροὺς) with *creatio ex nihilo*. The link is also implicit in Rom. 8.23, though it has been overlooked because scholars have, in my opinion, misunderstood the referent of the 'firstfruits of the Spirit' (ἀπαρχὴ τοῦ πνεύματος). In my earlier analysis of the phrase,[59] I argued that τοῦ πνεύματος is not, as generally assumed, a *genitivus epexegeticus* that equates 'firstfruits' with the Spirit, but rather a *genitivus auctoris* that

54. It seems likely that Paul has evil angels in mind in Rom. 8.38 since (1) benevolent angels would hardly constitute a threat to believers' fellowship with Christ, and (2) the term ἄγγελοι is paired with ἀρχαί (cf. Col. 2.15), Paul's most frequent term for denoting demonic powers (cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, p. 507). It is also probable that Paul is thinking of evil angels in 1 Cor. 6.3 and is drawing on an apocalyptic motif that envisions their judgement (cf. Schrage, *1Kor 6,12–11,16*, p. 411; Fee, *Corinthians*, p. 234). The στοιχεῖα would certainly be among them.

55. It is clear that, at this point in the 'cosmological narrative', Paul's cosmology and eschatology become inextricably intertwined so that we must, despite our caveat (cf. pp. 91–2), treat them together. Still, our emphasis will continue to be on the particular contribution of cosmological elements.

56. Cf. R. B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (2nd edn; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), pp. 78–92.

57. Cf. my extensive analysis of ἀπαρχή in 1 Cor. 15.20-28 in White, *Erstlingsgabe*, pp. 109–63.

58. Cf. W. Schrage, 'Schöpfung und Neuschöpfung in Kontinuität und Diskontinuität bei Paulus', in *Studien zur Theologie im 1. Korintherbrief* (BThSt 94; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2007), p. 132.

59. Cf. White, *Erstlingsgabe*, pp. 182–93.

bears the connotation 'firstfruits brought about by the Spirit'. I further sought to demonstrate that 'firstfruits' is an intra-textual allusion to 1 Cor. 15.20, one that Aquila and Priscilla (and perhaps others among the recipients of Romans, especially Epaenetus; cf. Rom. 16.5b) would have readily recognized, having become thoroughly familiar with Paul's teaching on the resurrection in Corinth and Ephesus (cf. Acts 18.2; Rom. 16.3-5a; 1 Cor. 16.9), and thus refers to the resurrected Christ. The point of Rom. 8.23 would then be that, since believers have the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead (cf. Rom. 8.11; this explains the *genitivus auctoris*) and indeed have witnessed the beginning of *the* resurrection in Christ, they long for its completion, namely the 'liberation' of their own mortal bodies. Understood in this way, the implication of Paul's argument in Rom. 8.19-23 is that the resurrection of Christ has set eschatological new creation in motion and that, as a result, both the cosmos and believers long to experience its ultimate fulfilment.

Paul's perspective that new creation has already begun with the resurrection of Jesus marks, of course, a significant point of departure from Jewish apocalyptic theology and results in some important modifications to the conventional two-age apocalyptic scenario. The 'already and not yet' character of new creation in the NT has been ably described by others,[60] so it needs no further explanation here. For Paul, this has tremendous implications for the way believers should live in the present. This is perhaps clearest in 1 Cor. 7.29-31: The 'compression' of the present age (so literally 1 Cor. 7.29a: ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν)[61] has resulted in its overlapping with the age to come,[62] so that the fundamental societal institutions designed for each age – marriage and family for the former and celibacy for the latter (compare 1 Cor. 7.32-34 with Jesus' teaching in Mk 12.25 par.) – are both operative in the present. Believers' assessments of their own experiences of joy and sorrow as well as their attitudes towards acquisitions should reflect this spiritual reality. They are free to make use of all that human society has to offer, but they should do so with a measure of detachment, since 'the form of this world' (1 Cor. 7.31b: τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), i.e. the 'socially constructed world' in the sense that Berger talks about (cf. n. 5), is passing away. Clearly, this implies that Paul is using κόσμος to refer not to the physical world but to human society, an inference that fits well in the larger context of Paul's discussion of the relative desirability of changing one's social, economic, or religious station (cf. 1 Cor. 7.17-31). Nevertheless, his argument presumes that the promised transformation of the cosmos has begun and that

60. Cf. esp. G. K. Beale, 'The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology', in K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliott (eds), *The Reader Must Understand: Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), pp. 12–28.

61. Cf. Fee, *Corinthians*, p. 339, n. 14.

62. This is possibly the meaning behind the cryptic phrase in 1 Cor. 10.11 that 'the ends of the ages' (τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων) have come upon us. So similarly D. E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (ECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), p. 465.

therefore the social categories designed for the present age have already started to lose their significance.[63]

Paramount among these for Paul is without question the fundamental covenantal division between Jews and Gentiles. We have already examined the bold move Paul makes in Galatians by relegating strict observance of ritual aspects of the Torah to the realm of στοιχεῖα. Paul continues in that vein, claiming in Gal. 6.15 that 'neither circumcision nor uncircumcision are of any account' (οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία) and implying that this division belongs to the 'world' (here, too, in the sense of society's mores and norms), which has no further relevance for him (cf. Gal. 6.14). Those old covenant structures have been replaced by a new standard (κανών), that of the inaugurated new creation (Gal. 6.15: καινὴ κτίσις), and by this standard members of the 'Israel of God', which includes both Jews and Gentiles united by faith in Jesus Christ, are already ordering their lives (compare Gal. 6.16 with Gal. 3.26-28).

Paul's radical negation of the division between Jews and Gentiles, at least with regard to soteriology, makes perfect sense when we consider that he views conversion itself as inaugural participation in the new creation. This is the force of 2 Cor. 5.17a, though its sense is often obscured behind individualizing translations in the tradition of the King James Version: 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature'. A better rendering would almost certainly be: 'Therefore if anyone is in Christ, it is new creation' (ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις).[64] Since, as noted above, 2 Cor. 5.17b picks up the language of Isa. 43.18-19, there is no reason to assume that Paul is speaking metaphorically. Rather he seems to mean, quite literally, that when someone turns to Christ, this marks the beginning of his or her participation in the promised Isaianic renewal of the cosmos.[65] To be sure, Paul is eager to emphasize that this renewal presently only affects the believers' 'inner man' (2 Cor. 4.16: ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν [ἄνθρωπος]), but it can hardly be doubted that he views this change as a divine act of recreation, even if it cannot be seen (cf. 2 Cor. 4.18), at least not yet.

9. *The restoration of the cosmos will be completed when Christ returns.* Without question, Paul's expectation that Christ would return was fundamental to his theological outlook (cf. Rom. 13.11; 1 Cor. 1.7; 4.5; 15.23; 16.22b; 2 Cor. 11.2 etc.).[66] Though he does not say so explicitly, his use of Jewish apocalyptic motifs in 1 Cor. 15.52-54, notably the image of the last trumpet, makes clear

63. Cf. similarly, Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 130–6.

64. Mell, *Schöpfung*, p. 353, argues convincingly that since Paul is making use of the quasi-technical term καινὴ κτίσις here, κτίσις should be rendered in line with standard early Jewish usage as a *nomen actionis*.

65. Cf. Mell, *Schöpfung*, pp. 368–9.

66. Cf. White, *Erstlingsgabe*, pp. 143–50.

that he awaits the transformation of the cosmos at the parousia.[67] In a mere moment new creation will be completed (1 Cor. 15.52). Bodies enslaved to the bondage of decay (Rom. 8.21) will be instantaneously transformed and creation's subjection to futility will end. The cosmos will finally be able to fulfil its God-given purpose of sustaining human life forever, for death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15.54). Once this last enemy has been destroyed (1 Cor. 15.26), then the proper hierarchy of relationships in the created order will be completely restored: the cosmos will be subject to humanity, humanity to Christ, the mediator of the new creation, and Christ to God (1 Cor. 3.21-23). All sentient beings, whether in heaven, on earth, or below the earth will confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God, the Father (Phil. 2.10-11). Then, in the final act of Paul's cosmological narrative, Christ, to whom the entire cosmos and all its inhabitants have sworn their fealty, will subject himself to God, 'so that God may be all in all' (1 Cor. 15.28). With that, God's purpose in creation, to bring glory to himself, will have been utterly and incontestably fulfilled.

67. Cf. J. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), p. 168.

7

Reoriented to the Cosmos: Cosmology & Theology in Ephesians through Philemon

Robert L. Foster

Human meaning and purpose emerge in no small measure from a person's perception of his or her relation to the world and its inhabitants. Particular spaces provide significant orientation based on the relationships associated with that space, as in the home. Radical changes in space and/or relationship can induce disorientation, as in the death of a family member, a marriage, or a move to a new place. These kinds of changes require a reorientation to space and relationship that gives a renewed sense of meaning and purpose.

I understand the nature of this project on cosmology and theology in the New Testament to involve the exploration of a kind of language of reorientation found in the New Testament writings intended to facilitate a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in the early Jesus communities, who felt some disorientation in their changed relationship to God, the gods, other human beings, and their world. In particular, we explore language concerning the structure of the universe as it pertains especially to the person and workings of God in Christ Jesus. For this essay, I use a definition of cosmology as 'the consciously entertained images, doctrines, and scientific views of the universe that provide a sense of its structure and significance'.[1] I define theology as 'speaking of all things in relation to God'. Thus, this essay investigates the language used by the authors of Ephesians through Philemon to structure[2] a vision of the universe as it relates to God as one means of reorienting these early Jesus communities toward a renewed sense of life and purpose in this world given their changed relationships both with God and with the universe. I should note here that we will investigate every letter except Philemon, which seems devoid of any cosmological imagery.

1. Kees W. Bolle, 'Cosmology: An Overview', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 3 (Detroit: Thompson/Gale, 2nd edn, 2005), p. 1992.

2. I prefer 'structure' over 'construct' because the former gives the sense of organizing preexistent reality (or perceived reality), whereas the latter term signifies to me the creation of reality, a stronger claim for the use of language than I wish to make. Cf. E. Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study of Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), following P. L. Berger and T. Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor, 1967).

Ephesians

From the outset, Paul[3] seeks to reorient the Ephesians to their new place in the cosmos that they experience because of God's work in Christ Jesus:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love (1.3-4, NRSV).

In these verses we observe Paul's basic division of the cosmos into the 'heavenly places' (ἐπουρανίοις) and the world or universe (κόσμος).[4] What distinguishes the heavenly places and the universe, at least in part, is the fact that the heavenly places existed sometime earlier than the universe. More importantly to Paul's argument, in the sphere of the heavenly places God worked in Christ Jesus on behalf of the Ephesians, choosing them to be holy and blameless before him in the pre-existent Christ. Paul introduces the distinction between the heavenly places and the universe to focus the Ephesians on two important points. First, the Ephesians ought to orient themselves primarily to the heavenly places because in them they receive their primary blessings, spiritual blessings. Second, the preeminent blessing is God's choice to make them holy and blameless before him. The general trajectory of the letter toward the παρακαλῶ of 4.1 indicates the significance of listing the first blessing as God's choice to make the Ephesians holy and blameless.[5]

Though the Ephesians receive numerous blessings in the heavenly places (holiness, adoption, redemption, knowledge of the mystery, an inheritance; 1.3-14), the heavenly places remain contested space. Paul apparently thinks that the Ephesian ἐκκλησία finds it difficult to live up to their high calling (4.1) in part because they do not realize, or not sufficiently, that they struggle primarily, not with the world, 'against blood and flesh', but '... against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places' (6.12). In the place where they receive every spiritual blessing they also struggle against spiritual forces of evil.

3. For the sake of continuity, in this article I will use the name 'Paul' to refer to the authors of all the letters under consideration, even though scholars question Paul's authorship in several instances. The disputed books, in my mind, require individual investigation to determine authorship, which falls beyond the scope of this piece. I would prefer to offer a separate designation for each author, but this would prove unwieldy.

4. I prefer the word 'universe' over 'world' given modern associations of 'world' and 'earth', 'earth' being an important half of the 'universe' in Ephesians.

5. Cf. F. J. Long, 'Learning Christ: The Dynamics of Moral Formation in Ephesians' (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. Washington, DC, November 20, 2006).

By perceiving the importance of the heavenly places as a contested space in the mind of Paul we see the significance of the 'in Christ' formula of 1.3. This is because the heavenly places are *not* a contested space for Christ. In fact, God raised Christ from the dead, seating him at his right hand in the heavenly places 'far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come' (1.21). The Ephesians' struggle against spiritual forces in the heavenly places takes on a new meaning given that they now receive every spiritual blessing in Christ, who reigns over all such rulers and authorities and powers and dominions. In their struggle to live holy and blameless lives, to live up to their high calling, Paul reorients the Ephesian ἐκκλησία toward at least three important resources to aid them in their struggle: (1) the spiritual blessings they have in Christ Jesus, including redemption (1.7); (2) the very same power that God used to raise Christ from the dead and to cause him to reign over the hostile powers (1.22); and (3) God's panoply, which they must put on to withstand the evil day (6.10-17).

Though Paul divides the cosmos into the heavenly places and the universe, there remains some permeability between the two spaces, especially as the Ephesians struggle in this world with the spiritual forces in the heavenly places. Among these spiritual forces is one primary evil persona that plots against the Ephesians, referred to in the closing section as 'the evil one' (6.16). Paul indicates the apparent 'omnipresence' of this chief evil worker by exhorting the Ephesians to take up the shield of faith 'in every [circumstance]' (ἐν πᾶσιν).[6] The change in the Ephesians' circumstances because of the work of God in Christ does not mean they are not in danger from other spiritual forces. They must not act ignorantly (or perhaps overconfidently), but take up the shield of faith (in God; 6.11) in every circumstance.

This primary evil persona is the 'ruler of the power of the air' (2.2). Furthermore, this evil persona exercises his reign over these powers in 'the age of this world', in which the Ephesians formerly walked when they were dead in trespasses and sins (2.1). Still, the one who reigns over *all* these powers, including their ruler, is Christ, seated at the right hand of God (1.20-2). Thus, in the age of this world, which will come to an end (1.21; 2.2; 3.21), the ruler of the powers of the air continues to work among those who are disobedient (2.2), but the Ephesians are not among these. Instead, they are seated with Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) in the heavenly places (3.6), made in Christ Jesus for good works, which God planned, in order that they might walk in them (2.10). The link with the heavenly places, the 'in Christ' formula, the invocation of the plan of God, and the vision of God 'making' the Ephesians (ποίημα, 2.10), all seem

6. NRSV translates this phrase as 'With all these', though in a textual note they observe one may translate this as 'In all circumstances'. This latter option seems to fit well in the context which instructs the readers to have their feet fitted with readiness (6.14) and to pray at all times, with alertness and perseverance (6.18).

to point back to 1.3-4 and the idea that in the heavenly places, before the foundation of the universe, God planned for the Ephesians to be holy and blameless before him, envisioned in 2.10 as walking in good works.[7] Thus, though the Ephesians live in the age of this world, they experience a radical change in the heavenly places, given 'in Christ' the power to overcome the works of the evil powers and their ruler. This is so that in the age of this world they can walk in good works, being holy and blameless before God as God intended before creation.

In Paul's rhetoric, part of what ought to invigorate the Ephesians to walk in good works is the work of Christ in the universe (κόσμος). One aspect of Christ's work will emerge in the future. According to the mystery revealed in the gospel, at the fullness of time, God will 'gather up all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth' (1.10). Here we see the basic structure of the universe, a division between that which is in the heavens (pl. τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) and that which is upon the earth. What is important is that all things in this universe will be brought together in Christ. One thing that enables the Ephesians to move beyond the concerns of this universe to a focus on the heavenly places is that everything in the heavens and earth will be brought together (in submission) to Christ, who reigns in the heavenly places (1.20-2).

Still, this future that brings together all things in Christ apparently reflects the previous work of Christ in earth and the heavens. In discussing the gifts given to the community by which they build up one another (4.7-12), Paul introduces a quotation from Ps. 68.19, 'When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself captive; he gave gifts to his people' (4.8). In explaining this quotation Paul argues that an ascent implies a descent, a descent he links to Jesus' coming into the 'lower parts of the earth' (4.9). However, Jesus also then ascended above all the heavens, 'so that he might fill all things' (4.10). The 'lower parts of the earth' probably does not refer to some 'underworld', but rather serves as a spatial term for Christ living in the earth, a low point compared to his exalted status in the heavens.[8] From a cosmological perspective it is important to note that Paul envisions the work of Christ in terms of the universe, both earth and the heavens. From a theological perspective one should note that the work effected the capture of captivity itself, which in this case likely refers to God rescuing the Ephesians from their captivity to the ruler of the power of the air and concomitant sin (2.1-7).[9] Furthermore, this freedom from the captivity to the ruler of the power of the air, in the age of this world

7. The second half of the letter unfolds around the 'walk' metaphor: 4.1, 17; 5.2, 8, 15.

8. See the arguments against the view of descent into the 'underworld' and a similar conclusion in M. Barth, *Ephesians 4–6* (AB 34A; New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 433–4.

9. See Robert L. Foster, 'Exploring the Limits of Grace: The Theological and Rhetorical Force of χάρις in Ephesians', in R. L. Foster and C. J. Roetzel (eds), *The Impartial God: Essays in Honor of Jouette M. Bassler* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, forthcoming).

(2.2), enables the community to freely receive and use the gifts imparted by Christ for their mutual upbuilding (4.8, 11-12).

The fact that God created this universe impacts Paul's rhetoric. When Paul prays for the Ephesian ἐκκλησία, he offers this prayer to 'the Father, from whom all fatherhood in the heavens and upon the earth is named' (3.14-15).[10] Though it remains difficult to discern what 'fatherhood in the heavens' refers to exactly, the point is that all parentage in the created universe derives from its creator. This vision of the derivative nature of all living beings from the creator of all life reinforces Paul's aim to set the Ephesians vision' on what existed before creation in the heavenly places, in this case on the Father. Later in the book, Paul becomes more explicit about how this vision directly impacts the Ephesian ἐκκλησία. In instructions to Christian masters, Paul writes that they should 'do the same to them [their servants]. Stop threatening them because you both have the same Master in heaven [the heavens; οὐρανοῖς], and with him there is no partiality'. The contrast, by implication, is between the relationship of the master/slave on earth, and the relationship of both master and slave to the one who, in the heavens, is Master of them both. The shift in language from 'heavenly places' to 'heavens' apparently derives from Paul's perception that the heavens and earth serve as a pair of realities that together make up the universe. Yet, the point remains the same as throughout: the members of the Ephesian ἐκκλησία must fix their gaze beyond the earth to focus on the Lord and the demands he makes on all those who exercise lordship on the earth.

Thus, Paul's cosmology reflects two important realities: the heavenly places and the universe, with the universe divided further into the heavens and the earth. The basic distinction between the heavenly places and the universe is that the universe came into existence some time after the heavenly places. The key term associated with the universe is 'everything' (τὰ πάντα, 1.10, 23; 3.9; 4.10), which includes the spiritual powers that work in the world, as well as all parentage, and all human beings, whether slave or free. In the heavenly places reside God and Jesus Christ, though a myriad of spiritual forces also populate this realm.

Theologically, God created all the realities of the universe; everything derives from him. Yet, God worked within the universe in Christ, so that Christ's descent into the earth and ascent into the heavens effectively took captivity itself captive. At some point in the future, at the fullness of time, everything will be brought together in Christ, who will reign over all. This future reign reflects the work of God already effected in the heavenly places, where Christ rules presently high above all rulers and authorities and powers and dominions. The Ephesians must recognize their own place within the heavenly places, seated

10. I retain the masculine 'Father/fatherhood' to show the play on words lost in the NRSV translation, 'the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name'.

with Christ (2.6). In fact, the life of the Ephesian ἐκκλησία demonstrates the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (3.10). All of this cosmological language is used by Paul to reorient the lives of the Ephesian ἐκκλησία.

Philippians

Though the cosmological language is not frequently as explicit in Philippians as in Ephesians, Paul introduces allusions to cosmology early in the letter. Several places in the letter's *proem* envision the time beyond this present life when the people of God join Christ in the heavens, though in none of the three instances does Paul use the term 'heaven'. In 1.6 Paul assures the Philippians that the one who began a good work in them will bring it to completion 'in the day of Christ Jesus'. This statement implies at least an end to the world as they know it at the return of Christ. Simultaneously this language reinforces the place of the Philippians within the universe as their work finds its completion in that day, in no small measure because *God* works in them and works in them faithfully to the end.[11] 1.10 reinforces this idea as Paul prays for the Philippians to have knowledge and depth of insight, leading to their purity and blamelessness until the day of Christ. Again, Paul envisions an end to the current experience of time that sets a particular trajectory for the life of the Philippian community.

Paul anticipates his own entrance into the other world, though he fears that he might enter this world, shall we say, prematurely, by dying for the cause of the gospel. Paul anticipates that he will continue to live in the present, that is, in the body, but if he dies he knows he will be with Christ, presumably in heaven, which he prefers (1.23). This life in the next world 'with Christ', in Paul's mind, is 'far better' (1.23).[12]

Paul enters the body of the Letter at 1.27 calling on the Philippians to 'live as worthy citizens' of the gospel. Within the body itself Paul uses cosmological imagery to reinforce what it means for the Philippians to live as worthy citizens of the gospel.

One of the initial exhortations involves a call to unity (2.1-4) with Christ as the first and greatest example of the life they ought to imitate (2.5-11; followed by Timothy in 2.19-24 and Epaphroditus in 2.25-30). In the famous 'Christ-hymn', Paul makes several references to his own cosmological vision. We notice in this hymn another dichotomy between this world and that of heaven,

11. P. T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 65.

12. Gordon Fee notes, 'Thus, even though he throws himself with abandon into life in the present, the entire orientation of his life is toward the (absolutely certain) future' (G. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], p. 145).

so that when Christ dwelled with God in heaven Christ experienced 'equality' (ἴσα; 2.6) with God, but coming into earth meant taking on the form of a slave (δούλου; 2.7). This vision of the difference between the two worlds reflects Paul's earlier language of the life in heaven as 'far better' and may intimate something of the qualitative difference those who depart to be with Christ will experience. For Christ, his own return to heaven proves even more triumphant than his original equality with God so that every knee in heaven and earth and under the earth bows to Christ (1.10). Paul gives explicit language to a vision of a three-storied universe populated with unspecified beings in each realm that may, at least metaphorically, bend the knee.

As Paul brings the body of the letter to a close he returns to the metaphor of citizenship, making one last contrast between life on earth and life in heaven. People invested in the earth are destined for destruction, have their belly as their god, glory in their shame, and set their minds continually on earthly things (3.19). On the other hand, the Philippians belong with those who know their citizenship lies in heaven, from which they expect their saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (3.20). Though 3.20 might imply current citizenship, it seems that again we find a vision of the future as Paul anticipates that he and the Philippians will have their 'body of humiliation' (ταπείνωσις) transformed into one like the glorious body of Christ. This 'body of humiliation' and 'body of glory' links 3.21 to the earlier Christ hymn, so that the bodies the Philippians inhabit are bodies of slavery, like Christ's on earth, so that they hope to receive salvation from this body and so find their bodies glorified as Christ did at his exaltation.

The vision of the cosmos in the letter to the Philippians entails the vision of a three-storied universe that all will one day submit to Christ. Yet, for the present instruction to the Philippian ἐκκλησία Paul contrasts life on earth and life in heaven, this life on earth as one of slavery and the one in heaven as a life of glory. The division between these worlds is less spatial and more temporal in Philippians, so that the transformation awaits a future time of either death or the day of Christ, presumably the day of Christ's return.

The reorientation of the Philippian ἐκκλησία involves their learning that their citizenship does not belong on earth, in the flesh. Rather, their citizenship lies in heaven where Christ dwells in exaltation and from which he will return to glorify their bodies like his own. The Philippians must not lose sight of their final aim and the final prize but must persevere in their good works to be freed from slavery in the body. Not only does their future depend on their orientation toward heaven, Paul's future depends on their orientation toward heaven as well.

Colossians

Paul also introduces key cosmological concepts early on in the Letter to the Colossians, in the opening thanksgiving:

> ... for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God (1.4-6).

In these opening lines we observe two basic cosmological realities: (1) the heavens (pl. τοῖς οὐρανοῖς), in which the Colossians' hope is laid up; and (2) 'the whole world' (παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ), which is the realm in which the gospel is proclaimed, announcing this hope. Though Paul connects the two realities around the idea of hope, there remains some distinction between them in that the gospel only proclaims the hope in the world, while this hope resides in reality in the heavens. As Paul begins to reorient the Colossians with the demands of this particular Letter, he reminds them that the hope in heaven gave birth to their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints, as the gospel bears fruit among them and in the whole world.

The major contrast between these two realities seems to be that things in the heavens remain invisible while things in the world (cosmos) are visible. In Christ, who is the image of the invisible God (1.15), all things were created, things in the heavens and on earth, visible or invisible (1.16). In the heavens resides the invisible God, along with other created heavenly things, the thrones, dominions, rulers and powers mentioned in 1.16. This contrast between the visible and invisible is primary as Paul reorients the Colossian ἐκκλησία, encouraging them to continue steadfast in their faith, 'without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven' (1.23). The Colossian ἐκκλησία must focus their minds on the invisible things in the heavens rather than on the visible, which will hinder their faith and divert them from their hope.

What are the visible things that might lead the Colossians astray from their faith and hope? These visible things are evident in the potentially deceiving 'plausible sounding arguments' (2.4). Such arguments are related to 'philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to elemental spirits of the universe' (κόσμου; 2.8). So, the visible things of the world are related to things spoken: plausible sounding arguments, philosophy and empty deceit. More to the point, they speak of human traditions, 'according to the elemental spirits of the universe'. 2.16-18 unpacks this further as Paul instructs the Colossians not to allow anyone to

> condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing of festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking.

Concern for such things indicates that the Colossians act like they still belong to the world (κόσμῳ), obeying regulations that in the end cannot keep them from

self-indulgence (2.20, 23). In fact, such 'regulations refer to things that perish with use' (2.22).

Thus the visible things of the world are things that will perish, anything that one may handle, taste, or touch (2.21). Because such things perish with use, it seems best to take στοιχεῖα in 2.8 and 20 not as 'elemental spirits' (NRSV), some sort of supernatural forces, but rather as 'the materials of which the world and the universe are composed',[13] similar to 2 Pet. 3.10, which states that 'the elements will be dissolved with fire'.[14] The world then is that which is visible, things people touch, the elements destined to perish with use. The irony is that regulations about such things are 'plausible sounding arguments', but focus on the material, which is only a shadow of the things to come, whose substance belongs to Christ (2.17). Thus, a second important distinction between the two realities: one will perish (the world) while the other will endure (the heavens).[15]

A third distinction between these two basic realities of the cosmos emerges in the immediately following section which images the heavens in terms of 'things that are above' (3.1). Preeminent among these is Christ, seated at the right hand of God. But, related to Christ's sitting in the heavens is the Colossians' own life hidden with Christ in God (3.3). Thus, they should focus on the things above because, 'When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory' (3.4).

Though Paul instructs the Colossians not to focus their minds on the things of the earth (γῆς; 3.3), the Colossians must still put to death 'whatever in you is earthly' (τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; 3.5). Instead of following their former way of life, the Colossians have been clothed with a new self 'being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator' (3.10). This use of 'image' (εἰκών) alludes back to the opening hymn of Christ, which refers to him as the 'image' (εἰκών) of the invisible God (1.16). Thus, in the new self that they clothed themselves with, the Colossians embody the things of heaven, as Christ

13. J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992) Vol. 1 2.1; p. 19, not as they list it, among the supernatural forces in 12.43; p. 147.

14. Though, as Lohse notes, the context includes discussion of Christ's triumph over rulers and authorities (E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon (A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon)* [trans. W. R. Poehlman and R. J. Harris; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971], p. 98), this does not necessarily mean that the elements are elemental spirits, authorities contesting Christ's authority. Notice the whole discussion in 2.8-15 regards circumcision of the flesh and spiritual circumcision, i.e. baptism (2.11-14). Demands for circumcision, which seem of the sort of fading elements of this world, are those that Christ 'set aside, nailing it to the cross' (2.14).

15. O'Brien writes with regard to the statement that these are only a shadow of things to come, that the Colossians should not allow themselves 'to be judged in these matters *because* they all belonged to the transitory order' (P. T. O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon* [Waco: Word, 1982], p. 139).

did. The invisible becomes visible not in the visible things of the world, the earth, the elements, which will all perish. Rather the invisible became visible in the Christ who lives as the firstborn from the dead (1.18) and in the lives of the Colossians, who have been raised with Christ (3.1).

The cosmology of Colossians, much like that of Ephesians, includes two major realms, the heavens and the world, though the cosmos in Colossians does not divide any further. The heavens are where God and Christ reside, invisible, eternal, and 'above'. In this realm are rulers, authorities, thrones and powers. However, Paul does not instruct the Colossians about struggling against such powers, but simply notes that Christ triumphed over the rulers and authorities in the cross (2.15). The world (cosmos) consists of the visible, things one can touch, taste, or handle, material things. These things are below and of the earth, things that will perish in time.

Theologically, the important distinction between these two realms is the fact that one is of Christ and the other is not. Thus the teaching that might take the Colossians captive concerns the elements of the world and not Christ (2.8). The concern for food and drink, festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths are shadows, while the substance belongs to Christ (2.17). The Colossians died with Christ and no longer need regulations about not handling, tasting, or touching things, as if they still belonged to the world and its elements (2.20). Instead, they have been raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavens, with their hope in the heavens and their life hidden with God. When Christ, who is their life, appears, they will appear with him in glory. They know what the invisible God is like because they have heard the gospel about Christ, who is the image of the invisible God in whom the fullness of God dwelled.[16]

Thus, Paul reorients the Colossians toward a better way of continuing steadfast in their faith, not shifting from the hope promised to them in the gospel. They should not give in to plausible sounding arguments concerning how to check self-indulgence but instead recognize they have died and been raised with Christ. They should direct their minds toward things that are above (3.2), because '[i]t is precisely in considering 'that which is above' that they mold everyday life accordingly, in obedience to the Lord'.[17] They have the new, which, like Christ, is the image of their creator, and so clothe themselves with those virtues that reflect the life of Christ (3.12-15), signs of their renewed life in Christ (3.10).

1 Thessalonians

The cosmological language in 1 Thessalonians is rather sparse, but not insignificant. At the end of his commendation of the Thessalonians, Paul writes that

16. Thus, Christ is 'absolutely superior to the cosmos' as the image of God, in contrast to the Hellenistic view of the cosmos as the image of God (Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, pp. 47–8).

17. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

they turned from idols to the living God and now 'wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming' (1.10). In these few words Paul gives us several indications of his cosmology. First, Jesus abides in the heavens until he returns. Second, apparently at the time of his resurrection Jesus was taken up into heaven. Finally, Paul implies that this age will come to an end when Jesus returns with judgement.

This basic thought concerning Jesus' coming from heaven to rescue believers from wrath receives a more developed discussion in 4.13–5.11, where Paul tries to reassure the Thessalonians about those already dead (4.13). Paul again asserts that the Lord will descend from heaven at that time, with those already dead rising first and then those who remain alive caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air in order to live with him forever (4.16-17). Apparent in this language is the belief that heaven is the abode of God and Christ and of the archangel, but not of humans, including the dead. Rather, the dead and the living both reside somewhere on/in the earth and await Christ's coming. The distinction between the dead and the living then is not spatial, since both abide in the earth, but temporal, with the dead preceding the living to meet Christ in the air, though both will finally reside with the Lord forever (4.17).[18]

In these passages Paul discusses the ways of God in Christ in the cosmos to encourage this young congregation, which he seems to think needs special care. Paul reorients their thinking concerning the dead, so that they will not grieve like the world does (4.13), but instead encourage and build each other up (5.11). Because of their assurance that Christ will return, that the dead will rise first, and that the living and the dead in Christ will be with the Lord forever, they can take heart. In fact, Christ's resurrection from the dead and subsequent exaltation to heaven with God, serves as the basis for their future hope of Christ's return.[19] Notice that these both are connected at the close of Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians in the middle section, where he hopes they will 'be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the saints' (3.13).

2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians contains a greater density of cosmological language compared to the earlier letter. At the beginning we find one of the few instances of the use of kingdom language in the Pauline corpus. Here Paul considers the afflictions and persecutions that the Thessalonians endure as preparing them for the kingdom of God (1.4-5). Temporally, this Kingdom is a future Kingdom,

18. Malherbe argues that there is also a qualitative difference inherent in the term φθάνω, so that he translates this phrase more generically, 'we...shall by no means have precedence over those who have fallen asleep' (A. J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000], pp. 272–3).

19. I. H. Marshall, *The New Century Bible Commentary: 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 59.

something that the Thessalonians will attain. Spatially, this Kingdom is also a heavenly kingdom, if we consider the revelation of Jesus 'from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire' as a description of the time when those who believe will enter the Kingdom. The Letter reinforces this connection between entering the Kingdom and the revelation of Jesus in heaven with Paul's description that 'on that day' those who believed will marvel at Jesus' appearance (1.10). The coming of Jesus then ends this particular experience of time and space so that the believers will enter into the Kingdom and Jesus Christ will breach the divide between this world and the other.

The activities in both places remain consonant, however. Thus, at the present moment, the Thessalonians endure affliction and persecution, continuing steadfast and faithful, which Paul considers a sign of the just judgement of God (1.4-5). The theological claim is that at the end of this particular experience of time and space God will inflict punishment on those who deserve judgement. Implicitly, this passage asserts that God remains completely aware of the things happening on earth and so will be able to right the wrongs happening on earth.

Paul uses this discourse of the future reign and concomitant judgement of God in part because he fears that the Thessalonians have fallen prey to a discourse, purporting to come from Paul and his companions, that the day of the Lord is already here (2.1-2). Perhaps the imagery of God afflicting those who fall under judgement at the end of time causes the Thessalonians to wonder whether they are presently under God's eschatological judgement. Paul assures them that the coming judgement of God in fact follows a discernible sequence of events. Several things cause the delay of 'that day', including the fact that the lawless one apparently has not appeared yet and has not appeared because the one who now restrains the appearing of the lawless one has not been removed (2.3, 6-8). The exact identity of the 'lawless one' and 'the one who restrains' need not delay us here. What is significant to our purposes is threefold. First, Paul envisions the coming day of Jesus Christ as happening on a particular timetable, with certain events that must occur before Jesus returns. Second, the appearance of the 'lawless one' cannot thwart the purposes of God and in fact, Christ will destroy/annihilate this being when he comes (2.8). Third, the working of the lawless one represents the working of Satan, a being who apparently works within the cosmos presently through 'power, signs, lying, wonders and every kind of wicked deception' (2.10). The reason that many refuse to love the truth and receive salvation (2.10) in no small measure relates to the working of Satan, which God reinforces by sending a powerful delusion upon unbelievers (2.11).

The cosmos in 2 Thessalonians concerns mostly the temporal world, which for the Thessalonians is presently experienced as a time of affliction. Yet, the good news for them in the midst of their affliction is that their suffering is not a sign of having fallen under the judgement of God. Rather, God will faithfully strengthen them and guard them in the midst of the working of various

evil forces who are apparently physical ('the lawless one' and 'the one who restrains') and those who are apparently spirits (Satan, the evil one). When this current time of the cosmos comes to an end, at the proper time, Christ will appear in a way evident to all and God will execute judgement against those who presently afflict the Thessalonians, along with other unbelievers.

According to Paul's explicit discourse, God in fact reigns in the world and will manifest that reign more clearly in the time of future judgement. Furthermore, the Thessalonians will find themselves able to endure in their present struggles in the world because of God's faithful protection. Likewise, though God reigns from heaven the text implies that God sees all that happens on the earth and will exercise just judgement based on this observation. The primary agent of God, the Lord Jesus, will himself execute justice against the lawless one by annihilating him, destroying him rather easily, simply with the breath of his mouth.

Rhetorically, then, the vision of the cosmos intends to affect the Thessalonians in two ways during their time of affliction. First, Paul wants to allay their fears that their affliction shows that the day of the Lord has already come and they stand under the Lord's judgement. Second, he wants to encourage them to endure during this hour as a sign of their faith in the just judgement of God, who will assert his reign more clearly at the appropriate hour.

1 Timothy

The introduction of the first cosmological language in 1 Timothy occurs in the 'trustworthy' statement: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost' (1.15). This one line provides several key nuances of cosmological thought. Perhaps primary among them is the vision of the world as the sphere in which salvation is wrought.[20] We do not have a sense of Paul's emphasis on God reconciling all things in heaven and on earth in Christ as in Colossians, but rather a specific emphasis on salvation in the world. Second, though Paul does not indicate the total corruption of the world, Paul imagines a world inhabited by sinners.[21] Third, this trustworthy saying implies that Jesus existed outside of the realm of this world but was able to enter it on behalf of humanity.

As Paul offers thanks for God's mercy, he refers to God in terms of one who is immortal and invisible (1.17). This language of the invisible God sounds much like the language of visible/invisible in Colossians. Here it is simply enough to note that Paul apparently considers God to abide in a world invisible to humanity, i.e. heaven or the heavens.

20. I. H. Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), p. 398.

21. The term is again κόσμος, but seems restricted to the earth given the focus on sinners.

3.16 introduces a simple statement of the mystery of faith, though the exact meaning of some lines remains unclear:

> He was revealed in the flesh,
> vindicated in the spirit,
> seen by angels,
> proclaimed among the Gentiles,
> believed in throughout the world,
> taken up in glory.

The opening line affirms what we observed in 1.15: Christ came into the world, though in 3.16 Paul affirms that he came in flesh. William Mounce points out that flesh is not considered 'sinful flesh', but simply refers to Christ's humanity.[22] Christ's vindication by the Spirit is a bit obscure but seems to fall into line with the claim in Rom. 1.5 that Jesus was declared to be the son of God by the spirit of holiness when he was raised from the dead. Yet, as obviously as he came into the world, taking on the flesh, he also apparently left the world, 'seen by the angels' in his ascension into glory.[23] And, though the world is full of sinners, it is apparently not evil in itself, as people in the world believe the proclamation of the gospel.[24] Finally, we see an allusion to heaven as a place of 'glory', likely as a reference to heaven as a place where the God of glory dwells. This provides a stark contrast between heaven and earth, where earth is full of sinners in need of salvation and heaven is a place of glory as God's abode.

The next invocation of cosmological language employs imagery of a cosmic tribunal as Paul presents a charge before the judge and courtroom witnesses, including the elect angels (5.21), which adds to the solemnity of the charge, given that mentioning the elect angels is unusual in the NT.[25] Two important emphases emerge in regard to cosmology. One is that God, Christ and the elect angels abide in the heavens, but they nevertheless observe the affairs of humanity, in this particular instance, the affairs of the church in Ephesus. Two, there will be a time when they will call a person, in this case Timothy, to account for the deeds they observe on earth.

In a second charge to Timothy, Paul again invokes the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, though now leaving out the elect angels (6.13-14). Paul makes explicit the eschatological overtones by demanding that Timothy keep 'the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord' (6.14). Again, the reader gets a sense of heaven as a place where the invisible resides, though the invisible nevertheless sees what occurs in the visible world, whether Timothy keeps the commandment.

22. W. D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 227.
23. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 229; Marshal, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 527.
24. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 230.
25. G. D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIBCNT; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), p. 131.

As Paul draws the book to a close, he twice addresses issues of wealth and possessions. In urging contentment, Paul apparently quotes a proverbial saying, 'we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world' (6.7). It is clear that, cosmologically speaking, only in this world are possessions any good and that one will not carry possessions into the next world.[26]

Still, in a further statement on possessions, Paul does not condemn them but states that God provides richly for us 'everything for our enjoyment' (6.17), reinforcing a vision of God's providential care for humanity.[27] As God reaches into the world to provide for humanity, so too the rich of this world may, shall we say, reach into heaven. By their generosity toward others they store up 'for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life' (6.19). Wealth, when put to proper use, still cannot be taken into heaven, but does make provision for life in heaven.

The cosmology of 1 Timothy entails two realms, the realm of this world and another realm, presumably heaven. The realm of the earth includes people of flesh and wealth, though these are not necessarily 'corrupt, sinful flesh'. The realm of heaven is a place of the invisible, where God, Jesus and the angels abide. There is some permeability between the two realms as the invisible observe the activities of the world and as the deeds of those in the world may produce some effect in the invisible world.

Theologically speaking, the world is a place of both sin and salvation, a place Jesus entered in order to bring salvation. The world is also the realm where people believe that Jesus came to provide salvation. God, though unseen, makes continued provision for the whole world, sustaining his creation, but also observes the activities of humanity in the world and will hold the world accountable.

In the world of the Ephesian ἐκκλησία Timothy has the difficult task of serving as an emissary, holding the leading citizens of this community accountable on a number of fronts, whether to sound teaching (1.3; 4.11; 6.3), to correct behaviour (3.15), to give proper order to the care of widows (5.7), or to serve as a judge in cases that arise in the ἐκκλησία (5.21). Consequently, Paul reorients Timothy toward the realities of the cosmos in order to strengthen him for his tasks. As one whose teaching will save both himself and his hearers (4.16), Timothy needs the reminder that the world is the place of salvation, where people believe the good news that Jesus came into the world for the express purpose of salvation. As Timothy holds others accountable for their teaching and their actions, he must remember that there is a heavenly tribunal observing his deeds and that will hold him accountable at the end of the present age. In exhorting others toward correct

26. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 646.

27. L. T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (AB 35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 310.

behaviour, Timothy must remember that the deeds done on earth have an effect on the future of people in the next life, real life.

2 Timothy

Early on in 2 Timothy we read cosmological language that divides the ages of the world into the past, present and future. In the past, 'before the ages began', God gave grace to Paul and Timothy both for salvation and for the specific work of ministry that each performs (1.8-9). Yet, the gift did not come to light until the present moment, with the appearing of Christ Jesus (1.10). As a result Paul became a herald of the gospel, which led to his own suffering, but he does not back away in shame because he knows that Christ will guard what he entrusted to Paul until 'that day' (1.12). In the past, present and future of the cosmos, we find Christ working and working on behalf of Paul and Timothy. This work of Christ unbound by time lends significance to the task entrusted to Timothy and Paul and encourages them to continue with it in the midst of various struggles. The confidence of Timothy and Paul is that, though this present age will apparently pass, Christ brought life and *immortality* to light through the gospel (1.10). Just as from the age before the world God gave grace, so into the age after this world Timothy and Paul will continue to abide in God's grace.

Yet, this sharing in eternal life, gaining eternal glory in Christ Jesus (2.10), requires certain actions on the part of Timothy and Paul. First, they must have died with Christ to also live with him. Second, they must endure to reign with him (2.12a). Third, they cannot deny him or Christ will deny them (2.12b). All three of these claims seem to envision a time after the present world, when one may live and reign with Christ or fall under his judgement. The things that happen on 'that day' include both good for those who endured for the gospel's sake and ill for those who did not.

As in 2 Thessalonians, Paul must assert that the present hour is not the time of the future; in this case the resurrection of the dead has not already taken place (2.18). For Paul, one must maintain a strict division between the boundary of time dividing this world and the future world. Talk that collapses these two different times is profane chatter (2.16) that upsets the faith of some (2.18).

Even though Paul awaits 'that day' and does not allow that the present is actually the future, he nevertheless seems to consider that he and Timothy live in the 'last days' (3.1). People will do all sorts of evil deeds and say all sorts of evil words (3.2-5) and Paul exhorts Timothy to avoid these people (3.5), implying that the trouble of the last days is, in fact for Paul, the troubles of today. What Paul wants Timothy to consider in light of 'that day' is that, if Christ Jesus will indeed judge the living and the dead, and his Kingdom will appear, then Timothy ought to spend his time in this world boldly proclaiming the message entrusted to him (4.1-2). One subtle cosmological note here is that Paul divides the people of the cosmos into two distinct categories, those living and those

dead. Eventually, even the dead will live forever, or at least those who believed in Christ. In fact, Paul knows that his own time is at hand, the time of his death (4.6) and that 'on that day' Paul will receive the crown of righteousness laid up for him, along with all those who long for his appearing (4.8).

Thus, in 2 Timothy, the cosmos is divided into the world and heaven, the living and the dead, and the time before time, the present time, and future time, especially the time of 'that day'. Furthermore, the present time for Paul writing this letter apparently involves the 'last days'. Paul seems rather unconcerned about these last days, knowing he will soon depart and that God has reserved for him a crown of righteousness. Theologically, we see that Paul ties all the different phases of the world to God's work in Christ Jesus. Moreover, Christ makes provision for the future, immortality, life and the ability to reign with him.

Paul uses these various aspects of his cosmology to exhort Timothy to certain actions. First, Paul wants Timothy to endure suffering for the sake of the gospel (1.8), knowing the significance of the grace of their calling both in the past and present, knowing that God will protect the gift entrusted to them until the day of Christ. Second, Timothy ought to remind those whom he instructs about the potential goods and ills of the future time in order to convince the congregation to quit 'wrangling over words' (2.14). Third, given that they live in the last days, Timothy ought to avoid those who do a variety of evils (3.5). Finally, Timothy ought to proclaim the message with boldness and persist in this work whether things seem favourable or unfavourable (4.1-2).

Titus

Of the letters explored in this chapter, Titus contains the least amount of cosmological imagery, though Paul uses this language as early as he does in any of the letters. In extolling God, Paul proclaims God's promised hope of eternal life, something he promised 'before the ages began' (1.2). This invocation of 'before the ages' stands 'on the other end of the temporal spectrum' from eternal life.[28] The working of God spans both before time and after time and again focuses on the elect who are the beneficiaries of God's omni-temporal work. Yet at various appointed times God revealed his word through proclamation, in which Paul now participates (1.3). The idea here seems to be that God's word was proclaimed at various times, perhaps referring to the times of the prophets or perhaps to various proclamations of the gospel by various servants of the gospel, including Paul. In any case, we find that Paul again envisions the cosmos in three distinct phases of time, with the middle time divided into 'times' of the proclamation of the word.

28. R. F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002), p. 305.

Titus ought to instruct older men, older women, younger men and slaves about the conduct appropriate to their status in light of their participation in the Jesus community (2.1-10). The reason for this is that the appearance of God's salvation demands that people renounce 'impiety and worldly passions' and in this 'present age' to live godly lives, anticipating the future when the glory of God and Jesus Christ is manifest (2.11-12). Like many of the previous letters, Paul mentions the previous ages, but his main concern is for the present time in the world in light of the future age. One must live a godly life in this world in light of the next. What Titus can assure the people of is that they are heirs of the hope of eternal life (3.7-8), signified by their renewal in the Holy Spirit (3.5-6).

Thus, God works in the cosmos in the past, present, and future on behalf of the elect. In light of this work, especially as they await the coming manifestation of the glory of God and Jesus Christ, Titus ought to instruct various groups in the church to live godly lives in the present. The working of the Holy Spirit in the immediate is a sure sign of their future hope.

8

The Cosmology of Hebrews[1]

Jon Laansma

What is a Study of the Cosmology of Hebrews?

Satellite pictures of earth can take quite different forms, depending on the data that is desired. A conventional image displays a given region in 'true colour' form, as we would expect it to appear were we to look at it with our own eyes from the window of a space shuttle. An infrared photo would give a very different image, one that humans would not see with the 'naked eye', though it would not for that reason be something other than a real image of the same area.

Looking at the text of Hebrews for its cosmology is something like taking an infrared photo of the book. By the book's 'cosmology' I mean the description(s) of created reality that are expressed or assumed or implied in this letter, including created reality's history, its structure, its inhabitants, and to some extent its meaning. Given the number and nature of the connections between cosmology proper and the earthly/heavenly tabernacles, these must be considered together and the latter, the sanctuaries, will feature prominently in the following discussion.

It must be said immediately that cosmology in the narrower sense, without regard to the heavenly sanctuary, is not what Hebrews is 'about', as if the writer[2] were composing a treatise for the sake of informing his churchly readers on the point. It is not what leaps out at the 'naked eye'. Yet, as should be obvious, and as the following will draw out, cosmology is certainly *there* behind and within the Letter's theology and argument. And it can be highlighted in a way that marks its contours, though admittedly with instruments less scientifically precise than those used on our satellite.

1. The writing of this essay was assisted by an Aldeen Grant from Wheaton College and by the helpful critiques of several colleagues and friends. Among the latter, besides the editors of this volume, I wish to name Stephen Spencer (theology), Joseph Spradley (physics), Douglas Penney (science and faith), Daniel Treier (hermeneutics), and John Walton (Old Testament and Ancient Near East). Any mistakes are entirely my responsibility.

2. For my view on authorship, date, audience, etc. see my *I Will Give You Rest* (WUNT 2.98; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1997), esp. pp. 252–74; cf. also my article, 'Hebrews', in K. J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), pp. 274–81.

Why Study the Cosmology of Hebrews?

Scientists, at least, do not take infrared photos simply because we can nor simply because they are pretty. They do so because they are after particular data (e.g., studying how the Gulf Stream actually looks), and this data has been deemed relevant for some larger set of questions that they are convinced is important (e.g., sailing in the North Atlantic). This analogy raises the question for us, 'For what is the evidence regarding Hebrews' cosmology relevant? What larger questions prompt us to ask after it in the first place?'

First, cosmology bears on a perennial question of Hebrews, to wit, whether the book's conceptual background is closer to that of the Alexandrian Jew Philo (as one reference point among others on that end of things) or to that of the Jewish apocalypticism that we see in *4 Ezra*, Paul's writings, and Revelation (again, to cite only representatives).[3] The importance of this question is well known to interpreters of this letter and will not be detailed here. However, within this set of questions the book's cosmology revolves with everything else around the cycle of the interpreter's presuppositions in approaching a given passage (the downstroke of the cycle: will the interpreter *tend* to read a given passage in Hebrews, e.g., 11.3, in line with Philo's or Gnosticism's dualism as opposed to that of apocalypticism?) versus the way in which the exegesis of a specific passage might shape the interpreter's presuppositions (the upstroke). There is no transcending this cycle, but on 'critical realist' grounds there is hope that it can represent a *spiral toward* truthful understanding of the intended sense of the discourse as Scripture rather than merely a *vicious circle* in the exercise of the autonomous human reader's will to power.[4] For our purposes, the interest of what follows is not to enter directly into the question of the religious-historical background of Hebrews, but we will bear that in mind as it affects and is affected by reflection directly on the letter's cosmology.[5]

3. See the survey in L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

4. Giving warrant to this optimism and further explanation of what it involves is D. J. Treier, *Virtue and the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

5. This debate constitutes the driving concern of another and very helpful study of this topic: E. Adams, 'The Cosmology of Hebrews', in R. J. Bauckham, D. R. Driver, T. A. Hart and N. MacDonald (eds), *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming 2008). Specifically, Adams' question is whether 'Hebrews evinces a radical cosmological (indeed anti-cosmic) dualism that negates the created, physical world'. His answer: 'Rather than displaying a radical cosmological dualism that negates creation and the material world, the cosmological ethos of the epistle to the Hebrews, as I read it, is decidedly *pro*-creational'. He argues further that there is enough in Hebrews to deduce that the writer expected a 'new creation'.

Secondly, Hebrews' cosmology does enter into open view as an aspect of salvation itself; it is not *merely* among the writer of Hebrews' presuppositions. Salvation in this letter is construed to a significant degree in *local* terms: it is a destination of redeemed humanity, a *place* under various names (resting place, city, throne room, etc.; see below). Correspondingly, verbs of movement (especially εἰσέρχομαι and προσέρχομαι)[6] are prominent within the characterization of human involvement in salvation. In 12.18-29 this locale mingles topically with cosmology, making somewhat explicit what is implicit throughout. Moreover there is, among other things, a very definite earthly-heavenly duality[7] at play within the letter's christology and soteriology, there is an explicit referencing of cosmogony, and there is a strong anticipation of creation's *telos*. Cosmology may not be the main theme of this homily but it cannot be construed as extraneous to the book's actual interests and so it must be considered as an aspect of its *theology*.[8]

Thirdly, there is the question of reality itself as the text's referent, which remains a concern of all who read the Letter from within the faith it commends. 'Reality' in this sense is what must exist if the human mind is to have something to talk or think about in the first place, in any way whatsoever. Faith, love, and hope would self-destruct if their realities – that which is believed (in), loved, and hoped for – were shown to be mirages. Within the Jewish and Christian traditions themselves it has always been taken for granted that the hoped-for realities will outdo our scripturally-shaped imaginations, but generally within analogical limits where revelation pertains. That this is the faith 'commended' by the letter is evident throughout, and not least at 11.1-3 in direct connection with the question of the cosmos. So, in short, the questions are: What is out there? How and where did it begin? Where is it now? Where is it going? Is there a 'why' to it? And so forth. Here the reader of Hebrews joins company with philosophers and scientists from within and outside of that faith, with all of the usual complementarities and disagreements, in a communal search for a faithful understanding. Of course any such discussion, if it is to be fruitful, must involve at some point an attempt actually to read this letter.

Fourthly, very directly related to this, there are the implications of our reflections for theology and for practice (and vice versa). Simply to mention them: For biblical theology there is the question of canonical coherence, e.g., with Romans 8 and other themes, and possibly canonical development. For systematic theology there is the question of hermeneutics, e.g., Bultmann's programme

6. For a protracted discussion of this terminology, see J. M. Scholar, *Proleptic Priests* (JSNTSS 49; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), pp. 91–184.

7. On the term *duality* versus *dualism* and the varieties thereof, see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 252–6; Laansma, *Rest*, pp. 255–7.

8. Adams, 'Cosmology', insists on the same point.

of demythologization.[9] For practice there are implications for the Christian approach to the present world, e.g., to the environment[10] and to each other.

In short, there are in fact a good many larger questions that warrant this 'infrared photo' of Hebrews. It cannot be our undertaking to answer all these questions, or any of them satisfactorily, but they will be borne in mind throughout.

How is the Cosmology of Hebrews to be Studied?

There are different possible approaches to studying the cosmology of Hebrews. One approach would be to stay as close as possible to the book's argument – its rhetorical strategies, literary structure, theological logic – and to depict its cosmology as conveyed through these elements. This approach is a vital and necessary one. Harold Attridge is right that 'the concentration on' conceptual parallels in contemporary writings such as those of Philo or *4 Ezra* 'may obscure the dynamics of Hebrews' argument, which should serve as the fundamental criterion by which to assess the work's thought.[11] This is the sort of thing I have done elsewhere, at least in part, and I will have those reflections in mind.[12] The conclusion there was that for the writer of Hebrews the cosmos is destined to become God's temple.[13] Although the imagery of temple and cultus is not monolithic or employed with systematic consistency, for this writer the heavenly tabernacle represents the future of the cosmos, not simply of believ-

9. R. Bultmann famously threw down the gauntlet with these words: 'The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character. The world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in the centre, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath... To this extent *the kerygma is incredible to modern man, for he is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete*'. 'New Testament and Mythology', in H. W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 1, 3. The kerygma must be 'demythologized'. The exegetical and hermeneutical problems attached to questions of cosmology in the NT writings are indeed numerous and daunting. J. D. G. Dunn registers the problems and the resulting dearth of studies with respect to the ascension in Acts in his 'The Ascension of Jesus: A Test Case for Hermeneutics', in F. Avemarie and H. Lichtenberger (eds), *Auferstehung – Resurrection* (WUNT 135; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 301.

10. Cf. D. J. Moo, 'Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment', *JETS* 49.3 (2006), 449–88.

11. H. Attridge, ' "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest": The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11', *HTR* 73 (1980), 279–88 (280; cf. 287–8).

12. 'Hidden Stories in Hebrews: Cosmology and Theology', in R. Bauckham and N. MacDonald (eds), *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Context* (LNTS; London: T&T Clark, forthcoming 2008).

13. As is commonly done, I will use the word *temple*, though Hebrews limits itself to the wilderness *tabernacle* (σκηνή), including at 13.10. I presume that for this writer, what he says of the tabernacle applies equally to the temple; cf. Laansma, *Rest*, p. 12 n. 64.

ers.[14] Additionally, he does not assume that, with believers safely relocated in the eternal heavens, the created world will be summarily annihilated and negated[15] but that, beginning with the bodily death at Golgotha, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the created world is being cleansed and reclaimed as God's temple.[16]

While I have paid attention to this sort of study, the approach in the present chapter will be different. The approach here will be to abstract and synthesize elements without regard for how they are deployed and weighted within the book itself.[17] For example, within the argument of Hebrews angels get more play than bodily resurrection, though the latter will receive equal if not greater

14. To be distinguished from the view noted by H. W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 222f. n. 88.

15. E.g., M. E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space* (JSNTSS 73; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992): The writer of Hebrews urges his readers 'to move beyond an understanding of sacred territory as located geographically on earth to an appreciation of its re-location as a beatific state in heaven' (p. 82); again, 'Hebrews does not speak of a restoration of sacred space on earth but of its re-location in heaven (p. 86, adding that this is in contrast to Jewish apocalyptic writings that do speak of a renewal of the earth; cf. pp. 65, 67). Also Attridge, *Hebrews*, on Heb. 12.27: 'Hebrews does not seem to suggest, as do some apocalyptists, a renewal of heaven and earth. What is expected is 'rather the complete destruction of what, because it can be "shaken", is transitory. The language thus reflects other strands of apocalyptic speculation that predicted the annihilation of the visible universe' (p. 381, citing as support for the latter *4 Ezra* 7.31; 1 Cor. 7.31; 1 Jn 2.8, 17; Rev. 21.1).

16. The argument *against* cosmic renewal (see Isaacs and Attridge above) is the easier argument to make in Hebrews on *prima facie* grounds, and the claim *in favour of* renewal is often given in the form of assertion – perhaps based on general associations with apocalyptic parallels which involve the idea – rather than exegetical argument. An exception to the latter is Adams, 'Cosmology'. In my essay 'Hidden Stories' I do foreground those aspects of the book that argue for the 'renewal' interpretation. At the same time the fact that the author of Hebrews does not make the statement of 2 Pet. 3.13 or Rev. 21.1 (although see Heb. 1.12; 9.11) remains noteworthy and must make us pause before too quickly and too easily using metaphors such as 'renewal', 'renovation', and 'transformation'. In my view the resurrection of Jesus would have been the basis of Christian reflection on the nature of salvific transformation (1 Corinthians 15). This entailed ideas of both radical continuity *and* discontinuity with the original creation, so metaphors can range from renewal to annihilation and replacement. Hebrews' rhetoric tends toward the latter end (though 12.25-29 has been misread, as I argue in 'Hidden Stories') but does not exclude the former, and the former seems worked rather thoroughly, albeit quietly, into the book's fabric. In any event, less often noticed and argued is the cosmos-temple element (in this form) of my proposal. G. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004), does the most to anticipate it based on his general thesis regarding the canon as a whole, but his points with respect to Hebrews – interesting on their own – do not constitute a compelling framework for the idea within Hebrews itself.

17. Such attempts to synthesize the book's cosmology are not common. Cf. P. Ellingworth, 'Jesus and the Universe in Hebrews', *EvQ* 58 (1986), 337–50; G. W. MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews', *Semeia* 12 (1978), 179–99; Adams, 'Cosmology'.

emphasis in the following sketch. Of course no one does this sort of thing without a pre-existing grid, some hypothesized construct that assists in connecting the dots. In the interests of full disclosure, then, I will be beginning with the general descriptions of cosmology in antiquity such as they are laid out for the OT period by, e.g., John Walton,[18] or for the NT by, e.g., Bultmann (in a somewhat critical context).[19] I will also be reading the text with the conclusions on the historical-religious background of the letter that I have expressed elsewhere.[20] In short, I find comparisons with the linear historical, eschatological conceptions of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic to be more fruitful than comparisons with Philo and Gnosticism as a way of understanding the thought world of this book. It is not my desire to force Hebrews' statements into these apocalyptic conceptions but to admit the place of the latter in my thinking and to proceed from there. The degree to which this is right- or wrong-headed will be open to judgement, but if anyone disagrees with my analysis it will not be because he or she transcends this hermeneutical circle.

Preliminary Observations: Cosmology in Antiquity and Sacred Space

Two general comments will serve to give a broad orientation to our investigation. First, commenting on the cosmologies of the Ancient Near East (ANE), John Walton writes,

> Like everyone else in the ancient world, Egyptians were less interested in that which was physical than in that which was metaphysical – what lies beyond physical reality. Nut, as the sky goddess, is portrayed arching her body over the disk shaped earth. She is often supported by the hands of the god of the air while the earth god, Geb, lies prone at her feet. This is not a physical representation. The Egyptians did not believe that one could go step on Nut's toes, or throw a rock and hit her knees. Instead the portrayal communicates important truths concerning what the Egyptians believed about authority and jurisdiction in the cosmos. These truths concern function, not substance. Though they may not deal with the material world *per se*, they represent reality – a greater reality than the material world offered. The cosmos functioned by means of the gods playing out their roles. Whatever the physical structure of the heavens, it was not a priority to them. To describe creation is to describe the establishment of the functioning cosmos, not the origins of the material structure or substance of the cosmos. Material substance had relatively little importance or relevance to their understanding of the world.[21]

At least at some points in that paragraph Walton's wording does not exclude entirely an interest in 'material structure or substance', and, in any event, his

18. J. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

19. Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology'.

20. See my discussion in *Rest*, esp. pp. 10–13, 253–9, 317–58.

21. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, p. 181.

depiction would have to be qualified by the time we reach the Graeco-Roman world of the first century in general.[22] But Walton's comment is relevant as a description of the OT world that shaped the Scriptures of the writer of Hebrews, and it is the positive point regarding (ANE) antiquity's dominating *metaphysical* and *functional* interest that is important to register. At that point Walton's characterization holds as a good model for the entirety of Hebrews, including 11.3 and 12.27. Whatever the writer of Hebrews might have said in another context, in this letter nothing goes even as far as 1 Cor. 15.35-54 in the direction of addressing questions of material structure or substance. We cannot assume that the writer of Hebrews was aware of Greek conceptions of the earth as a sphere and debates over whether the earth circled the sun or the sun the earth;[23] but neither can we assume, as Bultmann seemed to do, that he took his cosmology and talk of the heavenly tabernacle as straightforward structural description. These two were never the only options in understanding the use of cosmological and heavenly sanctuary language. In what way this particular thinker – from whom we have but one anonymous discourse of uncertain social location – was even aware of our form of the question cannot be more than guessed at. But from what is here it appears that as far as cosmology and the heavenly tabernacle are concerned the writer of Hebrews was content to follow through with the principle of 11.1-3 – to accept by faith the Word of Scripture, read christologically – and to concern both himself and his readers with the *meaning* of it all as that Scriptural projection is carried through to the *telos*.

Secondly, it was noted above that salvation is a distinctly *local* concept in Hebrews, a destination of the people of God that goes under different names. At the heart of this conceptualization is the divine throne and presence coordinated with the Most Holy Place of the earthly and heavenly tabernacles. This brings us, in turn, to the idea of sacred space.[24] In the world of Israel space might be religiously charged on the model of concentric spheres of decreasing holiness as one moves outward from a centre,[25] having a partial analogue in the amount

22. Cf., e.g., O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*, 2nd edn (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1993); M. R. Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Edward Adams' essay in the present volume.

23. See, e.g., J. Painter, 'Creation, Cosmology', in R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids (eds), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997), pp. 250–5; cf. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 655; A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 288.

24. Note, among others, Isaacs, *Sacred Space*; J. Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS, 75; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, pp. 118–23.

25. Cf. *m. Kel* 1.6-9, which mentions 'ten [degrees] of holiness[es]', as one moves out from the Most Holy Place to the entire land of Israel; cf. J. Neusner (ed.), *The Mishnah. A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 894–5.

of radiation that would be measured as one moved toward and away from Chernobyl in 1986. Certain locations such as Jacob's stairway (Genesis 28) and the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and temple were thought of as kinds of 'portals through which the gods traversed'.[26] The Most Holy Place was a point of intersection between heaven and earth[27] and the centre of Israel as sacred space. Moreover, precisely in this connection it was a place integrally related to creation[28] and the cosmos. Again, Walton:

> Since the temple on earth was considered only a type of the larger, archetypal cosmic temple, many images and symbols evoke the relationship between temple and cosmos. The temple is considered the centre of the cosmos, and in itself a microcosmos...
>
> In Syro-Palestine the temple was the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain. This concept is represented in Ugaritic literature as well as the Bible, where Mount Zion is understood as the mountain of the Lord (e.g., Ps. 48) and the place where his temple, a representation of Eden, was built. 'For ancient Israel, the Temple of Solomon – indeed, the Temple Mount and all Jerusalem – was a symbol as well as reality, a mythopoeic realization of heaven on earth, Paradise, the Garden of Eden'.[29]
>
> The sanctuary of Israel represented a small, idealized island of order in a world of threatened chaos. It was a place that preserved equilibrium for God's presence, which in turn was an anchor against disorder. Preserving sacred space provided for God's continued presence. God's continued presence served to maintain equilibrium and uphold creation.[30]

Whether in the end it will remain true that 'not all that counts can be counted', one might yet wish to insist on it for our present understanding of our world. The cultic and heavenly-earthly dynamics of sacred space introduce into Hebrews elements that are not natural ones (though perhaps not inconceivable) for modern conceptions of the space-time universe. It is in line with this assumed world that Christ's death can be portrayed both as an earthly and heavenly event, with the earthly centre of sacred space shifted from the Jerusalem Temple to Golgotha. It is also in line with this that I elsewhere mount the argument that for the writer of Hebrews the tabernacle represents the future of the cleansed cosmos (see above). The localized sacred offering on Golgotha will

26. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, p. 118.

27. Note the cover illustration of Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, depicting the Shamash plaque (*c.* ninth–sixth centuries BCE) about which Walton comments, p. 168, 'The Shamash plaque is particularly informative as it shows worshipers who, though physically in the earthly temple, view themselves before Shamash's heavenly throne. The heavenly waters are beneath his feet and the stars are shown in the sky across the bottom of the picture'.

28. See especially J. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Eisenbrauns, forthcoming). In this same work Walton takes up and develops further several points I am mentioning here.

29. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, pp. 123, 127 (citing L. Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden', *BAR* 26 [2000], 37).

30. Walton, 'Equilibrium and the Sacred Compass: The Structure of Leviticus', *BBR* 11.2 (2001), 296–7.

radiate through the entire cosmos. For the present it is all we can do to register this dynamic as essential to the cosmological thought of this discourse.

The Structure of the Cosmos in Hebrews

Given the above orientation we can distil from the discourse of Hebrews its portrayal of creation. Creation consists of the visible earth and heaven (sky), with the invisible heaven (God's abode) above. No attention is given to death as a place, an underworld,[31] and it is not clear that the writer has an intermediate *sphere* between earth and heaven in mind in 2.6-9.[32] The perspective is not anti-cosmic. The writer affirms the creation accounts of the OT, claims that same Creator God as the Father of the Son, and affirms creation itself, all of which places him on a different trajectory than the Gnostics.[33] The Son's role is pictured in terms reminiscent of wisdom in the OT and other Jewish texts. Creation was brought about through (δἰ οὗ [1.2]) the Son and by (δἰ οὗ = efficient cause [2.10]) God. It was created by the word of God (ῥήματι θεοῦ, 11.3), and is borne up (perhaps also 'borne *along*')[34] by the word of the Son's power (τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, 1.3). All things exist on account of (δἰ ὃν = final cause[35] [2.10]) God, and comprise the inheritance of the Son (1.2).[36] The flow of history between these poles of protology and eschatology contains

31. It is clearly implied, however: 13.20 (cf. 5.7; 6.2; 11.19, 35). See also 10.27, 31; 12.29. Demons are not mentioned (they may be included in the generic ἐχθροί of 1.13 and 10.13), and the Devil (2.14) is not localized beyond his association with death.

32. The latter *pace* Ellingworth, 'Universe', pp. 341, 349 (comparing and contrasting Hebrews to *Ascension of Isaiah* 7–9; Slavonic Enoch 1–20; Greek Apocalypse of Baruch; *Test. Levi* 2.3). Though Hebrews' imagery itself speaks of being higher and lower than the angels, nothing in 2.6-9 requires a spatially separate sphere, an intermediary world, and 12.22 is against it. The author's imagery may well assume this intermediate sphere, but we cannot know this with any confidence and it shouldn't lead to the complications that Ellingworth struggles with on p. 349.

33. Among others, cf. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 100f. This of course also removes him from Marcion's trajectory.

34. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 100f., takes φέρω in the sense of 'sustain' rather than 'bear along'. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2nd edn (London: MacMillan and Co., 1892), p. 13, gives the sense as a 'present and continuous support and carrying forward to their end of all created things'.

35. Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 48; P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 98.

36. The Holy Spirit is not assigned a role in cosmology in any direct sense within the discourse of Hebrews. In two ways perhaps the Spirit is implicated, however. The Spirit's association with divine speech hints at a relationship with both the original act of creation and the sustaining of the cosmos (11.3; 1.3), on the one hand, and the act of salvation (which can be coordinated with ideas of 'new creation') on the other; cf. 3.7; 9.8; 10.15. Secondly, the Spirit is closely bound up with the action that brings cleansing to the cosmos (9.14; 10.29) and with the share of believers in the 'present and future' sacred space of salvation (2.4; note the terminological tie with Josh. 11.23 and the theme of *inheritance* in Hebrews generally; 6.4).

God's testimony to his 'great salvation' through 'signs, wonders, and manifold deeds of power' (2.4; cf. also ch. 11).

The creation *event* itself can be spoken of either elliptically (1.2; 2.10) or as a making (ποιέω, 1.2; cf. 12.27), founding (θεμελιόω, 1.10; καταβολή, 4.3; 9.26), erecting (κατασκευάζω, 3.4), fashioning (καταρτίζω; 11.3; cf. 10.5; 13.21), creating (γίνομαι, 11.3; cf. 4.3), or simply as the works of God's hands (1.10; cf. 4.3f., 10); the result can be called a creation (κτίσις, 4.13; 9.11). What is made is, on the one hand, the visible earth and heavens.[37] On the other hand, the heavenly realm and place of salvation is also spoken of as made by God, certainly in 11.10 (cf. 13.14), where God is the craftsperson (τεχνίτης, designer)[38] and builder (δημιουργός)[39] of the 'city having foundations',[40] in 11.16, where God 'prepares' (ἑτοιμάζω) a city, and at 8.2, where God 'sets up' (πήγνυμι) the heavenly tabernacle (cf. also 1.2 and 4.3). One may then note that in 9.11 he does not write τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ κτίσεως, but τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως.

The statement about creation at 11.3 is more directly interested in the matter of faith than cosmogony. The wording expresses what the visible universe was

37. It is debated whether τοὺς αἰῶνας in 1.2 is temporal (ages) or spatial (worlds), and whether the plural equals a singular idea (world). Based on 11.3 Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, argues that it is spatial and that the plural should be taken as 'referring to the visible and invisible worlds... and thus denoting the totality of the universe' (p. 96; likewise Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 41). At 11.3 he understands τοὺς αἰῶνας as the visible world only (p. 569). Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 178, sees both spatial and temporal aspects in 1.2.

38. Cf., e.g., 1 Chr. 22.15; 29.5 (both regarding the temple); Wis. 13.1. Cognates are used of the building of the tabernacle: Exod. 28.11; 30.25; 31.5; and the temple: 2 Kings 12.11; 22.6; 1 Chr. 14.1; 22.15; 28.21; 29.5; 2 Chr. 24.12; 34.11; 1 Esdr. 5.53[55]; Ezra 3.7; Sir. 45.10.

39. This word is defined as one who designs something and builds it. Neither this term nor the cognate verb is used of God in the LXX or elsewhere in the NT. It was often used of the creator god in philosophical and religious traditions since Plato, and is used commonly in that way by Philo and early Christian writers. 'Hebrews here no doubt relies on the theological vocabulary of Hellenistic Judaism' (Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 324), a comment that is true in terms of occurrence but fallacious semantically in slipping in the phrase '*theological* vocabulary' (an 'illegitimate totality transfer'). W. L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (WBC 47B; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), p. 352, also connects both τεχνίτης and δημιουργός to Hellenistic Judaism, noting that they are frequently joined in Philo. But, in contrast to Attridge, Lane adds: 'That Josephus could use δημιουργός of God with none of the philosophical associations of the word found in Plato or Philo shows that the mere presence of a term is insufficient basis for determining its significance. Williamson has observed a significant difference in context for δημιουργός in Philo and in Hebrews. Philo consistently uses δημιουργός and τεχνίτης of God to refer to the creation of the physical universe. In v. 10, however, the context established for the use of these terms is distinctively eschatological; the city is unquestionably the heavenly city of God. The context in which the combination of the two words occurs in Hebrews suggests that it is no more than a rhetorical flourish, appropriate to the literary language of the homily...'. Cf. R. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 42–51.

40. See Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, p. 352; Isa. 28.16; 54.11 LXX; *4 Ezra* 10.27; Rev. 21.10-14, 19-20.

not created out of, namely μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων.[41] This may assume a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* but if so this is a very indirect way of expressing the thought.[42] The precise meaning of the phrase is far from clear in any event.[43] The simplest solution is probably to take ῥήματι θεοῦ and μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων as getting at the same thing and the whole thought as alluding to Genesis 1.[44] As Ellingworth comments, 'Hebrews' concern is...with the unseen origin of the visible world, an origin perceived only by faith... The essential thought is that creation is by

41. I am taking εἰς + infinitive as consecutive and μή with ἐκ φαινομένων. I am also restricting τοὺς αἰῶνας to the visible universe (contrast 1.2).

42. For discussion and parallels see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, p. 569; Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, p. 332; Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 315f. It seems to me that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is consistent with the overall conception of Hebrews, however (e.g., 1.2; 2.10).

43. For example, Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, p. 332, follows Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, in the view that for Philo and Plato 'the visible universe was made ἐκ φαινομένων, "out of visible material", in the sense that God molded φαινόμενα into the visible objects of the world we see around us'. Hebrews' phrasing accordingly 'excludes any influence from Platonic or Philonic cosmology. It may, in fact, have been the writer's intention to correct a widespread tendency in hellenistic Judaism to read Genesis 1 in the light of Plato's doctrine of creation in the *Timaeus*'. Adams, 'Cosmology', though differing from Lane, also finds the wording of 11.3 to be incompatible with Platonic conceptions. Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 316, takes the exact opposite view, arguing that a Platonic cosmogonic model is implicit here. Both views are defensible though both can be charged with over-reaching. In particular it is far from clear that a specifically Platonic cosmogonic model is implied in or needed for 11.3, though it plainly works for someone inclined to see that background behind the book as a whole. Attridge, 'Logic of Hebrews 4.1-11', suggests that the same idea is behind 4.1-11: 'the goal which the Exodus generation pursued corresponds to the goal which Christians pursue in the same way, as antitype to type. However, the type in this analogy (the rest in the land of Canaan) is itself an antitype of a more original type, the state of rest which God himself entered at the completion of the week of creation'. My critique in *Rest* still stands; Attridge's reading of the logic of 4.1-11 is problematic in that the writer of Hebrews' argument does not make anything of a typology with the earthly land (it is concerned throughout with the one reality that is or is not entered) nor of a heavenly-earthly contrast (the interest is with a *future* entrance); the κατάπαυσις is not redefined as a Sabbath-rest but rather the future Sabbath-celebration occurs in God's resting place. *But – considering the book as a whole – if this writer was inclined to see the tabernacle as a model of the universe and the tabernacle was modelled after a heavenly pattern (8.5) then the universe itself would find its pattern in what was shown to Moses (8.5).* In other words, I agree in some important respects with Attridge's way of conceptualizing the thought of the book as a whole. The main differences with Attridge are that (1) I am not confident that this is the precise thought being expressed in the language of 11.3; (2) I see this as further in the background of Hebrews 3–4 than Attridge does; (3) in 4.1-11, in the sense that this thought is behind the passage, this has as much or more to do with cosmology (resting place and cosmos) than experience (rest); (4) it is not clear that the Platonic tradition had a patent on this model. But in agreement with Attridge this broad conception is basic to the thought of Hebrews.

44. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 568–70, taking ἐκ as causal (BDAG, *s.v.* 3e); cf. C. R. Koester, *Hebrews* (CAB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 474.

God (cf. 3.4; 4.3), who is perceived only by faith'.[45] Or Lane: 'The discernment of the unseen creative activity of God behind the visible universe exemplifies the capacity of faith to demonstrate the reality of that which cannot be perceived through sense perception, which is celebrated as the essence of faith in v. 1*b*'.[46]

The created world has not only a beginning but also an end (1.2, 11-13; 3.14; 4.13; 9.26-28; 10.13, 27; 12.25-29; 13.14); this *telos* was anticipated in the pattern shown Moses on the mountain (8.5). It is this that I pursue in a separate essay.[47] Here we note merely that the writer of Hebrews shares with other NT writers the idea that the end has already begun (1.2; 6.4-5; 9.26).[48] The created world also has a *point*: It has a destiny, which is brought to fulfilment in the Son (2.6-9), whose inheritance it is (1.2). Hanging over all of this in Hebrews is the *promise* of God,[49] which is already anticipated by the exordium of the letter (1.1-4). This makes all of history far more than merely physical; it is a highly *personal* affair, for upon its outcome rests the very reputation of the Creator.

As for demographics, we can account for God, the Son, the Holy Spirit, angels, the Devil, and humans. God is enthroned in heaven; the location of his footstool is not indicated (cf. Isa. 66.1; 1 Chr. 28.2; Ps. 99.5; 132.7; Lam. 2.1).[50] The Son descended from the Father to earth in his incarnation, descended (evidently) further to death, was resurrected, and was exalted to the right hand of God; he will make a second appearance within the sphere of visible creation (9.28).[51] There is no indication of the Holy Spirit's movement or location other than his presence with humanity in God's work of salvation (2.4; 3.7; 6.4; 9.8, 14; 10.15, 29); the Spirit's role in cosmology was mentioned in a footnote above. Angels populate heaven (12.22), worship the Son (1.6), are sent as servants of those about to inherit salvation (1.14), and can be encountered on earth in the appearance of human strangers (13.2). The Devil is merely associated with death; his role in the larger drama of the cosmos is almost entirely assumed, breaking through to the surface only in the allusion to his destruction through

45. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 569f.

46. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, p. 330.

47. Laansma, 'Hidden Stories'.

48. C. K. Barrett, 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews', in D. Daube and W. D. Davies (eds), *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 363–93; Hurst, *Background*, pp. 7–42.

49. Cf. 4.1; 6.12, 13, 15, 17; 7.6; 8.6; 9.15; 10.23, 36; 11.9, 11, 13, 17, 33, 39; 12.26; also 4.2, 6; Laansma, *Rest*, pp. 301–2.

50. Cf. Beale, *Temple*, p. 134.

51. The Son's movements are indicated at more than one point; see further below. It is worth noting the way in which G. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (NovTSup 73; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 121–4, demonstrates that the embedded discourses of 1.5-14; 2.5-9; 2.10-18; 5.1–7.28; 8.1-2; and 8.3–10.18 follow the path of the Son from heaven to earth and back to heaven.

the death of Jesus and the deliverance of those that the Devil held enslaved by means of their fear of death (2.14-15).[52] Living humans populate the earth; believers have access to the heavenly throne room. There is no clear indication of where deceased persons are at present (12.23?;[53] 11.5?).[54] Ultimately those who are faithful will be bodily resurrected[55] and enter the place of salvation, which goes under different depictions (see below). The enemies of God – in this letter these are above all those who do not continue in faith – will find themselves without an escape (2.3; 12.25), made a footstool of the Son's feet (1.13; 2.8; 10.13), excluded from the place of salvation, 'removed' as that which can be shaken (12.27), in raging fire (10.27; cf. 6.8), and in the hands of the living God (10.31) who is a consuming fire (12.29).

On earth the central locations and architecture are Mt Sinai, the wilderness, and especially the tabernacle. The closer earthly realities, Rome (assuming this to be the location of the letter's recipients) with its persecution, Jerusalem with its Temple (if it is still standing), Gethsemane, and Golgotha (cf. only 12.2; 6.6), are present only by implication. Yet Jerusalem is in mind throughout the argument. And Jesus' crucifixion is central, but this is swallowed in the imagery of the heavenly tabernacle and cultus.

Heaven contains God's throne, with a seat to its right, located in the Most Holy Place of a heavenly tabernacle. There is a curtain, after the pattern of that which separates the Holy Place (present in heaven only by implication) from the Most Holy Place in the earthly tabernacle.[56] There is a book inscribed with the names of the church of the firstborn (12.23).[57] The same[58] location, with its

52. The Devil's appearance in 2.14-15 indicates that this much of the drama is relevant to the needs addressed by Hebrews, and certainly his role fits with both the key function of Genesis 1–3 in Hebrews generally and the apocalyptic cast of the book. The isolated nature of this allusion, however, suggests that this is not a topic that was currently problematized in this community.

53. According to Ellingworth the tension with 11.40 suggests that in 12.23 'the heavenly πανήγυρις is anticipated rather than fully realized: worshippers now enjoy communion in advance with the righteous of earlier generations with whom they will be made perfect at the end... It is probably misleading to suggest that the righteous are thought of here as having been made perfect in spirit, but not yet in body: this dichotomy does not appear significant in Hebrews' (*Hebrews*, pp. 680f.).

54. Cf. Laansma, *Rest*, pp. 309f., 283 n. 149; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 110.

55. 2.9, 14-15; 5.7; 6.2; 9.27-28; 11.19, 35; 12.2; 13.20; cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, pp. 457–61.

56. See D. M. Gurtner, 'The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend', *JETS* 49/1 (2006), 97–114. In Hebrews the earthly tabernacle as a whole is made obsolete but *neither* of the veils – earthly or heavenly – is ever explicitly 'torn' (Mk 15.38 par.) or removed. The question is one of the privilege of passing beyond it.

57. Exod. 32.32f.; Ps. 69.28; Isa. 4.3; Dan. 12.1; Mal. 3.16; Lk. 10.20; Phil. 4.3; Rev. 3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12, 15; 21.27.

58. Lane's comment fits here: 'The designation "city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem"

environs, is variously depicted as the destiny of the faithful: It is a resting place (κατάπαυσις), or world (οἰκουμένη) or a city (πόλις) place (τόπος, 11.8), fatherland (πατρίς), place of inheritance (κληρονομία), Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Σιὼν ὄρος καὶ πόλις θεοῦ ζῶντος, Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐπουράνιος), or an unshakable kingdom (βασιλεία ἀσάλευτος). The access of believers to this locale is both immediate (as divine throne room) and imminent (e.g., as the κατάπαυσις).

The movements of the Son–High Priest in relation to the cosmos and the heavenly tabernacle have been plotted out by Ellingworth, for whom we cannot afford the space that critical interaction would require, but whose study deserves notice. He comments that 'It is remarkable... how often the writer's view of who Jesus was and what he did does involve presuppositions about the universe... The author thinks synthetically, not analytically: for him, what Jesus did, who he was, and how the universe is framed, belong together, though the last is least important for him'.[59] The most problematic texts, he notes, are those that combine latent (presupposed) cosmology and patent soteriology (2.9; 4.14; 6.19f.; 7.26; 8.1-2; 9.1-14; 9.24; 10.19f.).[60] A survey of the language of structure and movement in these passages leads him to these suggestions:[61] (1) 'The vertical language of 2.9; 4.14; and 7.26 probably owes more to primitive Christian tradition, whereas the horizontal language of the heavenly and earthly tabernacles... is developed in a distinctive way to express the author's own typology'. (2) At least in some places (e.g., 10.20) the 'cosmological language is used in an *ad hoc* and incidental way to express a soteriological reality'. Almost certainly here we have language being employed metaphorically to draw out the theological significance of the cross and exaltation. (3) The vertical and horizontal cosmological images of the book do not readily reconcile,[62] but 'the two types of language complement one another'. In explanation he

evokes the thought of the heavenly sanctuary or temple as well. Cody has observed that in the NT, when the idea of God present and meeting with his people is stressed, there is a strong tendency to prefer the temple symbolism. When the allusion is to the goal of pilgrimage in its social significance (the fellowship of the elect and the angels), writers prefer to use the symbol of the city, as in 22a...' (*Hebrews 9–13*, p. 466; citing A. Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews* [St Meinrad, IN: Grail, 1960], p. 115 n. 65).

59. Ellingworth, 'Universe', p. 340.

60. Eliminating several passages that either treat only one or the other of these, or where neither is a factor (e.g., 3.7–4.11, as he sees it, is *explicitly* cosmological and does not do much with Christology). Some of the passages in Ellingworth's list of eight are particularly difficult and admit of alternative interpretations.

61. Ellingworth, 'Universe', pp. 348–50.

62. He considers rotating the horizontal through ninety degrees, especially since the horizontal imagery is only implicit. But he notes that the writer is nowhere concerned to reconcile the horizontal and vertical images and he finds it difficult to equate the curtain (from the horizontal imagery) with the intermediary angelic sphere (from the vertical imagery). I am not sure the writer of Hebrews operates with the intermediary sphere, but his first point is significant.

adds, 'one might say that the horizontal, typological language expresses nature or origin, whereas the vertical language expresses location, and is thus more truly cosmological'.[63]

General Observations Based on this Survey

Four broad observations in response to this survey of cosmic language in Hebrews:

(1) If it is obvious that some of this is self-consciously figurative in the writer of Hebrews' mind – that is, a way of depicting something so as to draw out its theological significance – it is also clear that these features (wherever they may be in the letter) blend without distinction into a world that the writer of Hebrews takes quite seriously as reality. He certainly believes in bodily resurrection. There is good reason to think that he believes that angels exist and that they have and can still appear in human form; his arguments in chs. 1–2 and at 13.2 fall flat if he doesn't. There is no reason to doubt that he believes that heaven is up, though it is gratuitous simply to assume that he does believe it.[64] There is good reason to doubt that he pictures God as seated on a throne, Jesus carrying a bowl of blood through a heavenly temple, or living believers as mystically venturing up (in the nature of a Merkabah ascent[65]) into the heavenly throne room. Where to draw the lines is the problem, and runs the risk of fostering more misunderstanding than understanding. This goes not least for 12.25-29, which many interpreters have been quick to take as 'literal' description. In my judgement, William Lane has shed the most light on that passage, and I developed my own conclusions on it elsewhere.[66]

[63]I.e., 'In horizontal, typological language, the nature of Christ's work is heavenly, while that of the levitical cultus was of the earth. In vertical, cosmological language Jesus lived and died on earth, and now reigns in heaven at the right hand of God'.

64. The canvas of imagery as a whole assumes it, of course, though I cannot see that anything in his argument depends on whether he thought that language to be descriptively accurate (and recall the insights of Walton, noted above). But saying this does not mean that we know whether and how the writer of Hebrews would have been *theologically* shaken by the argument that heaven is not straight up. As has already been stated, the hermeneutical problems are difficult at this point. Some answers may come through reexamination of the Scriptural texts in their contexts, allowing for the conclusion that apparent contradictions between the Bible and science are really just apparent. But other answers will probably require the admission that *Scripture's* meaning cannot be reduced to the human author's theological understanding. Perhaps Moses and the writer of Hebrews *would* have been theologically shaken by a modern course in physics. So much the worse for the human authors, who, it may appear, wrote better than they knew. There is also wisdom and considerable perspective in the words of J. Pelikan, *Whose Bible Is It? A Short History of the Scriptures* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), pp. 232–3.

65. Cf. Hurst, *Background*, pp. 82–5.

66. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, pp. 464–91; Laansma, 'Hidden Stories'.

(2) The cosmos is more than just setting for the writer of Hebrews. The theme surfaces too insistently to treat it as merely stylistic embellishment (e.g., at 3.4). It is here to highlight the *jurisdiction* of God and the Son, which is comprehensive chronologically, geographically and anthropologically (4.12-13; 9.26-28; 12.25-29). The implications are good or bad, depending on faithfulness. It is here to assert the *finality*, *scope*, and *nature* of God's salvation in the Son. It is here to manifest the *superiority* of the Son, and indeed his separation from the other sons/children and his position on the divine side of the divine-angelic/cosmos divide.[67] Finally, Hebrews' cosmology is here to point up the *glory* of God, and in the best of the biblical tradition to require *exclusive* reliance on God and his word. It is the great question: Will we cling to the Rock of salvation or to the rocks of creation? He will share his glory with no one and nothing and to instil the point he declares that he will shake out and change his very creation (1.10-12; 12.25-29). But for my part it is finally unsatisfying to say that all this is developed merely to set up a great snuffing out of the visible universe at 12.25-29. Pure and simple annihilation is an odd way to treat one's inheritance. Of course God's ways are not our ways, but such an end is not in any event the writer of Hebrews' expectation. As elsewhere an end (death) is the occasion for reclamation (resurrection), which redounds all the more to the glory of God (13.20-21).[68]

(3) The latter point does bring us back to the perennial question of the conceptual background of Hebrews, broadly consisting of the tug of war between those advocating for a more Platonic and those advocating for a more apocalyptic matrix. But that debate tends to have more to do with what the author says about tabernacle and cultus than about the cosmos itself.[69] The exception to

67. Cf. L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), especially pp. 497–504.

68. The very idea of bodily resurrection – which is certainly present in Hebrews – seems on theological grounds to entail the inclusion of the entire cosmos, which is where Paul takes the idea (Rom. 8.20-21; cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, p. 813). The writer of Hebrews may take a different view but I doubt it, for exegetical and scientific reasons already given. If the annihilationist view can claim the advantage of a *prima facie* reading of 12.25-29 then a resurrection model can claim the advantage of the broader tradition (represented by Romans 8) in which this writer plainly stood. In any event, our argument does not hang entirely on a deduction from resurrection.

69. The writer of Hebrews' spatial and metaphysical dualism divides terminologically along these lines: On the one hand, there is the 'true tent' (8.2; 9.24), 'pattern' (8.1-5), 'greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands' (9.11, 24), 'heavenly things themselves' (9.23), 'heaven itself' (9.24), 'the image itself of the [coming] things' (10.1). On the other hand, there is the 'copy', 'shadow' (8.1-5; 9.23), 'made with hands' (9.11, 24), 'antitype of the true' (9.24), 'regulations of flesh' (9.10), 'shadow of the good things coming' (10.1). To this can be added the language of creation surveyed above, especially related to the heavenly world. What is immediately apparent is that the language of 'copy', 'shadow', 'made with hands', and 'antitype' all attaches specifically to the earthly tabernacle with its law, that is, to something within the cosmos more than to the cosmos as such. In other words, the *heavenly* world tends to be merged in these comparisons,

that statement is 12.25-29, and possibly 3.7–4.11 and 11.3.[70] Of these, 12.25-29 requires the most attention and we have dealt with this elsewhere; here the idea that the tabernacle represents the future of the cosmos comes to its head.

In brief, we can reinforce the conclusions of others, especially Williamson and Hurst,[71] to the effect that the Letter's cosmology evidences no real sharing in the Platonic thought world represented, e.g., by Philo of Alexandria. Beyond what was mentioned above, the observation can be added that none of the various elements of the writer of Hebrews' cosmology are brought forth for purposes of allegorical meanings, certainly not relating to philosophical currents in the Platonic tradition. The writer of Hebrews' soteriological and christological conceptions are subtle and creative but the letter's cosmological features are rather unadorned.[72]

(4) Indeed, the above description encourages the impression that the writer is working with a cosmology that would have been considered traditional by Christians steeped in the OT. It would be consistent with the idea that this writer derives his cosmology more from his Scriptures as filtered through (by now) traditional christology than from either empirical observation or philosophical speculations, however acquainted he may be with thinking such as we find in Philo and to whatever degree it affects the form of his expression.

Closing Reflections

Taken together the foregoing provides perspective on the relationship between language and concrete referent for the writer of Hebrews. The number of ways

meaning that when the author is speaking in this way of the heavenly world as present or future he telescopes in and out from the tabernacle and city to the realm of heaven in general. On the earthly side of things, however, he keeps narrowly to the tabernacle and its law. The possible exception is the 'city' and 'fatherland' imagery of ch. 11 (11.10-16; cf. 13.14) but (1) by this time in the book's argument the idea is plainly that of sacred space (cf. 12.18-29; in other words, these are specific *parts* of creation that had symbolic import, especially as spheres in relation to the Most Holy Place, rather than creation as such; we can observe that in the OT the land, like the tabernacle and temple, was portrayed as a symbolic return to Paradise, i.e., to the original creation); (2) the latter passages are decidedly oriented along temporal, futuristic lines; and (3) nothing in these passages on their own requires anything beyond the conception of, say, 1 Pet. 1.1, 17; 2.11; Phil. 3.19-21; Gal. 4.25-26; Col. 3.1-4; Rev. 21.1-2. There is accordingly no *direct* line from the language of 'copy', etc. to the writer's general view of the *cosmos*. He does not picture *creation as such* as a copy or shadow or antitype. The assumed *indirect* line between this language and his view of the cosmos would be closer to this: The heavenly world as a whole was a pattern for the tabernacle/law, which was itself the shadow of the state of the world as a whole to come, a world identified with the pre-existing pattern shown to Moses on the mountain.

70. Perhaps also 9.11; 11.10, 13-16. 11.3 was dealt with above; see the preceding note on 11.10-16.

71. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, *passim*; Hurst, *Background*, *passim*.

72. This aspect of this subject – the contrasts with the Platonic tradition – are more thoroughly examined by Adams, 'Cosmology'.

in which the place of salvation can be pictured – tabernacle, city (= Mount Zion, heavenly Jerusalem), resting place, fatherland, world, etc. – already expressed more interest in getting at significance and understanding than in describing realistically and literalistically a concrete reality, as if there is actually a heavenly and future tabernacle structure, a city with buildings, and so on. In particular, the elasticity of the cultic and tabernacle imagery points in the direction of metaphorical usage. Especially in chs 5–10 the writer very creatively exploits the tabernacle cultus and liturgy to articulate christology and soteriology in powerfully *practical* ways. It is evident that he is finding yet another way of expressing the 'already–not yet' perspective that is found elsewhere in the NT; the attempt is to articulate the basis and nature of the 'entrance' that the believer already has while awaiting the entrance to come.

In connection with the point made earlier about sacred space we can go another step. If we are right that Golgotha is conceived after the manner of the Most Holy Place as the intersection of the earthly sanctuary and divine throne room, and if the writer of Hebrews is not imagining a form of mystical ascent for believers, then the language of *heavenly* entrance (εἰσέρχομαι) and approach (προσέρχομαι) is always oriented precisely through Golgotha's very *earthly cross* and so, for the present, is always conceptualized as the way of suffering, of cross bearing. This is consistent not only with the dynamics of sacred space, but with the language and the juxtaposing of ideas throughout the letter (e.g., 2.10-11; 6.9-20; 10.19-36; 12.1-29; 13.12-16). The themes of 'suffering/ shame' and 'approach to the divine throne' are not merely related as 'need and provision' but as two aspects of the one movement of worship.

Thus we approach the divine throne in heaven precisely and *only* when we go out (ἐξέρχομαι) to Jesus and his faithful ones outside the camp, to the new and ultimate centre of sacred space, suffering outside the gate where Golgotha is found, bearing his shame (τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ φέροντες). That is where the heavenly divine throne is to be found on earth; there is no other portal. Henceforth believers will neither seek nor cling to any place or means of security and sanctification beyond Golgotha within 'this creation' for here they have no abiding city – not even Jerusalem, far less Rome. Rather, they are communally seeking that city that is coming (13.12-14), the cleansed cosmos in its entirety as the temple of God. The positive cast of 13.15-16 should not cause us to miss the cruciform nature of the life it calls forth as an encapsulation of the whole string of exhortations to faithful action – focused particularly in the doing of good within the Christian fellowship – that runs through the Letter.

To say, then, that this cosmological and heavenly tabernacle language has no concrete referent is to mock experience and hope. Nor are we claiming that the preceding paragraphs by any means exhaust what the writer of Hebrews may have understood to be the concrete reality to which this language refers. But neither is it to say that he would have (or could have) surrendered any of his images for a more 'literalistic' attempt at description or for any other set of

images. These are images he would – I think – have insisted on as necessary and indispensable by dint of their being *revealed* (cf. 8.5; 9.23-24). They finally belong to a coherent world drawn from the OT as mediated through Christian tradition; they form an organic whole, a kind of self-sustaining ecosystem that does not admit of tampering. There may be no heavenly tabernacle – as we know tabernacles – but if we mentally raze the image the reality itself disappears from view. The image does not hold the thing in existence but it makes it knowable in the only way it can be and (more importantly, given the writer's pastoral concerns) *must* be known. Or to revisit and redeploy the imagery of conventional and infrared photography with which this essay began, we may say that even if another type of 'photo' of these heavenly and eschatological realities were possible than the one involving the cultic symbolism of this Letter, the writer of Hebrews would insist on *this* image as the most relevant and meaningful for the questions that matter.

And, in any event, Beale is correct to stress that for the writer of Hebrews – as for other early Christians – what was considered 'figurative' and what was considered 'real' was the reverse of what we may be accustomed to thinking.[73] In the end the 'real' tabernacle has nothing to do with a locatable building; it was the Mosaic tabernacle that was figurative. So for the writer of Hebrews it is not a matter of trying to use a 'real' tabernacle figuratively to talk about a 'spiritual' one, but of understanding properly what was always a figure to get at the reality to which it always pointed, the heavenly eternal and cosmically future κατάπαυσις. Whether this is 'demythologizing' depends then on how we define myth and what in the world is to be included in it.[74]

73. Beale, *Temple*, pp. 295–8.

74. Among other works that help in thinking through this sort of use of figurative language and the relationship between metaphor and referent, see J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); H. Weder, 'Metaphor and Reality', in J. Polkinghorne and M. Welker (eds), *The End of the World and the Ends of God* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), pp. 291–7; R. Bauckham and T. Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

9

God and 'the World': Cosmology and Theology in the Letter of James

Darian Lockett

James declares, 'whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God' (4.4b) and thus draws a line in the sand (or in the cosmos) separating the antithetical worldviews associated with 'the world' and God. Though according to 4.4 it seems clear that James' understanding of the cosmos rides upon this God/'world' divide, it has often been argued that James lacks any such coherent structure and theology. Much of this discussion has been dominated by the influential assumptions of Martin Dibelius. He concluded that because the text was made up largely of sayings material, '*the entire document lacks continuity in thought*'[1] and thus '*has not "theology"*'.[2]

If James lacks coherent structure, and thus any clear theology, why include the Letter in a text considering the interplay between cosmology and theology? Though an answer to such a question seemed certain for Dibelius, the last two decades have seen quite a shift, beginning with Peter Davids' comment that 'the age of the string-of-pearls conception of the letter is passed, and its essential theological unity is ready for exploration'.[3] Matt Jackson-McCabe nicely indicates this in his recent article: 'With the general shift, since the 1960's, toward reading strategies that emphasize coherence and connections in texts... has come a steady erosion in the hegemony of Dibelius's atomistic, form-critical approach to James'.[4] Furthermore Luke Timothy Johnson notes that James, as wisdom literature, though 'general in intention... is particular in expression. Even minimal arrangement of materials represents an interpretation and point of view'. He continues by insisting that though 'aphorisms may be worn to clichés... they do claim to make statements about reality – not only to say something *well* but to say *something*'.[5]

1. M. Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (rev. H. Greeven; trans. M. A. Williams; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 11th edn, 1976), p. 2 (emphasis original).

2. Dibelius, *James*, p. 21 (emphasis original).

3. P. H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 13.

4. M. Jackson-McCabe, 'The Messiah Jesus in the Mythic World of James', *JBL* 122 (2003), 701–30 (703).

5. L. T. Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 204–5, n. 14 (emphasis mine).

Johnson has noted how the wisdom sayings of James have been arranged. He asserts that the 'important organizing (and selecting) principle in James is a central set of convictions concerning the absolute incompatibility of two construals of reality and two modes of behavior following from such diverse understandings. This "deep structure" of polar opposition... undergirds the inclusion and shaping of James' material'.[6] He argues, '[e]ven a cursory survey of this composition shows that James characteristically establishes polar contrasts'. Johnson concludes that the central contrast between 'friendship with God' and 'friendship with the world' in 4.4 offers the best 'thematic centre for [James'] ethical and religious dualism'.[7]

Here we will explore, in Johnson's words, the 'something' James says, specifically with respect to how James' statements regarding the cosmos may be seen together as a whole and whether this cosmological framework may indicate a well-crafted theological point of view. It is in the fitting confines of 'text' that such an encoding of world view takes place, for in Judith Lieu's words: 'Texts play a central part not just in documentation of what it meant to be a Christian, but in actually shaping Christianity'.[8] According to Lieu, Christian reality (theological reality) was textually constructed. Thus, in describing the cosmos, James calls forth a new identity for his readers and articulates a theological construal of reality. The present chapter will outline the various indications of cosmology in James and will attempt to understand them within a coherent, textually constructed view of the universe. From these observations we will reflect upon how James' cosmology renders a theological map which plots both human and divine action – charting a new, theological identity for his readers. Our present journey through this Jacobean map of the cosmos begins with the 'earthly', namely a discussion of 'the world' in James, then proceeds upward to heaven, especially considering the phrase 'from above', and finally descends downward to 'Gehenna'.

1. *'The World' in James*

To view James' map of the cosmos we must first view the 'world' as he does. James uses the term 'world' (κόσμος) 5 times (1.27; 2.5; 3.6; 4.4 [2×]) and 'earthly' (ἐπίγειος) once (3.14).

In its first occurrence, the term 'world' is set in contrast to God's standard of measure (1.27). For James, 'pure and undefiled' religion is qualified as such

6. L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995), p. 14. See also, T. B. Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora: Discursive Structure and Purpose in the Epistle of James* (SBLDS 144; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 229–32; and K. D. Tollefson, 'The Epistle of James as Dialectical Discourse', *BTB* 21 (1997), 62–9 (62).

7. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, p. 84.

8. Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 7.

'before God, the Father' (παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ). The παρὰ here can be taken suggesting sphere: 'in the sight/judgement of God' (see Rom. 2.13; 1 Cor. 3.19; 7.24; 1 Pet. 2.20) which indicates the ultimate standard by which all aspects of worship, thought, and conduct should be assessed and will in the end be judged. It is 'with reference to God's scale of measurement'[9] that such religion is 'pure and undefiled'. And this religion, acceptable in God's estimation, is set over against worthless religion in 1.26. Here James insists that it is God's perspective that functions as the key indicator separating worthless religion from 'pure and undefiled religion'. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase παρὰ τῷ θεω along with the similar phrase in v. 27 (ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου), 'clearly suggest an opposition between God and the world'.[10] This rhetoric indicates that the author does not wish to cast two types of religion as equal but opposite; rather, he refers to God as the only one who approves pure religion, demonstrating that there is only one way to construe ordered worship and piety.

The definition of acceptable religion in the sight of God is first characterized as looking after orphans and widows in their affliction and then as keeping oneself 'unstained' (ἄσπιλον) from 'the world' (τοῦ κόσμου) (1.27). To remain 'unstained' with respect to 'the world' James' readers must maintain a particular boundary between themselves and the influences of 'the world'. Elsewhere in the NT the term 'unstained' is paired with the term 'unblemished' (ἄμωμος)[11] which together convey the notion of defilement. Here James' readers must keep themselves from 'the world' because it is the agent of pollution which, by means of contact, transmits a counter form of 'religion' contaminating James' readers. Because of their 'failure to live in accord with this complete law and their compromise with the alien values and norms of society', as remedy, James 'urges his readers to sever their ties with secular pollution ... to purify their hands and hearts by breaking clean from society's pollution'.[12]

'World' appears again in ch. 2. In challenging his readers with the incongruity of believing in Jesus Christ and practising favouritism, James rhetorically asks in 2.5, 'Has God not chosen the poor in the world (τῷ κόσμῳ) to be

9. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, p. 212.

10. Wesley Wachob, *The Voice of Jesus in the Social Rhetoric of James* (SNTSMS 106; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 83.

11. See 1 Pet. 1.19, with reference to Christ as an 'unblemished' lamb; 2 Pet. 3.14. In Jude 24, several manuscripts read ἀσπίλους either beside ἀμώμους or earlier in the verse (cf. 𝔓[72], C, 945, 1243, 1505) and thus may add weight to understanding the two terms as commonly being used together.

12. J. H. Elliott, 'The Epistle of James in Rhetorical and Social Scientific Perspective: Holiness-Wholeness and Patterns of Replication', *BTB* 23 (1993), 71–8 (78). Elliott's notion of 'breaking clean from society's pollution' specifically entails drawing boundaries of sectarian separation. I have argued elsewhere that 'keeping oneself unstained from the world' need not imply the construction of sectarian boundaries (see D. Lockett, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James* [LNTS; London: T&T Clark, forthcoming], ch. 5).

rich in faith?' Though a few manuscripts read τοῦ κόσμου, the dative is well attested and makes better sense here.[13] The phrase τῷ κόσμῳ should be read as a dative of advantage[14] and thus 'poor in the eyes of the world'. The syntactical construction indicates that it is from the perspective or valuation of 'the world' that these people are counted poor or low in social and economic status. Note the similar use of a dative of advantage with regard to the 'poor' in Mt. 5.3: Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι. The use of the dative, both in Jas. 2.5 and Mt. 5.3, indicates that the poor may be viewed from different vantage points and, specifically in James because it is from the world's vantage point, this is the wrong view or measure of the poor. Johnson has observed that because the poor with respect to ὁ κόσμος are to be 'rich in faith' implies that 'the "world's" measurement of value is directly opposed to God's'.[15] Rather than humanity in general, 'the world' here is the system of order contrary to the heavenly order, 'a measure distinguishable from God's'.[16]

In 3.6 James identifies the tongue as a 'world of wickedness' (ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας), or taken adjectivally, 'a wicked world' which 'stains (σπιλοῦσα) the whole body'. A precise translation of the first phrase of v. 6 is extremely difficult. The phrase consists of five nouns in the nominative case along with one verb, and the problem is how best to combine these words in a way that makes both grammatical and logical sense. In Johnson's estimation '[t]he problems revolve mainly around how to understand the phrase *ho kosmos tes adikias*, especially since it has a definite article, and how to understand it syntactically in relation to the substantive "the tongue" '.[17] Some have argued that ὁ κόσμος means 'whole' or 'sum total' as in LXX Prov. 17.6.[18] Others have suggested the translation 'adornment' (1 Pet. 3.3) and thus understand the tongue as the 'adornment' of evil.

13. Davids understands the genitive as a scribal attempt to smooth out the grammar (*James*, p. 112).

14. As in D. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 144, or a *dativus commodi*. Examples of commentators who understand the dative in this way include Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God*, p. 212; Dibelius, *James*, p. 138; Davids, *James*, pp. 111–2; R. P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco: Word, 1988), pp. 64–5; D. Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 107; *pace* S. Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1980), p. 103, who takes it as a dative of respect.

15. Johnson, *Letter of James*, p. 224.

16. Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God*, p. 212. Laws (*James*, p. 174) rightly argues that 'world' in James denotes 'in general the values of human society as against those of God, and hence the man who pursues pleasure aligns himself with the world and compromises or actually denies his relationship with God' (see L. L. Cheung, *The Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of James* [Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003], pp. 202–3).

17. Johnson, *Letter of James*, p. 259.

18. Both Cheung (*Hermeneutics of James*, p. 203) and Moo (*Letter of James*, p. 157) feel this may be due to the influence of the Vulgate (*universitas iniquitatis*), a translation reflected in the NLT. Both scholars reject this meaning.

But Dibelius correctly objects, 'No reader would have heard either of those two meanings in this expression'.[19] 'World' conveys neither of these senses in other occurrences in James, thus Mayor seems to have had the best feel for the phrase saying: 'In our microcosm, the tongue represents or constitutes the unrighteous world'.[20] With Mayor most take τῆς ἀδικίας as an attributive genitive and thus render the phrase, 'unrighteous world' as the RSV.

Understanding the phrase ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας as 'the unrighteous world', we must place it within the sentence as a whole. Moo observes that there are three possible options.[21] The first option is as follows. 'The tongue is a fire, the world of unrighteousness. The tongue is appointed among our members as that which stains the whole body…' This rendering (a) takes 'world of unrighteousness' in apposition to 'fire'; (b) places a full stop after this phrase; and (c) takes the phrase 'which stains the whole body' as the predicate of 'is appointed' (καθίσταται). Though the appositional relationship between 'fire' and 'world of unrighteousness' cannot be ruled out, Moo is correct in noting that the feminine participle 'stain' (ἡ σπιλοῦσα) is 'very difficult to turn into the predicate of the verb "is appointed"'.[22] A second rendering maintains, 'The tongue is appointed as a fire, indeed, as the world of unrighteousness in our members; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the course of our existence…' Here again 'world of unrighteousness' stands in apposition to 'fire', yet it is the term 'fire' that is taken as the predicate of the verb 'is appointed'. A third, and most popular, option maintains the translation, 'And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is appointed among our members as the world of unrighteousness, staining the whole body…' Here 'world of unrighteousness' is the predicate of the verb 'is appointed' and as Moo points out, it places 'a punctuation break between the initial assertion and the further elaboration'.[23] This final option is likely the best overall rendering of the passage; however, in order to maintain uniformity with how the verb καθίσταται is used elsewhere in James (4.4) the translation should maintain the middle voice. Thus the passage should be rendered, 'And the tongue is a fire. The tongue appoints itself an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body…'. This understanding of the passage is consistent with the Letter's overall notion of ὁ κόσμος as an evil and unrighteous system in opposition to God. Johnson notes:

19. Dibelius, *James*, p. 194.

20. J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (3rd edn; London: MacMillan, 1913, p. 115; cf. J. H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of St. James* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916), p. 233; Laws, *James*, p. 91; Johnson, *Letter of James*, p. 259; Cheung, *Hermeneutics of James*, p. 203. Here the genitive is a substitute for the adjective as elsewhere in James (cf. 2.4 κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν, 'judges with evil motives'; cf. *1 En.* 48.7; Mk 16.14; Lk. 16.9).

21. Moo, *Letter of James*, pp. 157–8.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

23. *Ibid.*

> James' meaning is only to be grasped in the light of 1.27 and 2.5, where *kosmos* and God are opposed, and in light of 4.4, where the same verb (*kathistemi*) is used for those whose choice of 'friendship with the world' has 'established' them as an enemy of God.[24]

Given this understating of the 'unrighteous world', the surrounding context does speak of creation in implicitly positive terms, namely humanity made in the likeness of God (3.9). Yet 'the world', over against God's good creation, carries the negative connotation of an evil and unrighteous system in opposition to God which finds particular manifestation in the tongue. Therefore just as 'the world' is the agent of pollution which readers are to avoid (1.27), so too the tongue is likened to the 'unrighteous world' that is able to pollute 'the whole body' (3.6). Laws aptly comments that:

> It is the tongue that brings the individual man into relation with 'the world'; indeed brings the world within him... The tongue effects in a man the defilement that is inherent in the world (cf. i.27, with the warning already in i.26 that the religious man must bridle his tongue), and its effect is total: it *defiles the whole body*. The idea is presumably that it is in his speech that a man identifies with that total hostility to God, and shows that it is part of his inner character.[25]

It is through the tongue that hostility to God, and consequently alignment with the counter system of 'the world', is manifest.

The final two occurrences of 'the world' are found in James 4. In 4.4 James uses 'world' twice in conjunction with friendship: 'You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world (τοῦ κόσμου) is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world (τοῦ κόσμου) makes himself an enemy of God'. Significantly readers are warned away from 'friendship' with 'the world'. The notion of 'friendship' (φιλία) in the Graeco-Roman world meant above all to share, that is to have the same mindset, the same outlook, the same view of reality.[26] To be a friend of 'the world' is to live in harmony with its values and logic – in 4.1-10 this entails envy, rivalry, competition and murder. Friendship with 'the world' is the height of disloyalty toward God (note the theologically loaded label 'adulteresses' in 4.4 directly connected to Israel's covenant relationship to God). One of the most common uses of friendship in ancient literature applied to alliances, cooperation or non-aggression treaties among peoples.[27]

24. Johnson, *Letter of James*, p. 259.

25. Laws, *James*, p.150 (emphasis original).

26. Friends were essentially 'one soul' (Euripides, *Orestes* 1046); they 'share all things in common' (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 9.82); a friend is 'another self' (*Eth. nic.* 1166A; Cicero, *De amicitia* 21.80); furthermore, friends 'saw things the same way' for in friendship there is 'equality' (Plato, *Laws* 757A; 744B; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1157B; see Johnson, *Letter of James*, pp. 243–4).

27. See Homer, *Il.* 3.93, 256; 4.17; 26.282; Virgil, *Aen.* 11.321; Demosthenes, *On the Navy Boards* 5; *On the Embassy* 62; *Letters* 3.27.

Thus, 'friendship' with 'the world' constitutes an alliance with a system of valuation set against God.

The emerging framework from this and the above references to 'the world' shows that James is not working with a strict cosmological dualism – 'the world' is not merely the trees, cities and peoples of the physical earth. Rather, as Johnson puts it, the world is 'a system of untrammeled desire and arrogance'.[28] The 'world' here is more than the material world or humanity in general, but rather the entire cultural value system or world-order which is hostile toward what James frames as the divine value system. Here references to 'the world' are clearly intended to be plotted as boundary lines upon James' theological map of reality.

A related reference to what is 'earthly' comes in ch. 3. Here 'wisdom from above' is set at odds with wisdom that is 'earthly, unspiritual, demonic' (3.14). This so-called wisdom, which animates self-seeking, is 'earthly' (ἐπίγειος), 'unspiritual' (ψυχική), and 'demonic' (δαιμονιώδης). Each adjective indicates an increasingly negative aspect of this wisdom and thus further alienation from God.[29] The first term, 'earthly', is not attested in the LXX and in the NT it is often used for what is characteristic of the earth as opposed to the heavenly (see Jn 3.12; 1 Cor. 15.40; 2 Cor. 5.1; Phil. 2.10). With this implicit contrast in mind, 'earthly' denotes not only what is inferior to the heavenly, but also that which is in opposition to the heavenly. If James consistently uses 'the world' to denote the contagious system of values standing in opposition to God, the term 'earthly' then certainly reinforces this notion. 'Earthly' specifically describes a counter form of so-called wisdom which is not 'from above' but is of 'earthly, demonic' origin. The next verse carries through on the logic of this wisdom, for James states that 'where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder (ἀκαταστασία) and every vile (φαῦλον) practice' (3.16). 'Earthly' wisdom traffics in jealousy and selfish ambition, the external qualities indicative of one motivated by self-interest, viewing others as rivals because they possess what he himself lacks. Again, this is no mere dualistic concept for, according to 3.16, this 'earthly' wisdom is an extension of a theological world-order which is hostile toward God.

'World' and 'earthly' throughout James consistently refer to the world as a counter measure of order over against the order of God. Moo comments in this regard:

> The 'world' is a common biblical way of referring to the ungodly worldview and lifestyle that characterizes human life in its estrangement from the creator. Christians who have ended that estrangement by accepting the reconciling work of God in Christ must constantly work to distance themselves from the way of life that surrounds us on every side – to keep themselves 'spotless'... from the world's contaminating influence.[30]

28. Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God*, p. 210.
29. Ropes, *St. James*, p. 248.
30. Moo, *Letter of James*, p. 97

Whereas James refers to God's created order in positive terms (3.9, see also 1.18), 'the world' (ὁ κόσμος) is clearly a system of valuation at odds with God's system of valuation and order.

2. *The Heavenly in James: 'From Above' and the 'Father of Lights' in James' Cosmology*

Whereas 'earthly' wisdom produces 'bitter jealousy' and 'selfish ambition' (3.14), wisdom 'from above' (ἄνωθεν) produces the host of positive qualities listed in 3.17 (purity being chief among them). As the rhetoric of the passage unfolds, the origin of wisdom is highlighted as coming down 'from above', that is, from God, and thus the only real wisdom. The δὲ in 3.17 signals a contrast with what has come before, namely that wisdom 'from above' is set against 'earthly' wisdom both with respect to its origin and its effect. Again, the rhetoric reveals the author's view that 'earthly' wisdom is really such by name only, and that the wisdom coming down from above, that is from God, is the only real wisdom by which one may demonstrate he is 'wise and understanding' (3.13).

The first characteristic of 'wisdom from above' is that it is 'pure' (ἁγνη). Here, ἁγνός denotes that 'wisdom from above' is free from theological contamination (which 'the world' conveys to James' readers, 1.27, 3.6) and, therefore, entails total sincerity or allegiance to God. This is very much like the central notion of wholehearted, undivided commitment to God conveyed by the central idea of 'perfection' (τέλειος) introduced in 1.2-4.[31] Hartin suggests:

> This pure wisdom is such that it has come down from above (3:17) as opposed to the wisdom from the earth, which is 'demonic' (3:15). This provides the backdrop to the search for wholeness and purity: it comes from having access to God, from being in a wholehearted relationship with God.[32]

On one level this spatial dualism, 'from above' over against 'earthly' reveals an important region of James' cosmological map of the universe. That which comes 'from above' is implicitly related to God and thus pure. John Elliott notes:

> This distinction between divine wisdom 'from above' and devilish wisdom 'from below' is significant conceptually and socially. Conceptually, this distinction between above and below *demarcates and contrasts* two distinct and opposing realms of the cosmos in terms of a *spatial* perspective. Accordingly, for James, space rather than time, as in other Christian writings, becomes the dominant perspective for viewing issues of human allegiance, good and evil, purity and impurity.[33]

31. Both Cheung (*Hermeneutics of James*, p. 143) and P. Hartin, *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 72 n. 34 make this connection independently of one another.

32. Patrick Hartin, *James* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 74.

33. Elliott, 'Holiness-Wholeness', p. 77 (emphasis original).

Unfortunately Elliott only sees the conceptual and social significance of this contrast. Without a doubt these realms of cosmos, while conveyed in spatial terms, are indicative of how James charts theological reality as a whole. Furthermore, Elliott posits too sharp a distinction between space and time in James. Though largely implicit, James indicates a full expectation that the spatial distinction between wisdom 'from above' and 'earthly' wisdom is ultimately related to the temporal consummation of 'perfection' (1.4) in his readers in the eschatological future. Clearly the patient waiting for the 'coming of the Lord' (5.7) and its incumbent future expectation of restoration casts doubt on such a sharp space/time distinction.[34] What is ultimately behind the contrast between the two kinds of wisdom in their cosmological orientation is a theological contrast between God and the world/devil, with their respective systems of values. And such a contrast rhetorically pushes the readers to make a choice to which system they will align themselves.

Furthermore, wisdom 'from above' (ἄνωθεν) is viewed as an instrument originating cosmologically (spatially) and theologically from God. The one lacking wisdom is to ask from God in faith (1.5), and this wisdom certainly is the 'good endowment and every perfect gift' that comes 'from above' (ἄνωθεν) (1.17). These good and perfect gifts come down 'from the Father of lights', another indication of James' cosmic cartography. Whereas James describes God in characteristically Jewish terms, referring to the classic articulation of Jewish monotheism the *Shema* (2.19; 4.12 εἷς ἐστιν [ὁ] νομοθέτης καὶ κριτής, 4.12), James also refers to God in the broader sense of creator of all, namely as 'Father of lights'. This description of God is rare and most likely refers to the fact that God created the luminaries (Gen. 1.14-19, note especially that here the sun and moon, rather than called by name, are called the 'two great lights'). And it is by means of God's creation and control of the luminaries that his sovereign power is clearly demonstrated (*T. Abr.* 7.6; CD 5.17-18).[35] James makes another allusion to God as Creator in ch. 3. Those created by God are not to bless 'the Lord and Father' only to turn and curse others who have been created in the likeness of God (39; cf. the implicit allusion to Gen. 1.26-28). Thus James clearly conceives God as both Lawgiver (2.19; 4.12) and Creator (1.17; 3.9).

Observing this description of God, the cosmological and theological implications of 1.17 may be probed further still. In 1.17 James contrasts the character of God with the luminaries: the 'Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change'. The phrase 'with whom there is no' (παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι) implicitly sets out a sharp contrast between creator ('Father of lights') and created things (the luminaries). There is neither 'variation' (παραλλαγή)

34. See for example the work of Todd Penner, who argues that the epistolary opening and closing of James points to an eschatological horizon for the wisdom instruction of the text (*The Epistle of James and Eschatology* [JSNTSup 121; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]).

35. Martin, *James*, p. 38.

nor 'shadow due to change' (τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα) – both characteristic of the heavenly luminaries – to be found in the 'Father of lights'. The phrase has long proven difficult to establish, for each Greek term is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. The noun παραλλαγὴ only appears here and in LXX 2 Kgs 9.20 where it renders the Hebrew שִׁגָּעוֹן or 'madness'. Though παραλλαγη is rarely used as a technical astrological term, τροπή ('process of turning' or 'change') can describe a 'solstice' (Plato, *Laws* 767C; Wis. 7.18) or the general movements of heavenly bodies (Plato, *Timon* 39d; Aristotle, *Historia Animalia* 5, 9). Ἀποσκίασμα (or the genitive form ἀποσκίασματος preserved in the margin of ℵ and in B) literally refers to a 'shadow' caused by some object which blocks the sun's rays. Johnson notes that, though there are several possible variations of this phrase,[36] the basic meaning is quite clear: 'The text opposes the steadfastness of God to the changeableness of creation, exemplified by the heavenly bodies'.[37] Though some would proceed to argue that such language betrays James' Hellenistic leanings toward describing God as 'unchangeable' (the notion of ἄτρεπτος) this contrast need not lead in the direction of Greek thought – namely ontological immutability.[38] Here James marks the vacillation of the created order, especially the luminaries, in contrast to God's steadfastness (1.17) and singularity (God is 'single' 1.5). God, as creator of the luminaries, exists in the highest heavenly sphere and remains constant in contrast to the movement of the created lights. The 'simplicity' of God, his unchangeableness or better steadfastness, is a characteristic of his 'perfection' or wholeness (holiness) – a characteristic James' readers are to strive for over against duplicity or vacillation (see 1.2-4 as setting the theme for the entire letter).

Not only has God created the luminaries but he 'gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures (κτισμάτων)' (1.18). Some have argued that the birth imagery here only refers to God's creation of human beings – and thus specifically not to redemption.[39] Yet if, as Donald Verseput has argued, the 'Father of lights' language in fact reflects the Jewish morning prayer, which moves from acknowledging God as creator (literally as 'Father of lights') directly to acknowledging him as redeemer, then

36. There are six different readings of the phrase noted in the Nestle-Aland[27] apparatus. Dibelius (*James*, p. 102) offers the conjecture: παραλλαγὴ τροπῆς ἢ ἀποσκίασματος ('alteration of change or shadow').

37. Johnson, *Letter of James*, p. 197.

38. See the discussion in D. J. Verseput, 'James 1.17 and the Jewish Morning Prayers', *NovT* (1997), 177–91. Here he suggests that the image here refers to the unwavering character of God's faithfulness rather than an ontological immutability.

39. Jackson-McCabe ('The Messiah Jesus', p. 712, n. 44) argues that '...the description of those so "born" as "a sort of first fruits of [God's] creatures" ...can be understood quite well in light of the Stoic notion of humanity's elevated place in the order of creation due to its endowment with *logos*'. Indeed Philo uses the Greek verb ἀποκυέω in the sense of God's creation of humanity (Philo, *On Drunkenness* 30). Also see the discussion in Moo (*Letter of James*, p. 79).

the 'first fruits of creation' in 1.18 should rather be viewed as a reference to redemption. Thus Moo helpfully concludes: 'the language James uses in the verse, while capable of a general "cosmological" application, is more likely to be read in a soteriological light'.[40] The creational motif (κτισμάτων) indicates not only that God created humanity but that creation is in need of redemption. Luke Cheung correctly asserts: '... the creation motif has been applied to a time of new creation in the OT and the entire creation... is in need of redemption. Christians are seen as the firstfruit [*sic*] in the cosmic redemption'.[41] Though Cheung does not pursue the eschatological implications of his statement, it is clear in light of Jas. 5.7-11 that readers are to endure present circumstances in light of future hope of restoration – the first fruits of which may be seen in present redemption (1.18).

3. *Gehenna and the Terrestrial Sphere*

Having considered the 'earthly' and heavenly ('from above'), we finally descend to the depths in 3.6: 'And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature (τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως), and set on fire by Gehenna (γεέννης)'. We have already considered the cosmological significance of 'unrighteous world' above. Here we ask further how 'the cycle of nature' and 'Gehenna' (γεέννης) fit into James' view of the universe.

Richard Bauckham has made a very interesting argument that the text of Jas. 3.6 should be corrected according to the Peshitta by inserting ὕλη after ἀδικίας.[42] Bauckham then translates 3.5-6: 'See how small a fire sets alight so large a forest [wood]! The tongue is a fire, the sinful world wood'. Given this reconstruction he concludes that the 'first sentence states the image, which the second interprets by identifying the two elements in the allegory. The image is then picked up again in verse 6b ("setting on fire the wheel of existence..."), where τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως is synonymous with ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας'.[43] Noting that it is only a possibility, Bauckham observes that James' phrase 'wheel of existence' is strikingly similar to the Hellenistic phrase 'the circle of existence' (ὁ τροχὸς τῆς γενέσεως), which was used to describe a traditional punishment in the underworld.[44] He suggests that the odd phrase τὸν τροχὸν

40. This is apparent especially in light of the redemptive context provided by the phrase 'by the word of truth'; see Moo, *Letter of James*, p. 79.

41. Cheung, *Hermeneutics of James*, p. 87 n. 1.

42. R. Bauckham, 'The Tongue Set on Fire by Hell [James 3.6]', in *Fate of the Dead. Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 119–31 (119 n. 1); here he follows J. B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 158–9.

43. Bauckham, 'The Tongue Set on Fire by Hell', p. 119 n. 1.

44. In Hades Zeus bound Ixion to a wheel so that he would revolve around it for eternity

τῆς γενέσεως in 3.6 was selected because of the pun between γενέσεως and γέεννης which theologically indicates that the punishment (Gehenna) fits the crime (the entire 'life' affected by the tongue).[45]

That Gehenna is a fitting and very real place of punishment sketches a further cosmological feature of James' theological atlas. Whereas 3.6 is often understood as implying that the defilement of the tongue derives from the powers of Gehenna, and therefore the devil,[46] this is unlikely. Again, Bauckham points out that Gehenna is not the location of the devil or of the forces of evil in first-century Jewish or Christian thought. Rather, he asserts Gehenna

> is the place where the wicked are punished, either after the last judgment or... after death. Its angels, terrifying and cruel as they are, are servants of God, executing God's judgment on sin. They are not evil angels who rebel against and resist God. These evil angels, with Satan or the devil at their head, will at the end of history be sent to their doom in Gehenna, but they are not there yet. Rather, they inhabit the terrestrial area from the earth to the lowest heavenly sphere. (It is with this area that James associates them when he contrasts the wisdom that comes from heaven with the false wisdom that is earthly [ἐπίγιος] and demonic [δαιμονιώδης] [3.15].)[47]

With this understanding of Gehenna it is clear why James contrasts wisdom 'from above' with 'earthly' wisdom, instead of wisdom 'from below'. It is precisely the demonic powers at work in the terrestrial sphere that produce a counterfeit wisdom that sets itself over against wisdom 'from above'. Here James uses Gehenna as the fitting location of future punishment due to the tongue's defilement while implying that demonic forces are currently at work upon the earth specifically through counterfeit wisdom (3.14-16).

4. *Conclusion: Cosmology and Theology in James*

James charts the universe via two competing world views, or systems of value, which order cosmological and theological order. The cosmos is bifurcated

(Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 2.20). Bauckham further notes that 'the philosopher Simplicius (writing *c.* 300 CE), refers to the myth and gives it an allegorical interpretation in terms of Orphic beliefs: the wheel, he says, is "the wheel of fate and becoming..." (*In Aristot. de caelo comm.* 2.168b). James may not have known this Orphic interpretation of the myth, but he could have been aware of the wheel as a punishment in hell depicted in Jewish apocalyptic descriptions, which had borrowed it, like various other infernal punishments, from the Greek Hades...' ('The Tongue Set on Fire by Hell', p. 130).

45. Bauckham, 'The Tongue Set on Fire by Hell', p. 130. That the phrase 'cycle of nature', or 'wheel of existence' refers to 'life' see Dibelius, *James*, p. 198; Davids, *James*, p. 143.

46. See William R. Baker, *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* (WUNT 2/68; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995), p. 128: 'what is conveyed here is tht [sic] the person who does not control his tongue makes his tongue an agent for Satan's harmful designs on the individual and society'.

47. Bauckham, 'The Tongue Set on Fire by Hell', p. 120.

along the boundary between these two world views – one associated with 'God' (1.27; 2.5; 4.4) and the other with 'the world' (1.27; 2.5; 3.6; 4.4 [2×]; or 'earthly' 3.14-17). Not only are these systems of measure set in opposition, but 'the world' is expressly marked off as contagious territory – polluting ground (1.27). Furthermore, the allegiance of James' readers is determined by their cartographic location with respect to regions of 'the world' or God – if one is a friend of 'the world', and thus plotted within defiled territory, then he is an enemy of God (4.4).

Rather than bound within the 'earthly' realm, God is not only above 'the world', but above the luminaries as well. As 'Father of lights' he remains consistent in contrast to the variations of the heavenly orbs and thus, inhabiting the highest heaven, is a faithful and steadfast source of good gifts (1.17) and wisdom (1.5). Because God is 'from above', wisdom 'from above' (3.17) necessarily is his instrumental means of rendering defiled readers 'pure' (3.17). It is within the cosmological sphere of the 'earthly', the area from the ground to the lowest heavenly realm, that the battle between 'demonic' (3.14) and heavenly wisdom is waged – where the struggle takes on the form of human submitting (to God) and resisting (the 'devil') (4.7). In this Epistle we view James' textually constructed, theological grid as it maps out the way of 'perfection' or wholeness (holiness) (1.2-4) for his readers. And, as we have seen, this 'perfection' is ultimately expected in the future renewal readers are to wait for with enduring hope (1.2-4 and 5.7-11). Within the lines of this map there is at least one clear and practical warning: the tongue is the conduit through which the polluting world transmits duplicity, thus compromising readers' present 'perfection' (1.27; 3.6) – and thus perhaps future 'perfection' as well.

James' cosmological language is line-drawing language – or 'worldview' language – that renders a map of theological reality. Readers are to understand themselves as plotted within this theological construal of the universe, and thus inscribed with a new identity. It is clear, if readers are mapped in 'worldly' terms, animated by 'earthly' wisdom, they are in danger of theological defilement. A 'perfect' relationship to God clearly calls for separation from 'the world's' defilement. Yet this separation from 'the world' is not merely cosmological; the cosmology is integrated into a theological understanding of the universe where individuals must stand free from the world view of 'the world' in order to be wholly devoted to God – the line in the sand drawn between a friend of God and a friend of 'the world'.

10

Cosmology in the Petrine Literature and Jude

John Dennis

This chapter will examine passages in the Petrine literature and Jude that employ explicit cosmological concepts and terminology. Cosmology is used here to describe the way in which our literature speaks about the structure of the cosmos, or universe, as a meaningful place.[1] But our authors are not concerned with cosmology as an end in itself or for mere speculative purposes. Rather, cosmology is dealt with for the express purpose of *theology*, that is, in order to say something about God and particularly God's salvific work in Christ. Cosmology is the canvas, so to speak, of *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history). The primary goal, then, of this contribution will be to investigate how cosmology serves the authors' *theological* and ethical purposes. Some of the passages dealt with are notoriously difficult and we do not pretend to settle all the debated issues. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this study will provide a clear, though introductory, account of the function of cosmology in the Petrine literature and Jude.

1 Peter

1. *The Setting of 1 Peter*

The life-situation of the recipients of 1 Peter is one of persecution and suffering. Thus, Peter wrote to console 'those caught up in such adverse circumstances' and to provide 'perspective on Christian life that will enable the community to survive persecutions with its faith intact'.[2] One of the ways the author accomplishes this strategy is to relate his readers' lives to the redemptive story beginning with God as creator (4.19) and his redemptive activity from before creation (1.20) to the consummation (1.5). Therefore the author is not interested by 'explaining metaphysics, history, or cosmology to them, but by addressing them from within this world, confirming the new world they received at their new birth, and by deepening and widening their perception of the new reality in

1. See R. A. Oden, 'Cosmogony, Cosmology', in *ABD* 1:1162.

2. P. J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), p. 65. See also A. Schlatter, *Petrus und Paulus nach dem Ersten Petrusbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1937), p. 13.

which they live'.[3] Thus, cosmology is a means to an end for Peter, the end being his readers' faithful obedience to the Gospel even in the context of suffering and persecution.

2. *1 Pet. 1.20: The Foundation of the Cosmos and the Last Times*

The larger context of 1 Pet. 1.20, namely, vv. 13-25, continues the apostle's paraenesis to these beleaguered Christians. He encourages them to 'fix your hope completely' on the future grace promised to them at Christ's parousia (v. 13) and to be themselves holy in all their behaviour, according to God's holiness as their pattern (v. 15), rather than being conformed to their former desires in their ignorance as non-believers (v. 14). 1 Pet. 1.17 communicates essentially the same idea: the readers are to 'conduct yourselves *in fear* (or *reverence*) during the time of your pilgrimage'. The section comprising vv. 18-21 serves as the ground for the main clause of v. 17 ('conduct yourselves…'). Thus, because these Christians have firm confidence that their redemption (λυτρόω) was secured 'by means of the valuable blood (τιμίῳ αἵματι)' of Christ (v. 19), they should conduct themselves in reverent fear toward God in the context of their present pilgrimage in a hostile world (v. 17). Verses 20 and 21 then spell out further aspects of the preceding verses: following upon the mention of Christ's blood in v. 19, v. 20 further describes Christ as the one who was 'foreknown before the foundation of the world'.

Our primary focus here concerns the meaning and function of the obvious cosmological term κόσμος in the phrase πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου ('from the foundation of the world') in v. 20. The term κόσμος (world, universe),[4] used 7 times in our literature,[5] takes on the following three basic meanings in the NT: (1) 'the sum total of everything here and now',[6] that is, the created universe; (2) the abode of humanity, or the inhabited world; and (3) the realm of sin and alienation from the Creator.[7] In 1–2 Peter and Jude, all three of these senses are found. But, it must be kept in mind that significant overlap in meaning is inevitable.

Although 1 Pet. 4.7 does not employ the term κόσμος, it nevertheless uses the virtually synonymous term πάντα in the phrase πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν ('the end of all things has come near'). The idea here is that the end, or final, transformation of the created world (meaning 1) (or πάντα) is imminent.[8] An

3. M. E. Boring, *1 Peter* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), p. 184.

4. See E. Adams' *Constructing the World: A Study of Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), pp. 41–81, for an excellent study of the term κόσμος in Greek, Jewish and Pauline literature.

5. 1 Pet. 1.20; 3.3 (here meaning 'adornment'); 5:9; 2 Pet. 1.4; 2.5, 20; 3.6.

6. *BDAG*, p. 561.

7. See further *BDAG*, p. 561; H. Balz, 'κόσμος', *EDNT* 2:311; H. Sasse, 'κόσμος', *TDNT* 3:885–9.

8. See also Jn 1.3 where it is said that 'all things came into being through him' (πάντα δι'

overlap of meanings 1 and 2 is evident in 2 Pet. 3.5-6 where the 'heavens and earth' (v. 5) seem to be equated with the 'world': God 'formed' the heavens and earth (v. 5; cf. Genesis 1) and destroyed 'the world at that time' (v. 6; cf. Genesis 6–7). God is both the creator and judge of the world in its totality and all living beings in its sphere. 2 Pet. 2.5, a related text to 2 Pet. 3.5-6 in that both concern universal judgement[9] by means of the flood (cf. Genesis 6–7), declares that God 'did not spare the ancient world (ἀρχαίου κόσμου)... when he brought a flood upon the ungodly world' (κόσμῳ ἀσεβῶν). Bauckham states that cosmos here 'means primarily inhabitants of the world',[10] although in light of the universal nature of the flood, this verse may well refer to some kind of 'cosmic catastrophe'.[11] In addition, 2 Pet. 2.5, along with such references as 2 Pet. 3.10 where the 'heavens and earth' are analogous to the present 'world' as the totality of the created universe (meaning number 1 above), suggests that the 'author of 2 Peter seems to have thought of three successive worlds: the ancient world before the flood, present world and the new world to come (3.13) after judgement'.[12] What is crucial to point out concerning these passages is that they ultimately point to the eschatological restoration of all things: 1 Pet. 4.7 implies it in the overall context of 1 Peter[13] and the arguments of 2 Pet. 2.5 and 3.6 peak at the promise of the 'new heavens and new earth', or the cosmos of the new age, in 3.13.

The phrases 'corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire'[14] (τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθορᾶς) in 2 Pet. 1.4 and 'the defilements of the world' (τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου) in 2 Pet. 2.20 suggest that 'world' in these instances should be categorized mainly under meaning (3): the world is the place or sphere characterized by sinful desire (ἐπιθυμία),[15] defilement and the corruption, decay and transitoriness of this age (signified by the term φθορά,

αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο) and Acts 7.49-50 where the adjective πάντα refers to 'all things' created by God including 'heaven and earth'.

9. R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco: Word, 1983), p. 250.

10. *Ibid.* Meaning (2) (cosmos as the inhabited world) is clearly found in 1 Pet. 5.9: 'your brethren who are in the world'. *BDAG*, p. 561, categorizes 1 Pet. 5.9 under the definition 'world as the habitation of humanity'.

11. J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1969), p. 332; and particularly E. Adams, *The Stars will Fall From Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and its World* (LNTS 347; London: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 214–16.

12. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 250.

13. See Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 294.

14. The translation here is Bauckham's from his *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 182.

15. Bauckham's translation of ἐπιθυμία in 2 Pet. 1.4 as 'sinful desire' is wholly justified. The term's basic sense is 'desire for something forbidden or simply inordinate, *craving, lust*' (*BDAG*, p. 372). In our literature it is used in the follow ways: 1 Pet. 1.14; 2.11 (lusts of the flesh); 4.2 (human desires and will of God contrasted); 4.3; here; 2 Pet. 2.10; 2.18 (desires of the flesh); 3.3; Jude 16, 18 (ungodly lusts).

1.4).[16] But again a message of eschatological hope is present in these passages. Believers have 'escaped' (ἀποφεύγω) the 'corruption' (φθορά) and 'defilements' (μίασμα) of and in this world (1.4; 2.20). Because of God's 'magnificent promises' (1.4) and 'in accordance' with them, believers in this present world 'wait for new heavens and a new earth' (3.13), or, the 'eschatological gift of αφθορσία ("imperishability", 1 Pet. 1.4, 18, 23)'.[17]

Returning to 1 Pet. 1.20, the term 'world' falls under meaning (1) and refers to the created cosmos. The term is used in 1.20 in a prepositional phrase ('before the foundation of the world') that employs the noun καταβολή ('foundation') and the preposition πρό ('before') and as such refers to a time 'before' or 'prior to' the creation of all things (cf. Gen. 1.1).[18] Our prepositional phrase is used only two other times in the NT: Eph. 1.4 speaks of God's election of his people in Christ 'before the foundation of the world' and Jn 17.24 speaks of the eternal love of the Father for the Son 'before the foundation of the world'.

In 1 Pet. 1.20 Christ is described with a parallel pair of participial phrases:

(a) προεγνωσμένου πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου	(a) who was foreknown before the foundation of the world
(b) φανερωθέντος ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων	(b) who has appeared at the end of times

The person of Christ, and by implication the redemption through him,[19] is related to eternity past *and* the end of the age in which believers now live. God 'foreknew' or 'destined' (προγινώσκω) Christ before the creation of the world.[20] These Christians' redeemer and his redemption therefore have nothing to do with the corruption and defilements of this world (1.4; 2.20) but rather stand outside its sphere. As B. Reicke[21] has pointed out, 1.20a corresponds in essence to the teaching of 1.4: God reserved and secured believers' inheritance in heaven for them and in 1.20 God has 'destined' Christ and his redemption 'for your sake' before creation. God not only foreknew or destined Christ before creation, he also caused him to be revealed 'at the end of times', that is, at the

16. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 182; Balz, 'κόσμος', *EDNT* 2:311.

17. Similarly, Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 182.

18. The phrase, according to Balz, 'κόσμος', *EDNT* 2:311, means: the 'Cosmos has a beginning that has been established by God'.

19. The two participles προεγνωσμένου and φανερωθέντος clearly describe Χριστοῦ and not God's 'plan' of redemption. But given that the redemption secured with Christ's blood (v. 19) and the fact that Christ 'has appeared at the end of times *for your sake*' (v. 20) suggest that Christ, along with the redemption he came to bring his people, was also 'foreknown before the foundation of the world'.

20. Achtemeier's translation of προεγνωσμένου πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου captures well the intended sense: 'whose destiny was set before creation'.

21. Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), p. 86.

'the beginning of the end of time'[22] in which believers now live. Since all of these occurrences (1.20a-b) happened precisely for the sake of God's people ('for your sake', v. 20), they have the effect of 'focusing the whole sweep of history on the readers, and sets them, exiles and aliens that they are, at centre stage in the drama of salvation'.[23] In addition, because these Christians 'know' these things concerning their redeemer and redemption (vv. 18-21), they can, with confidence, 'conduct themselves in fear during their pilgrimage' (v. 17) in these 'last times'.

3. *1 Pet. 3.18-22*

This extremely difficult passage is full of exegetical minefields which we shall not be able to discuss in detail in this chapter.[24] We will limit the focus[25] primarily on the references to the 'cosmic powers'[26] in v. 19 ('the spirits in prison') and in v. 22 ('angels and authorities and powers'), all of which relate to the Jewish apocalyptic 'cosmic myth'.[27]

It is probably best to take the 'for' (ὅτι) that begins v. 18 as providing the 'theological basis' for the entire preceding section (3.12-17),[28] a section that encourages believers to continue their 'good behaviour in Christ' (v. 16) even as they are being persecuted for it. In this way, these Christians can live lives that bear witness to their hope in Christ (v. 15). Christ's unique death ('once for all', ἅπαξ) is presented 'as the objective ground and cause of salvation'[29] which provides these Christians with confidence *in their suffering* that Christ's death and resurrection accomplished their reconciliation to God (it brought them 'to God', v. 18) and victory over every opposing power.[30] We must keep in mind that this is the overall point of 3.18-22.

Christ's once for all suffering for sins in v. 18a is further described in v. 18b as Christ 'having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit'

22. L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter* (trans. J. E. Alsup; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 118.

23. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 132.

24. On the extensive history of interpretation of vv. 18-22, see particularly B. Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Peter iii.21 and Its Context* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1946), pp. 7–51; and W. J. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18–4:6* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), pp. 15–41.

25. In light of space restrictions exegetical conclusions will be mentioned for which I can provide (at best) limited support.

26. Designated as such by Goppelt, *I Peter*, p. 248.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

28. So Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 243; L. Thurén, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origin of Christian Paraenesis* (JSNT 114; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 158; Kelly, *Commentary*, p. 146; Dalton, *Proclamation*, p. 158.

29. Dalton, *Proclamation*, p. 122.

30. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 251.

(NASB). These phrases refer to Christ's death on the cross and his vindication by resurrection respectively. The μέν-δέ construction that correlates these participles suggests that the emphasis is placed on the second element,[31] so that Christ's resurrection is the emphasis. The following two grammatical/syntactical questions that bear directly on the meaning of vv. 19-20 are: what is the sense of the dative case of the two nouns σαρκί/πνεύματι (v. 18) and what does ἐν ᾧ (v. 19) refer to and mean?

The two nouns in the dative case (NASB translation: 'in the flesh'/'in the spirit') have been understood in a number of ways, but probably the only real options are to construe them as either datives of reference/respect ('with reference to the flesh'),[32] sphere ('in the sphere of the S/spirit')[33] or as instrumental datives ('by the Spirit').[34]

If the clause ζωοποιηθεὶς πνεύματι is a reference to Christ's resurrection by the agency of the Spirit then this suggests that ἐν ᾧ (v. 19), whose antecedent is the immediately preceding πνεύματι, should likewise be understood instrumentally[35] and with the following sense: 'by whom [the Spirit] he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison'.[36] In the end, as Michaels observes, there is not a great deal of difference in terms of the overall sense, since 'the words ἐν ᾧ καί serve to link ζωοποιηθείς closely to the πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν that follows, making Christ's proclamation to the spirits a direct outcome of his resurrection from the dead'.[37] Where did Christ 'go', what did he 'proclaim', and to whom did he proclaim? These are the important questions that pertain to vv. 19-20.

One of the dominant interpretations[38] through the centuries has been to argue that Christ proclaimed the gospel to the departed spirits (i.e., 'the spirits in prison', v. 19), that is, the unbelieving contemporaries of Noah, who were preserved in a place of punishment after their death.[39] The reference in 1 Pet. 4.6 to the gospel being preached to 'the dead' is often used to support this

31. See D. Blass and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), §447; *BDAG*, p. 629; Dalton, *Proclamation*, p. 137.

32. J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (Waco: Word, 1988), p. 205.

33. Kelly, *Commentary*, p. 151.

34. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 250; J. S. Feinberg, '1 Peter 3:18-20, Ancient Mythology, and the Intermediate State', *WTJ* 48 (1986), 303–36 (335); R. T. France, 'Exegesis in Practice: Two Examples', in I. H. Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 267.

35. Reicke, *Disobedient Spirits*, pp. 103–15 and Michaels, *1 Peter*, p. 205.

36. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 252–3. Similarly, Goppelt, *I Peter*, p. 254, n. 28.

37. Michaels, *1 Peter*, pp. 205–6.

38. See the excellent summary of the history of research on 1 Pet. 3.19-20 in Feinberg, '1 Peter 3:18-20', pp. 309–12.

39. So F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), p. 172; and Goppelt, *I Peter*, p. 259. The main thrust of this view was also held by Augustine.

interpretation.[40] However, the interpretation that is far more likely argues that the 'spirits' of 1 Pet. 3.19 are the fallen angels identified with story of Gen. 6.1-4 in Jewish (particularly *1 Enoch* 6–16) and Christian tradition (2 Pet. 2.4-5 and Jude 5–7).[41] The full story appears in *1 Enoch* 6–16,[42] a second-century BCE Jewish apocalyptic text. It is important to note that in most instances of this expanded Jewish saga about fallen angels/spirits, the flood story (following Gen. 6.1-6) features as an integral part, just as it does in 1 Pet. 3.19-20. Following the full account in *1 Enoch* 6–36, the story can be summarized as follows. (1) The angelic 'Watchers' left their God-given proper abode as 'spiritual beings', that is, heaven (*1 En.* 15.4-7) and they rebelled against their proper function as heavenly beings (*1 Enoch* 2–5) in order to mate with human women. As a result, the Watchers beget 'giants' and engender all manner of corrupt, sinful, and forbidden acts among human beings. The offspring of the union of the Watchers and the women are identified with 'evil spirits upon the earth' (*1 En.* 15.8-12). (2) The Watchers are punished by being put away in a holding place until their eternal punishment on the final judgement day (cf. *1 En.* 10.6-12). This 'holding place' is variously described as a 'hole in the desert' (*1 En.* 10.4-6), 'underneath the rocks of the earth' or 'inside the earth' (10.12; cf. *Jub.* 5.6; 14.5), 'in chains' in the seventh heaven (*2 Enoch* 7), or as a 'prison house of the angels' (*1 En.* 18.21) where the earth and heavens come together, 'the ultimate end of heaven and earth' (*1 En.* 18.11-16). Apart from the clear parallels between the story of the Watchers in these Jewish texts and 1 Peter 3, it is also striking to note that the Noah and the flood story is almost always associated with this strange story of the Watchers,[43] just as the Noah and the flood story is associated with the 'spirits in prison' in 1 Pet. 3.19-20. It is therefore most likely that this apocalyptic saga stands behind 1 Pet. 3.19-20 (as it explicitly does in Jude 5–7 and 2 Pet. 2.4-5).

With this conclusion in mind, where is the 'prison' (φυλακή) in which the 'spirits' are located and where did the risen Christ 'go' (πορεύομαι) in order to proclaim a message to them? There is good evidence that the participle

40. We will not specifically deal with 1 Pet. 4.6. But, suffice it to say that 4.6 uses the term 'dead' not 'spirits' (3.19) and the verb 'preach the gospel' (εὐαγγελίζω), not the general term 'proclaim' (κηρύσσω). 1 Pet. 4.6 concerns the Christians who have died, not the 'spirits' of the unbelieving dead. See Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 286–91 and France, 'Exegesis', p. 269.

41. This is now the dominant interpretation. E.g., Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 256; N. Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (Zurich: Benziger, 2nd edn, 1979), p. 172; Michaels, *1 Peter*, pp. 207–9; France, 'Exegesis', pp. 264–81; Kelly, *Commentary*, pp. 153–4.

42. The story is also referred to in the mid-second-century BCE book of *Jubilees* 5, Josephus' *J.W.* I.73-74 and the late first-century CE *2 Baruch* 56. All translations for the pseudepigraphical literature here and below are from Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985).

43. For example, in Josephus, *J.W.* I.73-74 we find a clear association between the stories of the Watchers, the 'sons of God' of Genesis 6, and Noah and the flood. See also *T. Naph.* 3.4-5.

πορευθείς ('went'), found in the statement that Christ 'went and proclaimed' (v. 19), refers to his ascension,[44] just as it does in v. 22: 'He is at the right hand of God, after having gone (πορευθείς) into heaven…' The verb πορεύομαι is, after all, the verb that normally describes Christ's ascension (or his 'going') to heaven in the NT.[45] Where he went, or where the prison was located in Peter's mind, is not at all clear. Following on from interpreting πορεύομαι ('Christ went') as Christ's ascension, Dalton argues that the prison was somewhere in the heavens, as it is in *2 En.* 7.1-3.[46] Christ then proclaimed to these disobedient angelic spirits in the context of his ascension. This may well be the case. But in light of the various locations of the prison in the apocalyptic texts noted above, the 'place' ultimately eludes us. Nevertheless, that there was such a prison for evil spirits[47] 'is assumed in the NT and Jewish tradition'.[48]

What did Christ 'proclaim' (κηρύσσω) to the spirits, salvation or condemnation? The verb κηρύσσω can be used of preaching the gospel,[49] but in every such case, the object of the verb is the noun 'gospel' (εὐαγγέλιον). In 1 Pet. 3.19 the verb is used without an explicit object and thus the 'message' of the proclamation is not specifically stated. That the message of the proclamation is negative is suggested by the following evidence: (1) as Dalton points out,[50] 2 Pet. 2.5 describes Noah as a 'preacher' (κῆρυξ) and his proclamation is a warning of coming judgement. (2) Assuming that the background to 1 Pet. 3.19-20 is the story of the Watchers found in Jewish apocalyptic texts (particularly *1 Enoch*), there is a remarkable parallel between Enoch's mission to proclaim judgement to the Watchers in *1 Enoch* 12–14 and Christ's mission to proclaim to the spirits in 1 Pet. 3.19.[51] Enoch is told to 'go and make known to the Watchers of heaven…' that 'they have defiled themselves' and 'neither will there be peace unto them nor the forgiveness of sin' (*1 En.* 12.4-5). Later, Enoch 'reprimands' the Watchers (13.10; 14.3), also called their 'chastisement' (14.1). D. A. DeSilva is probably correct to argue that Enoch 'becomes a type for Christ, just as Noah (saved through water) becomes a type for believers (saved through the waters of baptism)'.[52]

The interpretation argued above supports the view that Christ's 'going' (πορεύομαι) is a reference to his ascension after his resurrection ('made alive

44. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 258; Michaels, *1 Peter*, p. 209; Dalton, *Proclamation*, pp. 159–60.

45. Acts 1.10, 11; Jn 14.2, 3; 16.28. Note the very similar wording in Acts 1.11 (πορευόμενον εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) as in 1 Pet. 3.22 (πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν).

46. Dalton, *Proclamation*, pp. 177–84.

47. In Rev. 18.2 and 20.7 Satan and demons are held in a 'prison' (φυλακή).

48. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 256.

49. E.g., Mk 1.14; Gal. 2.2; 1 Thess. 2.9.

50. Dalton, *Proclamation*, pp. 156–7.

51. France, 'Exegesis', p. 270.

52. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004), p. 854.

by the Spirit, v. 18) and his proclaiming (κηρύσσω) to the spirits in prison refers to Christ who, 'on his way to the right hand of power (3.22), announces to the imprisoned angelic powers his victory and hence their defeat'.[53] This interpretation is virtually made certain on the basis of v. 22: 'Who is at the right hand of God having gone into heaven after angels and authorities and powers were made subjected to him'. By the use of this three-fold list (ἀγγέλων, ἐξουσιῶν, δυνάμεων), Peter has referred to a range of spiritual beings/powers[54] who have been subordinated to the risen and exalted Christ. Thus, 3.22 reiterates and expands what is found in 3.19. Jesus' triumph over the powers of evil would encourage believers to remain faithful despite their suffering by the hostile forces in their environment. 'Christ's victory over the evil forces behind such hostilities also ensures their [Christians'] own final victory over them'.[55] They can now, in the midst of their present difficulties, 'resist him [the devil]' (5.9) because of Christ's decisive victory over the devil and all evil forces.

Jude and 2 Peter

Jude and 2 Peter are polemical letters in that their authors seek to deal with the negative influences of itinerate false teachers (Jude 4; 2 Pet. 2.1), also called 'scoffers' (Jude 18; 2 Pet. 3.3), who were encouraging ideas and lifestyles that are contrary to the faith once for all given (cf. Jude 3). Although their teachings are different, the two sets of false teachers share a basic similarity: they commend and engage in immoral behavior of various kinds (Jude 4, 7-8; 2 Pet. 2.2, 18). In addition, these teachers are not presented as outsiders to their respective communities, for they have found their way into the most intimate part of the community's life: the 'fellowship meal' (Jude 12; 2 Pet. 2.13). Our authors have to address their respective situations head-on.

Our consideration of the function of cosmological language and ideas in these two letters will be limited to the sections in which this language is concentrated, namely, Jude 6-8/2 Pet. 2.4-10 and 2 Pet. 3.4-13. The specific issues that will be focused upon are: 2 Peter's use of the term ταρταρόω ('to cast into hell') (2 Pet. 2.4), the angels kept in the chains of 'nether darkness'[56] (ζόφος) (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2.4), the 'slandering' (βλασφημέω) of the 'glorious ones' (δόξας) (Jude 8; 2 Pet. 2.10b), and issue of cosmic conflagration (2 Pet. 3.4-13).

1. *Tartarus, the Nether Darkness and the Angels: Jude 6 and 2 Pet. 2.4*

In dealing with their respective false teachers, both authors make use of examples from the OT and Jewish tradition to show that God will punish the ungodly.

53. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 260.

54. For similar references to these spiritual beings, see 1 Cor. 15.24; Eph. 1.21; Col. 1.16.

55. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 261.

56. This is Bauckham's translation of ζόφος from his *2 Peter, Jude* volume.

On such tradition is the story of the Watchers (evil angels) which clearly stands behind Jude 6 and 2 Pet. 2.4 to various degrees. One can immediately see the parallels between these verses and the story of the Watchers in *1 Enoch* (see above). The key elements in Jude, 2 Peter and *1 Enoch* are: angels rebelled and were punished by being chained in a place of darkness until the final day of judgement. Jude's version is closer to the Watchers' story, noticeable in his statement that the angels 'did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode' (Jude 6; cf. *1 En.* 15.4-7), which in *1 En.* 15.7 is 'heaven'.[57]

In Peter's appropriation of the story of Watchers (2 Pet. 2.4) he adds a reference to 'Tartarus': God did not spare the angels 'but "cast them into Tartarus" (ταρταρόω)'. In Greek mythology Tartarus, often associated with Hades,[58] was thought to be a subterranean abyss[59] where the disobedient (whether gods or human beings) were punished.[60] Tartarus is particularly associated with the defeat of the Titans and their punishment of being chained in the abysmal depths of the earth or Tartarus.[61] Mythical Tartarus was widely known by Hellenistic Jewish writers and was associated with the 'giants' of Genesis 6 and the angelic Watchers. For example, some of the Jewish translators of the Septuagint make reference to Tartarus in association with the tradition of the giants and Watchers. LXX Ezek. 32.27 refers to the Watchers or giants (γίγας) of Genesis 6 who 'went down to "Hades"' (ᾅδης) and Jdt. 16.6 explicitly refers to the 'Titans' and the 'giants'.[62] Josephus knows about Tartarus as a place where disobedient gods are 'chained' (δέω) 'under the earth' (*Ag. Ap.* 2.240). What is particularly important for our purposes is what Josephus does in *Ant.* 1.73-75. On analogy

57. 1 Pet. 3.22 may imply that the 'angels, authorities and powers' are in the heavens.

58. E.g., Plato, *Gorgias* 522E-523B; Homer, *Iliad* 8.10.

59. Tartarus figures in Greek cosmogony and cosmology. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod gives an account of the origins of the cosmos and particularly 'how in the first place the gods and earth were born' (*Theogony* 104). Everything originates from a 'chasm' (χάος), a 'gap' or an 'opening' from which the earth emerged. 'Murky Tartarus' (Τάρταρα ἠερόεντα) is located 'in the depths' of the earth (*Theogony* 116) or 'under the earth' (*Theogony* 718). Homer locates 'murky Tartarus' 'far, far away, where is the deepest gulf beneath the earth... as far beneath Hades as heaven is above the earth' (*Iliad* 8.10-14). Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 111E-112A (Tartarus is a 'chasm' in the 'lowest abyss beneath the earth').

60. In *Gorgias* 523B, Plato refers to the myth as follows: 'Now in the time of Cronos there was a law concerning mankind, and it holds to this day amongst the gods, that every man who has passed a just and holy life departs after his decease to the Isle of the Blest... but whoever has lived unjustly and impiously goes to the dungeon of requital and penance which, you know, they call Tartarus'. See also Homer, *Iliad* 8.5-15; Hesiod, *Theogony* 617; Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.528-552. On Tartarus in Greek literature in general, see especially 'Tartaros', in H. Canick and H. Schneider (eds), *Der neue Pauly Enzyklopädie der Antike* (Vol. 12/1; Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2002).

61. The Titan myth was widely known in Greek and Latin literature and particularly in the poets. E.g., Hesiod, *Theogony* 639-711; 811; Virgil, *Aeneid* 578-580.

62. See also LXX Job 40.20 (Tartarus is a 'deep' place); 41.24 ('Tartarus of the abyss' as a place for prisoners); LXX Prov. 30.16 (the 'abyss' and Tartarus).

with 2 Pet. 2.4-5, Josephus conflates the story of Genesis 6 and the Watchers with the story of Noah and the Flood and draws a comparison between the evil deeds of the Watchers and the deeds of the Titans: 'in fact the deeds of that tradition ascribed to them [the Watchers] resemble the audacious exploits told by the Greeks of the giants' (*Ant.* 1.73).[63]

Another Hellenistic Jew, Philo of Alexandria, also knows Tartarus and uses the myth to contextualize his view of divine judgement for his Graeco-Roman audience. He writes, 'And the proselyte who... has come over to God of his own accord... has received as a most appropriate reward a firm and sure habitation in heaven... But the man of noble descent, who has adulterated the coinage of his noble birth, will be dragged down to the lowest depths, being hurled down to Tartarus and profound darkness...' (*Rewards*, 151).[64] Therefore, in light of the fact that the concept of Tartarus was well known and employed by Hellenistic Jews and early Christianity,[65] it seems best to conclude that 2 Peter's use of the verb ταρταρόω ('cast into Tartarus') in 2.4 is another example of contextualizing the Jewish-Christian concept of divine punishment in the language and thought of Peter's largely Gentile audience.[66]

In both 2 Pet. 2.4 and Jude 6 the sinful angels are assigned to (2 Peter: 'committed them to fetters of'; Jude: 'kept in eternal chains in') the 'nether darkness' (ζόφος) where they await the final judgement. As mentioned above, this binding of the angels echoes the judgement of the 'Watchers' in *1 Enoch*.[67] The term ζόφος comes from Greek literature[68] and refers to the mythological notion of the underworld or nether regions.[69] The term thus refers to the same subterranean region known as Tartarus. This is particularly clear in Hesiod's *Theogony* where it is said that the Titans are chained under the earth in 'murky Tartarus' (τάρταρα ἠερόεντα)[70] and 'under murky gloom' (ὑπὸ ζόφῳ ἠερόεντι).[71] In the same context 'murky Tartarus' is clearly synonymous with the 'gloomy chasm'

63. See the second-century CE Christian work known as *Sib. Or.* 2:229-240 in which those who have been locked in 'Hades', namely, the 'ancient phantoms, Titans and the Giants and such as the Flood destroyed' will be led to the final judgement seat of God and Christ.

64. See also *Sib. Or.* 4.185 where we find another Hellenistic Jewish author associating the place of the final punishment of sinners as being under the earth, Tartarus, and Gehenna.

65. A. Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief / Der 2. Petrusbrief* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994), p. 190.

66. Similarly Kelly, *Commentary*, p. 331; D. J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 103.

67. Cf. *1 En.* 13.1; 10.4-6; 14.5; 54.3-5; 56.1-4; 88.1; see also *Jub.* 5.6 and *2 Bar.* 56.13.

68. The term is found five times in the New Testament: 2 Pet. 2.4, 17; Jude 6, 13; and Heb. 12.18.

69. Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 11.54-7; 20.356; *Iliad* 15.191; 21.56. Cf. *BDAG*, p. 429. Cf. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 53.

70. *Theogony* 721; 736; 807.

71. *Theogony* 729. See also *Theogony* 650 where 'under the murky gloom' (ὑπὸ ζόφου ἠερόεντος) is clearly describing the same reality as 'murky Tartarus'.

(χάεος ζοφεροῖο), the place where the Titans are assigned (*Theogony* 807-814). I would therefore suggest that although 2 Peter makes explicit reference to the two terms that refer to the mythical subterranean abyss, ζόφος and Tartarus (2.4), Jude likewise refers to the same reality but by means of only one of the terms, ζόφος. In so doing, both authors describe the Jewish concept of the abysmal 'darkness' or 'prison' (cf. *1 Enoch* 10; 1 Pet. 3.19) in which the evil angels are bound by means of the terms ζόφος. The key verses in *1 Enoch* 10 read as follows:

> The Lord said to Raphael, 'Bind Azaz'el hand and foot (and) throw him into darkness!' And he made a hole in the desert which was in Duda'el and cast him there; he threw on top of him rugged and sharp rocks. And he covered his face that he may not see light; and in order that he may be sent into the fire on the great day of judgement (vv. 4-6).

This temporary holding place should probably be equated with Hades, the place of the dead,[72] rather than Gehenna since Hades was directly associated with Tartarus in Jewish and early Christian tradition (LXX Ezek. 32.27; Philo, *Rewards*, 151; *Sib. Or.* 2.229-240). Gehenna on the other hand appears to stand for the final place of eternal fiery judgement,[73] that is, the 'place' where evil creatures congregate after the final judgement. In light of these connections, the reality described by ζόφος and Tartarus may be equated with the 'abyss' and 'prison' in which the devil is 'thrown' and 'bound' until the final fiery destruction in Rev. 20.1-10.[74] Moo's conclusion is therefore warranted: 'Tartarus [and I would add ζόφος] ... appears not so much to represent a place of final or endless punishment (as our "hell" often does), but the limitation on sphere of influence that God imposed on the angels who fell'.[75]

2. *Slandering the Glorious Ones: Jude 8 and 2 Pet. 2.10b*

In both 2 Peter and Jude the false teachers are accused of 'insulting/slandering (βλασφημέω)[76] the glorious ones' (2 Pet. 2.10b; Jude 8). Most interpreters agree that the term δόξας ('glorious ones') refer to angels, but in Jude they are good angels and in 2 Peter they are evil.[77] In Jude, the two 'examples' (δεῖγμα, v. 7) in v. 6 and v. 7 (the angelic Watchers and Sodom and Gomorrah) are enlisted to show that such sins will be eschatologically punished by God. The sins of immorality of these two groups are equated: the Sodomites 'indulged in immo-

72. Cf. Mt. 11.23; Acts 2.27, 31; Rev. 1.18; 6.8; 20.13, 14. See *BDAG*, p. 19.

73. *BDAG*, pp. 190–1; J. Jeremias, 'ᾅδης', *TDNT* 1:148.

74. Similarly J. Jeremias, ' ἄβυσσος', *TDNT* 1:9-10.

75. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 103.

76. The verb βλασφημέω can mean 'to revile, defame, slander, speak disrespectfully of' someone. See *BDAG*, p. 178.

77. So Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 261; Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, p. 50; Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 122; Kelly, *Commentary*, p. 337.

rality' (ἐκπορνεύω) 'in the same way as' (τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον) the angels in v. 6. Jude is clearly referring to the incident in Gen. 19.1-11 and thus Bauckham's assessment is accurate: 'As the angels fell because of their lust for women, so the Sodomites desired sexual relations with angels'.[78] Bauckham is also correct to see in Jude's references to the Watchers and Sodom a similar tradition as is found in *T. Naph.* 3. In this chapter the sins of Sodom and the Watchers are described as not conforming to the divinely established order of the cosmos: 'Sun, moon, and stars do not alter their order; thus you should not alter the Law of God by the disorder of your actions' (*T. Naph.* 3.2). In other words, the behaviour of God's people should reflect and conform to God's ordered (that is, obedient) cosmic structure. This is precisely the conception of the 'sin' of the Watchers in Jude 6, for they 'did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode' (Jude 6). 'Abandoning of the proper abode', whether by an angel or human, is a sinful action at least in part because it constitutes rebellion against God's cosmic order of things (as in *1 Enoch* 2–5). In *1 Enoch* 2, as in *T. Naph.* 3, the cosmic elements (the sky, luminaries of heaven, the earth, the seasons, trees, the sun, clouds, rain, etc.) function 'according to their [divinely] appointed order' (*1 En.* 2.1) and as such these cosmic elements are the work of God which 'obey him [God]' and do 'not change; but everything functions in the way in which God has ordered it' (*1 En.* 5.2). 'Yet in the same manner these dreamers defile the flesh' (Jude 8), that is, they behave as the sinful angels and the Sodomites did when they 'went after strange flesh' (Jude 7) and as a result rebelled 'against the divinely established order of things'. 'In doing so they were motivated, like the Watchers and the Sodomites, by sexual lust, and, like the Sodomites, insulted the angels (v. 8)'.[79] The actual nature of the 'reviling/ insulting' of the angels is unclear. Bauckham may be correct to ground the insults in their antinomian 'rejection of the authority of the Lord'[80] (v. 8) and his laws, particularly in light of the fact that the angels were viewed as the guardians of the Mosaic Law (cf. Gal. 3.19) and the created order, an 'office from which the Watchers apostatized, v. 6'.[81]

In 2 Pet. 2.10a-b the false teachers are similarly described as those who 'indulge the flesh (cf. Jude 8: 'defile the flesh'), 'flout the authority of the Lord' (Jude 8: 'reject the authority of the Lord') and 'slander/insult the glorious ones' (Jude 8: 'slander/insult the glorious ones'). But for 2 Peter the focus is a bit different. The description of the false teachers follows upon the main point

78. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 54. 'Going after strange flesh' (ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἑτέρας), in this context and the context of Gen. 19.1-22, must refer to the 'flesh of angels'. See also Kelly, *Commentary*, p. 259.

79. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 58.

80. The phrase κυριότητα ἀθετοῦσιν in Jude 8 means 'they reject the authority of the Lord'. See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, pp. 56–7 and Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, pp. 49–50.

81. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 58.

that Peter makes in the examples he employs in 2.4-8, namely, that the Lord 'knows how to rescue the godly' and 'to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgement' (2.9). 2 Pet. 2.10 functions to spell out further the kinds of sins that will be eschatologically punished. Unlike Jude, the statement about 'slandering the glorious ones' in 2 Pet. 2.10b is further explained in v. 11. Although there has been much debate about the precise meaning of v. 11, the following view is supported by most interpreters. The false teachers who dare to slander the 'glorious ones', or rebellious angels, in v. 10b are compared to the 'angels who, although they are greater in strength and power [than the glorious ones, v. 10b], do not use insults when pronouncing judgement on them [the glorious ones, v. 10b] from the Lord' (v. 11).[82] The false teachers' lack of fear (they 'are not afraid', v. 10b) and their presumptuous overstepping of their God-given boundaries, evidenced by their contempt for and lack of respect for angelic powers, will incur the same eschatological destruction as will the evil angels (v. 12). Even though they deny it, the point here is to show that the false teachers' eschatological judgement 'is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep' (2.2).[83]

3. *Cosmic Destruction and Renewal: 3.4-13*

a. *'All Things Continue as They Were from the Beginning of Creation' (2 Pet. 3.4b).* The primary false teaching of Peter's opponents, or the 'scoffers' (3.3), is revealed in 3.4a-b: 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'. In vv. 5-10, Peter embarks on his direct refutation of the false teachers' assertion in v. 4. But what do the false teachers assert or deny in v. 4? This verse is comprised of a main proposition in the form of a rhetorical question in v. 4a and one that provides the argumentation for it in some way in v. 4b. The two propositions can be paraphrased as follows: the promise of Christ's parousia is empty, that is, it has failed to occur (v. 4a) *because* (γάρ), since the fathers died,[84] all things (πάντα) continue unabated, that is, nothing in existence has been altered or interfered with since the origin of the cosmos. But how does this constitute an argument for their denial of the parousia in v. 4a?

The standard view of v. 4b states that it constitutes a rejection of the possibility of divine intervention in history and therefore, by definition, the promise of the future parousia *and* divine judgement is ruled out.[85] Bauckham, following

82. So Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 261; Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, pp. 199–201; Kelly, *Commentary*, p. 337; Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, pp. 121–2; S. J. Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), p. 136.

83. Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, p. 203.

84. Adams argues that 'the fathers' most likely refers to the OT fathers since the scoffers of 2 Peter seem to be denouncing the OT prophetic promises of God's eschatological parousia (pp. 204–6). He is probably correct. See also Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 167.

85. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, pp. 293–5; Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, p. 221; Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter*,

J. Neyrey,[86] is representative when he notes that the closest parallel to the opponents' 'rationalistic skepticism about divine intervention in the world' appears to be the Epicurean denial of providence.[87]

E. Adams has recently argued that the scoffers' cosmological assertion in v. 4b does not resemble Epicurean thought. For example, 'the scoffers affirm the *created* nature of the universe (κτίσις); Epicureans, of course, totally repudiated the notion of the divine creation of the cosmos'. In addition, the scoffers seem to assert the continuance of all things since the beginning of creation, whereas the Epicurean view taught the opposite: 'the cosmos and all the cosmoi are inherently destructible'.[88] Thus, the statement in 3.4 'is best taken as affirmation of cosmic indestructibility', reflecting not Epicureanism but 'the Platonic/Aristotelian doctrine of cosmic indestructibility'.[89] Nevertheless, both the traditional interpretation of v. 4b and the one set forth recently by Adams recognize that the author's opponents reject the expectation of Christ's eschatological advent, or his second coming (v. 4a). The upshot of their basic denial of the parousia excludes the eschatological judgement which is part and parcel of the parousia. Thus, 'they are free to conduct their lives (cf. 3) according to their own passions'.[90]

b. *Counter-Argument Against the Opponents (2 Pet. 3.5-7).* Consistent with the main thrust of 2.9-12, 3.5-7 stress that the ungodly (ἀσεβής) will face eschatological 'judgement and destruction' (κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείᾳ, v. 7; cf. 2.2), despite the fact that the opponents ignore or overlook key facts about creation and the Flood (vv. 5-6).[91] The cosmological language in vv. 5-7 serves the purpose of highlighting that the God who by his word (λόγῳ) created the cosmos ('heavens and earth', v. 5)[92] is the one who by water (ὕδατι) destroyed the cosmos of

pp. 152–3; M. Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (Leicester: Intervasity Press, 1987), pp. 138–9.

86. Neyrey, 'The Form and Background of the Polemic in 2 Peter', *JBL* 99 (1980), 407–31.

87. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 294.

88. Adams, *The Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 207. There may be another problem with the majority view. As mentioned above, the false teachers of 2 Peter seem to be regarded (or at least regard themselves) as in some sense 'Christian'. In light of this, Moo has suggested that, if the opponents denied divine providence and intervention in the world, 'it is difficult to understand how they could make any claim to be Christian, for they would have to deny the incarnation and resurrection of Christ as well as his Parousia' (*2 Peter, Jude*, p. 168).

89. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 208.

90. Kelly, *Commentary*, p. 357.

91. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 210, is probably correct in arguing that it is not the fact of the world's creation as such that the opponents ignore or overlook, but rather the Flood and 'the character of that event as the reversal of creation'.

92. 'Heavens and earth' in vv. 5, 7 refer to the cosmos in its entirety. This is demanded by the term κόσμος in v. 6 which clearly refers to the same reality as 'heavens and earth' in vv. 5, 7. So Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, pp. 213–14.

Noah's day, including the world's ungodly inhabitants (v. 6). Furthermore, it is by means of this same God's creative 'word' (λόγῳ) that he has determined that the present 'heavens and earth' (i.e., the cosmos) 'are being reserved (τεθησαυρισμένοι) for fire' and 'kept' (τηρούμενοι) until the final judgement (v. 7), all of which again zeros in on the ungodly (ἀσεβής).[93] Therefore, contrary to the false teachers' assertion in v. 4, 'the observable stability of the world is ... no guarantee of its continued stability in the future;'[94] the cosmos and the ungodly are certainly 'being kept for final judgement and destruction' (v. 7).

The central issues related to vv. 5-7 are: (1) what do the two prepositional phrases ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος ('out of water and by means of water') refer to (v. 5)? (2) What is the background to the notions of the cosmic destruction by water (v. 6) and (3) eschatological judgement by means of cosmic conflagration (vv. 7, 10, 12).

1. *2 Pet. 3.5: Word, Water and Creation.* The notion of the cosmos as having been created by means of God's 'word' clearly draws upon the OT (Gen. 1.3-30; Ps. 33.6, 9; 148.5; cf. Sir. 39.17) and Christian (Heb. 11.3) tradition. This is not debated. The first prepositional phrase, ἐξ ὕδατος (the cosmos was created 'out of water'), is probably likewise grounded in the Genesis creation narrative (Gen. 1.2-7), which in turn echoes the general Ancient Near East view[95] that the cosmos emerged *out of* the watery chaos or primaeval ocean (Gen. 1.6; cf. Gen. 1.2-9; Ps. 33.7; 136.6; Prov. 8.27-29; Sir. 39.17).[96] As Moo puts it, the phrase ἐξ ὕδατος suggests that 'Peter is again thinking of the story of creation in Genesis 1, where water plays a significant role'.[97] The second prepositional phrase in 2 Pet. 3.5 (δι' ὕδατος) is not as easily accounted for. What could it mean for the cosmos to have been created δι' ὕδατος? Most interpreters still want to see this second phrase against the backdrop of the Genesis creation account and as such it is taken instrumentally by Bauckham ('by means of water') to suggest that 'water was, in a loose sense, the instrument of creation, since it was by separating and gathering the waters that God created the world'.[98] This is reasonably evident in Gen. 1.7 where God 'made the firmament and separated

93. That this final judgement and cosmic conflagration have as their focus the punishment of the ungodly and not just the destruction of the cosmos may be indicated by the fact that the other occurrences of the notion 'kept (τηρέω) for final judgement/destruction' have as their subjects disobedient beings (angels, 2.4; the unrighteous, 2.9; the opponents, 2.17; and the ungodly, 3.7), and all employ the term τηρέω.

94. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 302.

95. By 'echoes' I am not suggesting that Genesis simply takes over Ancient Near Eastern cosmogony. Rather, Genesis seem to be opposing Ancient Near Eastern cosmogony and theology by arguing that Israel's God is the true and only creator of the cosmos and thus he is wholly other than the cosmos.

96. See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 297; and Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, pp. 225–6.

97. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 170.

98. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 297; cf. Kelly, *Commentary*, pp. 358–9.

the waters which were below the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament'. Thus, God's act of 'separating the waters' brought order to the chaos of Gen. 1.2 as well as the formation of 'heaven' (v. 8) and the 'earth' (vv. 9-10).

E. Adams challenges the standard interpretation of both phrases, which he believes amounts to 'a strained attempt to make the language fit Genesis 1'.[99] He argues that the double phrase ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος (2 Pet. 3.5) 'makes best sense against the background of Stoic cosmogony: water was the immediate substance out of which the cosmos was made'.[100] Adams shows that according to the Stoic view, the cosmos originated from primal fire, which changed into air and then condensed into water. The 'watery mass' then changed again into the four terrestrial elements which combined to make the earth and life-forms on it. The cosmos then ends in fiery destruction, only to repeat the endless cycle of renewal and destruction.[101] The cycle begins and ends with fire, but, 'the change to water is properly *the beginning of our world*'.[102] This is illustrated well in Plutarch's *Stoic. rep.* 1053a and Diogenes Laertius 7.142. Plutarch states: 'The transformation of fire is like this: by way of air it turns into water; and from this, as earth is precipitated... the stars and the sun are kindled from the sea' (*Stoic. rep.* 1053a). Diogenes describes the process as follows: 'The world... comes into being when its substance has first been converted from fire... and then the coarser part of the moisture has condensed as earth' (7.142). Adams may be right in arguing that the concept of world formation 'by means of water' (δι' ὕδατος) in 2 Pet. 3.5 reflects Stoic cosmogony. The author certainly referred to other Greek concepts, such as Tartarus and ζόφος (2.4), in order to communicate Jewish-Christian content. And, as Adams emphasizes, in 2 Pet. 3.5 the author was not solely dependent on Stoicism; rather, he has combined the creation account of Genesis with Stoic cosmology. However, I cannot go as far as Adams in suggesting that 'if the author... is alluding to the Stoic view of world-formation, he is implying that the water pre-cosmic state of Gen. 1.2 was preceded by a more primal state of things – a state of pure fire'.[103] I see no evidence in 2 Peter 3 for this conclusion.

2. *2 Pet. 3.6: The Deluge as Cosmic Destruction of the Ancient World.* The cosmos was created by God's word 'through water and by water' (v. 5). But (δέ) 'the cosmos at that time' (ὁ τότε κόσμος), that is, the antediluvian world, was destroyed by the same word of God and water[104] of creation (v. 6).[105] This

99. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 212.

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 213, n. 56.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

104. That v. 6 refers not to a local destruction (via the Flood) but rather a cosmic destruction is clear. See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 299; Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 214.

105. The prepositional phrase δι' ὧν ('through which') is best understood as referring to 'water'

cosmic destruction via the Flood prepares for the eschatological destruction via fire in vv. 7, 10, 12. But, according to Adams, this understanding of the Flood as a cosmic destruction goes beyond the Genesis narrative, a narrative that portrays the destruction as global rather than cosmic (cf. Genesis 6–8). Again he thinks that Stoic cosmology, or better, the 'Roman Stoic notion of a cosmic deluge', is the closest parallel to 3.6.[106] Adams challenges Bauckham's argument that 2 Peter's understanding of the Flood as a cosmic judgement 'is not so alien to the Genesis narrative' or to later Jewish reflections on that narrative. Bauckham points to the account of the Flood in Gen. 7.11, where 'the waters of chaos, confined at the creation above the firmament, poured through the windows of the firmament[107] to inundate the earth'. Enoch's vision of the Flood in *1 En.* 83.3-5 extends the ideas of Gen. 7.11 into cosmic destruction.[108] Here, heaven falls down upon the earth, the earth is 'swallowed up into the great abyss', and the things of the earth are 'thrown down into the abyss... the earth is being destroyed' (*1 En.* 83.4-5). Adams counters by pointing out that the Enoch passage says nothing about 'opening of the windows of heaven or the bursting out of the foundation of the deep' (cf. Gen. 7.11). 'The picture is really about that of the final world-ending catastrophe which the author has imposed on the flood'.[109]

But what Adams overlooks with regard to Enoch's reflection on Gen. 7.11 is that the mention of 'the great abyss' (*1 En.* 83.4) comes from Gen. 7.11 (cf. 8.2) where we do find 'the *fountains of* the great abyss' bursting open and flooding the earth. The 'abyss' (תהום/ἄβυσσος), although later associated with the depth of the earth, was originally associated with the primeval ocean and 'the original flood' in ancient Israel's cosmogony.[110] Thus, the abyss is almost always mentioned with a reference to water(s) or the sea(s) and associated with them,[111] harkening back to its use in Gen. 1.2. In fact, the abyss is itself comprised of water. Prov. 8.28 speaks of 'springs of the abyss'[112] and Isa. 51.10 mentions 'the waters of the great abyss'. In Ezek. 31.15 the abyss has 'many waters' (Heb.) or 'fullness of waters' (LXX). And in Isa. 63.13 the crossing of the waters of the Red Sea is described with the phrase, God 'who led them *through the abyss*' (διὰ τῆς ἀβύσσου). Here, as in *1 Enoch* 83, the concept 'abyss' is used alone to refer to the great waters. This can be done because the concept was so associated with the primaeval waters of creation. In a section where Enoch is interpreting

and 'the word of God' in v. 5. See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 298; Kelly, *Commentary*, pp. 359–60.

106. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 62.

107. Gen. 7.11 has 'the flood gates of heaven' (ארבת / οὐρανός).

108. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 299.

109. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 214.

110. Jeremias, *TDNT* 1:9; *BDAG*, 2.

111. E.g. Gen. 7.11; 8.2; Job 28.14; Ps. 77.16; 106.9; 135.6; 148.7; Prov. 3.19.

112. LXX Prov. 8.28 has 'springs under the earth'.

the Flood, a reference to the earth being 'swallowed up into the great abyss' (cf. Gen. 7.11) could only mean 'swallowed up by the *waters* of the great abyss'. Therefore, final destruction is not just 'superimposed on'[113] the Flood story in *1 Enoch* 83; rather, the author is interpreting the Flood eschatologically and as a prediction of final cosmic destruction. This shows well that a Jewish author *before* 2 Peter could interpret the Flood as an event of future judgement by cosmic destruction.[114] 2 Peter could have done so as well.

3. *2 Pet. 3.7,12-13: Cosmic Conflagration*. The cosmos that God created (v. 5) was long ago destroyed by water because of human rebellion and sin (v. 6), and this shows that God can and will destroy 'the present heavens and earth' (i.e., the present cosmos) again, but this time by fire. The aim of the destruction is eschatological judgement and destruction of 'ungodly people' (v. 7). The cosmic conflagration broached in v. 7 prepares for the description of the 'coming' Day of the Lord in vv. 10, 12 as a 'day' that will bring about the fiery destruction of the 'heavens' and the 'elements' (στοιχεῖα), that is, the whole created universe.[115] This 'coming day' (3.4, 10, 12) will bring the destruction of the cosmos and the ungodly (v. 7). The destruction will give way, in biblical fashion, to the new creation ('new heavens and earth'; cf. Isa. 65.17; 66.22)[116] (v. 13).

The question at this point is, what is the origin of the idea of total cosmic conflagration in vv. 7, 10, 12? Bauckham[117] and Vögtle locate the origin in Jewish apocalyptic and thus the cosmic conflagration found in Stoicism 'has however hardly considerably influenced his [author] use of the world-fire notion'.[118] They point to OT and Jewish texts that picture God's judgement as a consuming fire.[119] Here again Adams proposes that Stoicism provides a more immediate background to 2 Peter's cosmic conflagration. He maintains that even in Jewish texts where cosmic catastrophe is envisioned as a conflagration none envisages total cosmic conflagration,[120] as 2 Pet. 3.12-13 does. The real parallel then is between 2 Peter 3 and Stoic doctrine of *ekpurōsis* (conflagration). As Vögtle has argued, the author of 2 Peter surely could have known the

113. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 62.

114. In 1QH 11.19-20, 31-33, the earth's destruction comes by way of a flood of fire which corresponds to the Genesis Flood.

115. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 223.

116. Cf. *Jub.* 1.29; Rom. 8.21; 2 Cor. 5.17; Rev. 21.1.

117. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 300.

118. '...hat seine Wahl der Weltbrandvorstellung aber kaum beträchtlich beeinflußt' (Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, p. 228).

119. E.g. Deut. 33.22; Ps. 97.3; Isa. 30.30; 66.15-16; Ezek. 38.22; Amos 7.4; Zeph. 1.18; Mal. 4.1 (LXX 3.19); 1QH 11.19-36; *Sib. Or.* 3.80-90; *Ant.* 1.70; *Life of Adam and Eve* 49-50; Pseudo-Sophocles, *Fragment 2*.

120. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 97.

Stoic *ekpurōsis* idea[121] and there is no reason to preclude the possibility that he could have used it. But, do the vast differences between the world views of 2 Peter and Roman Stoicism (differences that Adams' recognizes) speak against such a direct borrowing? Vögtle argues that the Stoic idea of the cyclical annihilation of the world by fire and the resurgence *of exactly the same world*[122] sets it apart from the cosmic conflagration envisioned by 2 Peter, a conflagration that is unique (it does not repeat or 'cycle') and results in final judgement and vindication.[123] Adams has pointed out, though, that the Stoic view of cosmic destruction and renewal was viewed as a kind of *katharsis*, a refreshing by the creator god.[124] Nevertheless, the Stoic doctrine of 'everlasting recurrence' also includes the idea that 'every man and woman are born again in the next world-cycle and repeat their lives exactly',[125] and as such seems difficult to reconcile with 2 Peter's view (consistent with Jewish and Christian eschatology) that cosmic destruction is a *final* judgement which brings about *the final* renewal of the cosmos 'in which' (ἐν οἷς) righteousness dwells (δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ) (v. 13). Thus, the renewed and final cosmos, 'the new heavens and earth' (v. 13), will be a new world in which the godly who have been vindicated on the 'Day of the Lord' (v. 12) will do righteousness, that is, the will of God.[126] Nevertheless, these differences with Stoic thought do not rule out the possibility that the writer employed aspects of Stoic cosmology in order to better connect with his largely Hellenistic-Christian readers, just as he used the concept 'Tartarus' to contextualize Jewish-Christian content in 2.4. However, I would still maintain with Bauckham and particularly Vögtle that although 2 Peter's cosmic conflagration is quite unique in its formulation, the OT and Jewish traditions[127] provide the rudimentary elements that could have been 'pulled together' to construct 2 Peter's final judgement as a cosmic-fiery destruction.[128]

In the end, the primary point of 2 Peter is clear: the denial of the parousia is by definition a denial of eschatological judgement for present behaviour. 2 Peter insists that God has and will again destroy the ungodly and the cosmos along with them. The destruction is total; no one can possibly escape. 2 Peter draws primarily upon his Jewish and Christian traditions in his polemic against the

121. Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, p. 228.

122. Cf. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, pp. 118–20.

123. Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, p. 228.

124. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 121.

125. *Ibid.*

126. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 326.

127. See particularly 1QH 11.34-35; God's fiery judgement has cosmic effects and incorporates aspects of the Flood tradition, as does 2 Peter. See also the late first-century Jewish text known as the *Life of Adam and Eve*, which reveals the punishment upon the race of Adam and Eve as a 'judgement, first by water and then by fire; by these two the Lord will judge the whole human race' (cf. Pseudo-Sophocles, *Frag. 2*; and the Christian *Apoc. Elijah* 5 and *Asc. Isa.* 4).

128. Vögtle, *Judasbrief*, p. 227.

false teachers. I cannot rule out the possibility that the author also, particularly in 3.7, alluded to some aspects of Stoic cosmology in order to communicate with his Hellenistic readers. But the core of his ideas are Jewish-Christian. That the focus is God's coming for judgement for the wicked and not cosmological speculation as such seems clear. God is not slow about his 'promise' (3.9), that is, the 'promise of his coming' (3.4). Therefore, he wants 'you' to repent and escape his wrath (3.9). In v. 11, the cosmic destruction provides the ultimate motivation for the readers to be 'holy and godly' (3.9). In v. 10 the judgement aspect of the 'day of the Lord' will surely result in the destruction of the cosmos, but the aim appears to be the revealing or exposing (εὑρεθήσεται) of human 'works' or 'deeds' (ἔργα) done on the earth. 'The point... is that the eschatological dissolution will expose all the deeds of human beings to divine scrutiny'.[129] The readers 'wait for' the parousia and the 'Day of the Lord' (3.12), because for them the 'promise of his coming' will mean a 'new heavens and earth' (3.13), but for the false teachers it will mean being engulfed in the cosmic 'burning' (3.12). It should be quite clear then that cosmogony and cosmology, here in 2 Peter as well as 1 Peter and Jude, serve the main concerns of theology and ethical formation and transformation.

129. Adams, *Stars Will Fall From Heaven*, p. 228.

11

Revelation: The Climax of Cosmology

Sean M. McDonough

If Revelation is, to quote the title of Richard Bauckham's book, 'the climax of prophecy', it may equally be called 'the climax of cosmology'.[1] John's picture of the achievement of God's kingdom is painted on the canvas of the cosmos, and the created order is intimately involved in every phase of the book. We can offer here only a brief overview of what could be an exponentially lengthier exposition.[2]

Generic Considerations

Recognizing the visionary nature of the Apocalypse is essential for speaking accurately about the book's cosmology. We learn very little from Revelation about John's view of the 'actual' structure or working of the cosmos: the wealth of cosmological imagery can only be spent within the borders of the vision. We can no more deduce John's view of the physical universe from, e.g., the ascent

1. R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

2. A careful book-length treatise on the subject is still a *desideratum*. Paul Minear's brief but seminal essay 'The Cosmology of the Apocalypse' is the best introduction to the subject (in W. Klassen and G. F. Snyder [eds], *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* [London: SCM, 1962], pp. 23–37). The few books devoted exclusively to Revelation's cosmology tend to shunt all else aside in search of purported astronomical references. The most notable is Bruce Malina's *On the Genre of the Book of Revelation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), which in its efforts to read Revelation as 'astral prophecy' dismisses out of hand virtually all prior scholarship on Revelation (the most significant precursor to Malina's own approach, F. Boll's *Aus Der Offenbarung Johannis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914), is remarkably not even mentioned). The magisterial recent commentaries of Aune (*Revelation* [WBC 52a-c; Dallas: Word, 1997–1998]); and Beale (*The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGNTC, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999]) contain much relevant information, while G. B. Caird's *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: A&C Black, 1966) remains the best short commentary on the book. Among other works, significant attention is given to Revelation in A. Y. Collins' *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypyticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); and there are numerous cosmological insights in S. Friesen's *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John – Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, esp. pp. 152–66).

vision of Revelation 4 than we can deduce the physiognomy of the Roman Emperor from the description of the Beast in Rev. 13.2-3. We should not even expect absolute consistency within the imagined cosmos of the Apocalypse. Visions are not coincidentally linked in the biblical literature with dreams, and dream-logic is precisely what we experience in reading Revelation. The usual boundaries of time and space are fractured; dislocation abounds. Heaven will be above, and earth below, but beyond that nothing is nailed down – and even this basic separation of heaven and earth will be subject to revision by the end of the book. John does not need to account for the precise location of the abyss, nor to explain whether the lake of fire can be said to have any 'location' at all.[3]

Constant awareness that Revelation is a vision is likewise essential for making proper use of putative source material. Mythological material of varied provenance may appear in Revelation, but it does not follow that John has thereby adopted any given cosmology *in toto*. Various pagan and biblical astronomical motifs, for instance, appear to have contributed to the story of the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12: Zeus and Typhoeus; Isis, Osiris, and Seth; Apollo and Typhon; and the book of Daniel all may have played a part in shaping the chapter. This may tell us a great deal about what sort of material John felt was appropriate for communicating the Christian message, but it tells us little about John's view of pagan (or biblical) cosmology as such.

The fact that John does not directly describe the visible universe, however, is no indication that he thinks it unworthy of concern. John has a very strong theology of creation, as witnessed by the acclaim of the living creatures in 4.11, 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, because you created all things and by your will they were and were created'; and the content of the 'good news' of 14.7, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come, and worship him who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water'.[4] The present cosmos is in the throes of the de-creation,[5] but it is never meant to be taken as a mere illusion. (This stands in contrast to the Beast, whose essential nothingness is pointedly made in the designation 'the one who was and *is not* and is about to come up out of the abyss and goes away to destruction' [17.8]).[6] The recipients of the messages to the churches lived in named cities and must wrestle with concrete social and political realities.

Furthermore, despite obvious discontinuities, the first heaven and first earth share a meaningful connection with the new heavens and new earth. The New

3. Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, p. 157.

4. Cf. also the rainbow around the throne, a symbol of God's faithfulness to the creation. See Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 51–3; cf. also Sean McDonough, 'Of Beasts and Bees: The View of the Natural World in Virgil's Georgics and John's Apocalypse'. *NTS* 46 (April 2000), 227–44.

5. See J. Ellul, *Apocalypse* (trans. G. W. Schreiner; New York: Seabury, 1977), p. 51.

6. See McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp. 227–9.

Jerusalem obviously shares the *name*, and thus to some extent the identity, of the earthly city Jerusalem. While the New Jerusalem may in some ways serve as the archetype of the earthly city, the narrative itself suggests that the city coming down from heaven represents rather the eschatological destiny of the old Jerusalem. This is confirmed by the pilgrimage of the kings of the earth into the holy city in 21.24. The imagery does not suggest a vertical ascent to a platonic urban ideal; it is instead the end of the historical journey to Jerusalem as it was meant to be, and has finally become. Within the city, we find elements of the Garden of Eden, notably the River and the Tree of Life. Wherever they have gone in the meanwhile (cf. *1 Enoch* 24–25; *Jubilees* 4.23), or however God has hidden them from human perception, they are here again to consummate the blessing of God through his creation to his people.

John does, then, 'dream a world', but it remains a dream of our world. This balance must be kept throughout our discussion.

The Cosmological Stage

Heaven plays a crucial dual role in the Apocalypse, signifying both the visible sky, and the unseen place of God's throne. At times it may be difficult to distinguish between these two nuances of οὐρανός.

As the visible sky, οὐρανός is the source of various meteorological phenomena (hailstones, fire, etc.), most of which presage the doom of idolatrous earth-dwellers. This of course invites comparison with numerous biblical and extra-biblical accounts, most notably the plagues on Egypt. A door can appear in it, giving access to God's throne room.[7] In this sense οὐρανός is part of the complex of sky, earth, sea, and under-earth, and like them it is subject to removal and/or renewal (6.14; 20.11; 21.1).[8] It may also be seen as a kind of veil separating the earth from the throne room of God. Thus when the sky is pictured as rolling back like a scroll on the day of God's wrath (6.14), this speaks not only to cosmic dissolution, but to the unveiling of the majesty of God to the creation. In ch. 12, meanwhile, the starry sky becomes a living illustration of the conflict of Satan and the people of God: the sun-clad woman crowned with twelve stars is pursued by the fiery dragon until his fall from heaven.[9]

7. This assumes the more common understanding of 4.1 as referring to some sort of doorway offering entry through the sky, as opposed to a doorway above the heavenly dome leading into the heavenly temple.

8. We may also distinguish the οὐρανός from the μεσουράνημα mentioned in 8.13, 14.6, and 19.17. The μεσουράνημα in 8.13 and 14.6 may refer to the zenith of the sun's orbit, and thus the apex of the celestial dome, rather than the middle region between heaven and earth. But in 19.17 it clearly means this middle region, as in English idiom 'the birds in the sky'.

9. In keeping with the OT focus on Revelation, I would take the stars to represent Israel, but it is not out of the question they represent the Zodiac, as Yarbro Collins (*Cosmology and Eschatology*, p. 130) suggests: 'For the author of Revelation, [the woman] is the heavenly Israel whose destiny foreshadows that of the followers of Jesus, her "seed" '.

This leads us naturally to the second sense of heaven in Revelation, the place of God's throne (e.g. 8.1; 16.11; 21.2). In keeping with a 'naïve' view of the cosmos as a massive dome of suspended water or ice, God's throne room is portrayed as lying on top of this dome in what Plato would call the ὑπερουράνιος but which the NT is content to call simply οὐρανός.[10] Thus the 'roof' of the visible world quite straightforwardly forms the 'floor' of the heavenly throne room. Hence the description in 4.6: ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ.[11] The most notable feature of heaven in Revelation is God's throne and the worshippers attending upon it. There is no supposition of a multi-layered heaven such as we meet with in some contemporary Jewish literature: presumably once one goes through the sky-door, one is in the throne room.[12]

The theological significance of heaven in the Apocalypse is profound. From heaven, one has a literally over-arching view of the whole universe. John is able to speak authoritatively about the world and its history because he has been privileged to share in the transcendent perspective of God himself. Thus while God is 'the one who is and who was and who is to come' (1.4), John is to write 'what you have seen, and what they are, and what must take place after these things' (1.19). Whatever the exact meaning of the latter phrase may be, the three-fold time formula is clearly meant to draw a parallel between the scope of God's being and the scope of John's message.[13]

As the place of God's throne, heaven also represents the determinative plan and power of the Almighty.[14] Voices from heaven, whether divine or angelic,

10. This is the view presupposed in the vision of Ezekiel 1, where God in the glory cloud is seen as enthroned above a miniature cosmos, replete with a רָקִיעַ or 'firmament' (Ezek. 1.22, cf. Genesis 1).

11. The word κρύσταλλος can mean ice, which might help John explain why the firmament is firm, and why the heavenly throne room does not just come crashing down to earth. On the other hand, he may intend some vaguer sense of 'crystallized water-like substance', evoking the ultimate source of rain in 'the waters above', and providing a counterpart to the boundary waters of the Reed Sea and the Jordan (see below on 21.2). As always, John may not have felt the need for absolute or even proximate consistency here.

12. It is even questionable whether the levels of heaven in other literature constitute different layers within the invisible heaven as the dwelling place of God. It seems more likely that the levels refer to the regions of the visible cosmos which need to be traversed before reaching the throne of God. Thus 'seven heavens' could refer to the ascent through the levels of the seven planets, whereas in a system focused on the Sun and Moon, one could speak of three heavens. For detailed discussions see ch. 2 of Yarbro Collins' *Cosmology and Eschatology*, and R. G. Edmonds III, 'The Faces of the Moon: Cosmology, Genesis, and the *Mithras Liturgy*' in R. S. Boustan and A. Y. Reed (eds), *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

13. Cf. L. L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 84.

14. Cf. Minear, 'Cosmology', p. 32: 'The phrase "from God" would seem to underscore the ontological ultimacy of this heaven'.

cannot be gainsaid (8.13; 10.4; 11.12; 12.10). Activity springing from heaven cannot be reversed (11.19; 21.2). While there are indications in 12.7-12 of primordial struggles in heaven, and of the erstwhile presence of Satan as accuser in the heavenly courtroom, for the most part heaven serves as the place, as in the Lord's Prayer, where God's will is done. It is here that the living creatures, representing the animate creation of God, ceaselessly worship before his throne. They are joined in their praise by the twenty-four elders, who appear to be idealized human or angelic representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles of the Lamb (thus the saints of the Old and New Covenants).[15]

But the inexorable purpose of God is not worked out in isolation from people and events on earth. The most notable example of this is the enthronement of the Lamb in heaven. As Ellul notes, Jesus' reception of the kingdom is based on his work *on earth*: 'The terrestrial event provokes the celestial event... What happens in the divine world is defined, determined, provoked by the venture of Jesus upon the earth'.[16] The brief narrative of 8.3-5 illustrates the crucial role of the prayers of the earthly saints in the achievement of heavenly purposes: the angelic offering of human prayers precipitates the fiery trumpet judgements which follow.

God and his throne room, finally, are a kind of archetype of the eschaton.[17] The living creatures are doing what all creation ought to be doing were it not for the taint of human iniquity. The throne room can expand in time and space to accommodate the countless multitude which has come out of the great tribulation (7.14), and indeed to include all created things in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea (5.13).

It can even be said that heaven provides the constituent elements of the New Jerusalem. God's appearance is like jasper and carnelian according to 4.3: ὁράσει λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι καὶ σαρδίῳ. The only other appearance of jasper in the NT comes in Revelation 21, where the New Jerusalem shines like crystalline jasper (21.11); jasper is likewise the material of the city's walls, and the first listed adornment of the foundations. The message, like the stone, is transparent: God's glory, hitherto restricted in its fullness to the throne room, has now

15. See Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 323–6; contra Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, pp. 127–30, who suggests they are based on a group of 24 Babylonian astral deities. Aside from the fact that there are twenty-four of them in a heavenly place, and that they are described as 'judges', I see little to connect the two groups.

16. Ellul, *Apocalypse*, pp. 47–8.

17. If this strikes some as 'platonic', this may say as much about Plato's debt to earlier mythological conceptions as it does about John's debt to Plato (cf. especially Plato's use of myth in the *Phaedrus*). John's heaven is not a static realm of ideal concepts, but a living world of worship. It is superior to the present earth not because of any intrinsic ontological virtue, as in the Platonic scheme, but rather because unlike the earth, it is suffused with the presence of God. Once the earth is purged of its resident evil, it is just as 'real' as heaven, and equally fit to serve as the place of his throne.

permeated the world of humanity in accordance with the prophetic promise (Num. 14.2; Hab. 2.14).

The earth has strong negative associations through most of Revelation.[18] For the saints, the earth is a place of struggle against the Beast and his minions. The frequent designation of unbelievers as 'earth dwellers' is pointed: in contrast to the saints, they have no love for the One who sits enthroned in heaven. As with the Egyptians at the Exodus, they will watch in horror as the world in which they have put all their trust falls in ruins around them. Their attempt to gain mastery over the earth culminates in the great counterfeit city Babylon, the dead-end street of the hijacked creation project.[19] Yet as we have already noted, the promise of a renewed earth is not abandoned in Revelation. After the de-creation comes re-creation, as the world and the nations in it at last reach God's appointed goal in the New Jerusalem. Even in the present age, parts of the earth can be a place of refuge for the saints (12.14). When the Dragon pours a river out of his mouth to drown the Woman, it is the earth which swallows it up (12.15-6). As Paul Minear notes, the same ground which had swallowed the blood of Abel and cried out against humanity has now become the church's helper.[20]

The sea is often linked with earth as part of the regions below heaven, and thus to that extent remains a good creation of God (cf. 5.13). But it also has an important role as a symbol of primordial chaos. At one level, the fact the Beast rises from the sea in 13.1 reflects the reality that Roman power came to Asia Minor as a foreign power from across the Mediterranean. But the obvious resonances with the nightmare vision of Dan. 7.4-6 point deeper to the sea as the font of radical evil, the chaos waters out of which emerge the leaders of opposition to God. Thus the Beast can equally be said to come out of the Abyss (11.7;17.8). The fusion of the Sea and the Abyss was invited by the LXX, where ἡ ἄβυσσος is always used of watery places (cf. e.g. Deut. 8.7; Isa. 51.10; Ps. 103.6), though John is clearly aware of the later Jewish traditions which depict the Abyss as the prison-house of evil spirits (e.g. 9.1-11).[21] The admit-

18. The earth is said to have four corners (τὰς τέσσαρας γωνίας τῆς γῆς, 7.1, cf. 20.8), but this tells us no more about John's understanding of the shape of the world than our own colloquial expression 'from the four corners of the earth'. In the midst of an otherwise extremely helpful discussion, Friesen (*Imperial Cults*, p. 155) curiously suggests on the basis of 10.6 (without exegetical argument) that the 'earth is governed by time'. But Aune (*Revelation*, p. 567) is surely correct that ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται should not be rendered 'Time will be no more' but rather 'there will be no more interval of time'; i.e. once the seventh trumpet sounds things will move straight to their denouement.

19. Note the numerous parallels between the description of Babylon in ch. 17 and of the New Jerusalem in chs 21–22.

20. Minear, '"Far as the Curse is Found": The Point of Revelation 12.15-16', *NovT* 33 (1991), 71–7 (76).

21. Even this may relate to the flood waters overwhelming the rebellious angels of Genesis 6, as in *1 Enoch*. Note that φρέαρ is typically used of *wells* rather than merely 'shafts' (Rev. 9.2).

tedly perplexing disappearance of the Sea in the eschaton (Rev. 21.1) is thus likely an image of the removal of all threat to humanity in the new heavens and new earth. It is a world not only after the flood, like Noah's, but a world beyond any threat of flood.[22]

The regions under the earth appear first in a surprisingly positive context in 5.13: the universal worship of God and the Lamb includes those ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς. Its more familiar role as a place of gloom and menace is picked up in ch. 9, where the demonic locust-warriors emerge from the abyss to torment the earth-dwellers. While much of the imagery here derives from the prophet Joel, John is no doubt content to let the widespread terror of chthonic spirits have its full effect on his listeners in the Hellenistic world. Hades is mentioned on a few occasions, both as a name for the fourth horseman Death (5.8), and as the place of the dead (20.13, again in conjunction with θάνατος). It may be presumed to lie under the earth, but there is little concern to locate it or ponder its dimensions. When 'death and Hades' are thrown into the lake of fire (21.14), it is difficult to know exactly what we are meant to envision; but there is no question that John wants us to realize that the spectre of death no longer haunts the new world.

We are left at last with the lake of fire. John has, I believe, carefully structured the judgement narrative of ch. 20 to capture the paradox of absolute judgement and absolute renewal. The familiar view of hell being under the earth can lead to the very reasonable question: how can I enjoy heavenly bliss while my former friends and relations are roasting below me? To put it more broadly, how can the evil dead perpetually taint the renewed cosmos? John's answer is, in brief, they are not 'below' the earth at all. In 20.11, we read that 'heaven and earth fled from his face, and a place was not found for them' (ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς). The motif is drawn from LXX Ps. 113.3,7 and Dan. 2.35 (Th),[23] but John has made the passing away of the entire cosmos more explicit. It is crucial to note that judgement thus occurs directly *after* the passing away of the first heaven and earth, and directly *before* the introduction of the new heavens and earth in 21.1 (Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινήν. ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν). This does not appear to be a mere literary *inclusio*. We are instead meant to see that the reprobate in the lake of fire are forever outside the renewed cosmos; they have, as it were, become eternally irrelevant. They are in a place that is No-Place.[24]

Why *smoke* (καπνός) would come out of a watery prison remains a puzzle (unless *steam* is in view?; cf. Acts 2.19; and *Odyssey* 12.219, where καπνός seems to mean 'sea spray'), but this is likely an instance where John is content to jump from one conception to another. The water image may be abandoned in favour of the lingering smoky destruction of, e.g., Sodom and Gomorrah.

22. Bauckham, *Theology*, p. 53.

23. τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς is verbatim from Daniel (Th).

24. Aristotle confronts a similar paradox when he discusses the region above the heavens, see *De Caelo* 279a17-28.

The Players

While our focus here is on the cosmos, it is necessary to offer a very brief description of the players and their role in the cosmic drama of the Apocalypse.[25] God, the One who sits on the throne in heaven, has created everything that exists, and as *Pantokrator* (1.8; 4.8, etc.) he holds cosmic sovereignty.[26] He exercises this sovereignty through Jesus, the Lamb who shares his throne. Jesus bears the fiery divine likeness (1.12-16), and in an image of universal lordship, holds the stars in his hands. He is himself the bright Morning Star (22.16). The divine presence is communicated to the church by the Spirit (2.11 etc.).[27]

Angels are especially active in Revelation as mediators between the earthly and heavenly realms. They are linked with stars in 1.20, a vivid symbol of their heavenly status.[28] It is an angel who gives John the Revelation and guides him through heaven. Angels represent churches in the heavenly assembly (cf. the greetings 'to the angel of the church in…' in chs 2 and 3), and pass the prayers of the saints along to God (8.3). They are also agents of judgement. Evil angels are explicitly mentioned in 12.7 ('Satan and his angels'), while the star who opens the abyss in 9.1 and perhaps even the four angels of 7.1 may also be considered malevolent.[29]

The living creatures before the throne are clearly based on the figures in Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6. While they may have distant commonalities with the hybrid guardians of Ancient Near Eastern temples, they are here exclusively devoted to worship. While John presumably thought of them as distinct, 'real' heavenly creatures, they appear to symbolize the worship of God by all animate creatures.

25. Recognizing, of course, that the cosmos itself is in some ways itself a 'player' in Revelation and not merely the stage (a helpful reminder from Jonathan Moo in personal correspondence).

26. For the cosmic use of related terms see, e.g., Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 1.1 (παγκρατές); *Orphic Hymns* 8.11 (Sun as κοσμοκράτωρ) and 10.4 (Nature as παντοκράτειρα).

27. I take the 'seven spirits before the throne' (1.4 τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ) to be a reference to the manifold work of the Spirit in the world (and particularly to the church, represented by the *seven* churches of Asia Minor), rather than to seven angels. The expression is unusual, but so is much in Revelation, and the idea that this refers to the Holy Spirit is strongly suggested by the tri-partite form of the greeting in 1.4-5 and the repeated mention of the Spirit in chs. 2–3.

28. Much ancient mythology of course likely begins as a reading of the sky, under the assumption that the stars are divine beings. But association in Revelation is not identification. Aside from the star who opens the abyss in 9.1, angels are not equated with stars.

29. On 7.1 (cf. 6.2-8) as depicting evil angels, see Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 370–408. In context, the battle of Michael and his angels versus Satan and his angels in ch. 12 appears to represent the termination of Satan's prosecuting role in the heavenly courtroom. But it is possible the motif could be drawn from an earlier source in which there was a primordial, Milton-esque expulsion of rebel angels from heaven.

The Saints are portrayed (with heavy debts to Exodus and Daniel) as those who dwell in the shadow of the Beast and must resist the twin evils of persecution and seduction as they await God's deliverance. In the vision they are frequently viewed in heaven, since their loyalty lies there, and they are bound to dwell in the presence of God forever.[30]

The opposition to God is led by the Satanic trinity: the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. The Dragon, the blasphemous imitation of the Father, appears in the heavens with crowns on his heads (12.3), and sweeps a third of the stars to earth. Based on the parallels with Daniel 8, this probably refers not to any angelic fall, but rather to the death or apostasy of saints in Old Testament times, before the advent of the Child.[31]

The Dragon, however, is cast down to earth, and must prosecute his war against the woman by other means.[32] He calls forth out of the chaos waters his would-be Messiah, the Beast. This is not simply the Roman Emperor *tout court*, but rather the Roman Emperor as the embodiment of recurrent evil; any given ruler is simply the periodic spring flowing from an underground river of malice (cf. 11.7, 'the Beast who comes up out of the abyss'). He has his false resurrection (13.3) and his false parousia (17.8) but he is destined for destruction. His

30. The saints are also likely in view in 13.6, where the Beast blasphemes God's 'tent, the ones who tent in heaven' (τὴν σκηνὴν αὐτοῦ, τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας). The 144,000 (whom I take to be a symbol of the church, and equivalent to the countless multitude in ch. 7, cf. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, pp. 215–29) appear on Mount Zion in 14.1. This Zion is difficult to chart cosmologically. It could refer to the heavenly Zion in parallel to Hebrews 12.22. This would be supported by the note in 14.2-3 that John heard a voice 'from heaven' and that 'they' (presumably the 144,000) sang a new song *before the throne*. But the prophetic background of Joel 3.5 and Isa. 4.5 (cf. 4 Ezra 13.33-36) suggests this may be a proleptic view of the end-times deliverance of the earthly Zion (*not* necessarily the literal deliverance of Jerusalem, but presumably a picture of the salvation of the church on earth in the manner of 20.9-10). In this view, the earthly saints would only be learning the heavenly song, not themselves singing it before the throne. It is almost impossible to choose between the two. See Aune, *Revelation*, pp. 803–9.

31. Dan. 8.10, 'and it [= the little horn] grew up towards the hosts of heaven, and it threw to earth some of the host and some of the stars and trampled them'. This is interpreted in Dan. 8.24, 'and he will destroy mighty ones and the holy people'. It is just possible that the host in Dan. 8.10 constitutes the heavenly representatives of the earthly people, but a more straightforward interpretation in which the host = the people is more likely. In support of this view, at least with respect to Revelation, note that the verb for 'trample' in Dan. 8.10 (רמס/κατεπατήθη) is a cognate to the verb used for the trampling of the holy city (a symbol of the saints) in Rev. 11.2 (πατήσουσιν).

32. 12.8 notes that there 'was no place found' (οὐδὲ τόπος εὑρέθη αὐτῶν) for Satan and his angels in heaven. The language is from Dan. 2.35, but has clear resonance with the disappearance of the first heaven and earth in Rev. 20.11 (see discussion above). To the extent that 'the whole world lies in the power of the evil one' (1 Jn 5.19), Satan's heavenly demise may presage the removal of the cosmos he has usurped. The narrative of ch. 12 also recalls the taunt over the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14, which has its roots in astral mythology; cf. esp. vv. 13-15 where the astral elements are especially strong.

worship is promulgated by the second Beast, also known as the False Prophet, a mockery of the Holy Spirit (cf. 13.11-17 and esp. 16.13-14, where the deceptive spirits come out of the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet). We have already discussed the earth-dwellers who are seduced by the Satanic trinity: they are those who fall for the deception of Satan, and end up making the blasphemous acclamation, 'Who is like the Beast, and who can war against him?' (13.4l cf. Exod. 15.11; Ps. 89.7).

The Drama

The drama of the Apocalypse may be profitably viewed through the lens of the cosmos. The cosmos and all that is in it was created good by almighty God, and it exists to reflect his glory. The crown of creation is humanity, and the crown of humanity is the Messiah, the risen Lamb of God. Those who remain faithful will share in his kingdom and glory.

The cosmos, however, has become corrupted. The heavenly courtroom itself has been subject to the incursions of an accusing enemy, the Serpent of old, now seen in the guise of a fiery Dragon. The redeeming work of Christ (put into practice by the celestial bailiff Michael) has cleansed heaven of that scourge, and thrown down the devil and his angels, such that God's throne room is characterized by ceaseless worship and praise. Even so, the cries of a desperate earth are heard in heaven, as the martyrs below the throne cry out, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, before you judge and avenge our blood from those who dwell on the earth?' (6.10).

The earth, which has already laboured under numerous idolatrous tyrants, is now subject to the full fury of the Dragon. His wrath is directed primarily against the church, 'the Woman and her offspring', but the war waged by his agents the Beasts has devastating consequences for the creation itself. God's people cry out to him for deliverance, and as at the first Exodus, so in this great eschatological Exodus he answers by systematically dismantling the cosmos which the Dragon is trying to usurp. The beautiful order of Genesis disintegrates; things fall apart, the centre cannot hold. A biblically literate auditor of the Apocalypse would appreciate the patent allusions to the plagues upon Egypt; but any pagan listener could easily identify the hailstones and bloody waters and the rest as signs of divine wrath.[33] The natural world has been transformed from living-room to torture chamber.

As things spiral back towards primal chaos, neither the created order nor the monuments of human civilization offer any refuge. There is, as the spiritual says, no hiding place down here. The stars fall (6.13), the mountains and islands are removed from their places (6.14). The sky, which had served to shelter humanity from the looming wrath of God and the Lamb, is rolled back like a

33. Cf., e.g., Virgil's *Georgics* 1.471-80; 3.541-58.

scroll, leaving the world naked before the divine judgement. The 'lightnings and sounds and thunders' that go forth from the throne of God (4.5) break forth upon the earth, and the eschatological earthquake removes the foundation of idolatrous humanity (16.18-21). The great city falls under the wrath of God (16.19). At last, heaven and earth itself flee from his presence (20.11).

But God, who in the beginning said, 'Let it be...', now declares, 'Behold, I am making all things new' (21.5). The centrepiece of the new creation is the New Jerusalem, which evokes at once God's people, God's place and God's presence.[34] At one level, the city represents God's people, as is indicated by the description of the city as a 'bride' (21.2), coupled with its gates and foundations being named for the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb (21.12-14). But it is equally God's place, the Garden City where Nature and Culture at last meet in harmony. The massive dimensions of the city may indeed suggest that it is not merely a part of the new creation, it is itself the renewed cosmos.[35]

But the New Jerusalem is not God's place merely by virtue of its size, or by a fortuitous convergence of a favourable climate and well-disposed citizens: the New Jerusalem is what it is because it is suffused with God's presence. The spatial boundaries which had separated God and his people have been removed. God's throne is now on earth. The marriage of the Lamb and his Bride, the marriage of heaven and earth, has come to pass.

Conclusion

The cosmos, then, plays a number of indispensable roles in the visions of Revelation. As the handiwork of God, it bears the stamp of his glory and becomes the basis for creaturely praise. But like a story-book mansion, it is a place of many rooms, not all of them inviting: there is a heavenly throne-room above, but the abyss and the pathless sea lurk below. It can become a place of terror, as the Dragon's fall and human idolatry trigger a spiral back towards primal chaos. Yet in the end, just as human ploughshares are beaten into swords, so the cosmos itself will reach its appointed place of rest and peace, and become a place of nurture: a river running through it, and the tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations; God its light, its lamp the Lamb.

34. See Bauckham, *Theology*, pp. 132–43.

35. Yarbro Collins, following suggestions by Charles and others, believes that part of the depiction of the New Jerusalem as cosmic city consists in the connection of its foundation stones with the zodiac (*Cosmology and Eschatology*, pp. 131–4). The evidence of such a connection is not entirely secure, and I am more inclined to see the basis in the twelve stones on the breastplate of the High Priest (see Caird, *Revelation*, pp. 274–5). The breastplate in its turn may well have had some astronomical connotations; but I do not believe these can be assumed for John. For the New Jerusalem as cosmic temple, see above all Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downer's Grove: Apollos/Intervarsity Press, 2004).

12

Conclusion

Sean M. McDonough and Jonathan T. Pennington

What, then, have we learned from our tour of the New Testament cosmos? We may begin with the negative results. The detailed cosmic template beloved of theorists and illustrators remains elusive. Apart from a tendency to describe the cosmos in terms of 'heaven and earth' (with the occasional addition of 'the sea' or 'under the earth'), the New Testament texts do not offer enough information to reconstruct a uniform 'early Christian view' of the physical universe. In scholarly terms, this means that it is unlikely there is a Rosetta Stone waiting to be found which might unlock the secrets of New Testament cosmology. At the popular level, the New Testament cannot be used to provide a guide to modern astrophysics, but neither can it be assailed for holding forth an antiquated, 'unscientific' view of reality.

The reticence of the texts themselves could be managed, of course, if they showed clear allegiance to some well-known cosmological schema. But while there are intimations that the writers were in touch with the intellectual currents around them, there is nothing to indicate that any given author adopted such a system *in toto*. We may assume that they would have conceptualized the world on the basis of everyday observation: the sun and stars move through the sky, the sky is like a great dome, and so on. But these observations never commit to anything beyond the ordinary human experience of the world; there is no chapter and verse citation which demands to be read against Galileo or Copernicus. 'He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good' (Mt. 5.45) is not a disquisition on celestial mechanics. The Old Testament can be assumed as generally authoritative for the NT writers, and it surely had a profound effect on their *theological* assessment of the created order. But there is no demonstrable commitment to a real or imagined Old Testament blueprint of physical reality. Revelation comes closest to tracking Old Testament conceptions of the heavenly realm, but this is about as far as possible from straightforward scientific description. Early Judaism likewise shaped the theology of the New Testament writers without leaving clear traces on their cosmology *per se*. Paul's cryptic mention of the 'third heaven' in 2 Cor. 12.2 seems to be indebted to early Jewish speculation, but precisely what he meant by the term is still difficult to determine.

The Hellenistic background is if anything more tantalizing; the reach continually exceeds the grasp. There is certainly no thoroughgoing engagement with scientific cosmology or cosmogony in our texts. The most extended meditation on cosmic structures in the NT is probably the book of Hebrews, which is also generally seen as the most Hellenized book in the NT. But the epistle is clearly focused on theological concerns, and what might appear at first blush to be 'platonic' elements turn out on closer inspection to be fully consonant with traditional Jewish and Christian beliefs. The author has likely highlighted those aspects of the tradition that were most amenable to refined Greek sensibilities, but he has not initiated the kind of wholesale merger of Judaism and Hellenism we see in, e.g., Philo's *Opificio Mundi*. 2 Pet. 2.4, meanwhile, could have distant echoes of Hesiod's Titans in his use of *tartaroō*, but we can hardly deduce from this that Peter believed Tartarus was a ten days' and nights' anvil-fall below the earth (*Theogony* ll.713ff.). Whatever fusion there may have been between Genesis 6 and Hesiod took place long before the writing of 2 Peter, and Tartarus in any case appears as a general term for the underworld in, for example, the Greek translation of Job 40.20 and 41.24. Later in the Epistle, there is debate about the possible Stoic influences on the phrases concerning creation 'out of water and through water' (3.5) and the cosmic conflagration (3.7, 10-12). But the patent biblical associations of water/creation and fire/judgement make a 'pure' Stoic background unlikely. The extent of 2 Peter's dependence on Stoic cosmological theory remains obscure.

There is, then, no discernible, fixed background against which the NT sets forth theories about the physical universe. Instead, the texts appear to draw upon a variety of resources and images to articulate fundamentally theological points. If we focus on the theological orientations of the text, real growth in understanding can be made. If the authors are loath to tell us what they think of the precession of the equinoxes, or the number of primal elements, they are not at all shy about setting their theological concerns on the canvas of the cosmos.

Here we do find a number of commonly shared perspectives. As we noted above, 'heaven and earth' was a basic division of reality, with 'heaven' doing double duty as the place of God's throne and the visible sky. Typically, heaven represents the dwelling of God, from which proceed his directives for the rest of creation: 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Mt. 6.9). Meteorological phenomena like hail and lightning can easily fuse into 'heavenly' judgements in the fullest sense of the term.

Earth carries a much more ambivalent role in the New Testament. While the heavenly places might be the scene of cosmic warfare, or on occasion the abode of maleficent spiritual forces, earth is so burdened with human iniquity that an adjective like 'earthly' can fit comfortably alongside 'unspiritual' and 'demonic' in Jas 3.15. With 'earth' thus described, it is not surprising that allusions to the region under the earth are almost unremittingly negative (the exceptions being Rev. 5.12 and perhaps Phil. 2.10). Yet the earth remains the product of God's

creative hand, and the object of his providential and redemptive concern (1 Cor. 10.26; Acts 1.8; Rev. 21.1).

In all of this, 'earth' bears resemblance to the more comprehensive term 'world'. John in particular typically uses 'world' for the 'world-system' implacably opposed to God and his ways, while for James, 'friendship with the world' is the signal temptation for believers (4.4). In the same way, Paul declares that the 'wisdom of the world' is foolishness in the eyes of God (1 Cor. 3.19). But the same John who uses 'world' in such a consistently negative way can equally declare, 'God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life' (Jn 3.16).

The Lord's Prayer points to the fact that the spatial 'heaven' functions in an analogous way to the ultimate future, the 'day of the Lord' in its various lexical guises. This leads us naturally to the flow of cosmic history in the NT. The comprehensive nature of the creator God's kingdom means that the universe must be taken into consideration by our texts, even if the divine-human relationship remains central. Thus the creation of the world by God is frequently affirmed or alluded to, although the details of this creative act do not go much beyond statements that it was done 'through Christ' as God's creative agent (Jn 1.1-3; 1 Cor. 8.6; Col. 1.15-20; Heb. 1.2). The involvement of the creation in humanity's fall would have been a theological commonplace for those committed to the OT as Scripture, not to mention an existential reality. Every bump and bruise and thorn and thistle would have been taken as a sign that things were not now as they were meant to be. The consequences of the fall for the cosmos are vividly depicted in Romans 8 and throughout the book of Revelation.

But the present state of affairs would not obtain forever. The coming day of the Lord would be signalled by cosmic dissolution, the unravelling of what had been woven together in the beginning. While hyperbolic language is doubtless in play in certain texts, there is no reason to doubt that the early Christians anticipated that the eschaton would be marked by disturbances in the natural order. Whether this involved an annihilation of the creation, versus a cleansing or renewal, may be questioned. Even 2 Peter 3 can be (and should be) taken to indicate purgation rather than annihilation. In any event, the theological crux is that the 'de-creation' must precede the re-creation.

This re-creation is assuredly coming. The language used may be localized and even homely (reclining at the table in the kingdom of God, Lk. 13.29) or more comprehensive ('the new heavens and new earth' of Rev. 21.1 and 2 Pet. 3.13). But it all points to the reality of a transformed creation. Naturally, we find here the obverse of the questions raised above concerning the annihilation or purgation of the old creation: is the new creation absolutely new, or renewed? Rather than hold forth a probably false dichotomy between complete continuity and complete discontinuity, it seems better to say that the degree of 'newness' depends on the point an author is making in any text. Thus even within the same letter to the Corinthians, Paul can stress the meaningful connection of the

now-body and the new-body (1 Cor. 6.9-20), and then emphasize the radical differences between the two (1 Cor. 15.35-58). The transition from the now to the new is complex, and we must be willing to tolerate a certain ambiguity in various descriptions. The ambiguity can be neatly illustrated by considering the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection body, the first instalment of the full restoration to come. On the one hand, the logic of God's vindication of Jesus demands that there be a continuity between who he is now and who he was then. This theological necessity is confirmed by the empty tomb and the recognition scenes with the disciples. Luke in particular highlights the materiality of the resurrection body, as Jesus eats the broiled fish in Lk. 24.42-43 (a motif likely present also in Jn 21.9-15, though Jesus' eating is not made explicit). At the same time, recognition is often slow in coming, and Jesus is supernaturally quick in going (Lk. 24.13-31). His body may be material, but it appears to be a radically upgraded substance, one that cannot only disappear and appear at will, but can apparently walk through walls as well (Jn 20.19).

We began with the central image of 'heaven and earth', and with it we will conclude. As often as not, the NT presents heaven and earth in sharp opposition to another. But in the end, these two join in harmonious union. God creates a new heaven *and* a new earth. The final words of Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*, while directed towards the destiny of humanity, may equally serve to point to the culmination of the creation project as a whole:

'For there is the one Son, who accomplished His Father's will; and one human race also in which the mysteries of God are wrought, "which the angels desire to look into"; and they are not able to search out the wisdom of God, by means of which His handiwork, confirmed and incorporated with His Son, is brought to perfection; that His offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature (*facturam*), that is, to what had been moulded (*plasma*), and that it should be contained by Him; and, on the other hand, the creature should contain the Word, and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels, and be made after the image and likeness of God' (*Adv. Haer.* 5.36, trans. Philip Schaff).

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