

## Other Worlds and Their Relation to This World

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VOLUME 143

# Other Worlds and Their Relation to This World

Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions

*Edited by*

Tobias Nicklas  
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## INTRODUCTION

Is there a (hopefully better) “otherworld” which, at least sometimes, is in contact with the world(s) we live in? Will we have a place and future in this otherworld after we passed away? And if “yes”: What will this future look like? Death is the end of life—the absolute end, at least for life in the way we know it. Therefore, death radically questions any attempt of making sense of human life. Definite answers to these and related questions will most probably never be reached, but it has not prevented humanity from asking the questions and trying to come up with some sort of answer.

Starting with the Hellenistic era authors of biblical texts, such as the Book of Daniel, and of deuterocanonical or apocryphal writings, such as 2 Maccabees, gradually came to formulate ideas of a “resurrection” of the individual in the end-time that offered a perspective of hope, at least for the righteous one. Early Christianity roots its hope and its belief in a resurrection in the message and in its experience of the crucified and risen Christ. Yet, Old and New Testament texts are very cautious in giving clear answers to the second question: What does this future look like? What kind of life can we expect, and in what kind of world?

While Paul in 1 Cor 15:35–58 uses the image of a complete transformation that will happen at the *parousia* and through the resurrection, he does not offer a concrete description of life after death or of the “otherworld”. In 2 Cor 12:2–4 he speaks in a mysterious way about his rapture into the third heaven, but—again—he does not give a detailed description of this experience. Even the book of Revelation, with its images of “a new Jerusalem” (Rev 21:9–22:5) and “the Sea of burning sulphur” (Rev 21:8), only in part satisfies human yearning for a better and a more secure knowledge. Several apocryphal writings of early Judaism and ancient Christianity have tried to fill this gap. The *Apocalypse of Paul*, for one, starts with a citation of 2 Cor 12:2–4 and provides the kind of descriptions which Paul did not wish to offer.

The above ideas constitute something of an “anthropological” background for explaining the emergence of texts about “otherworldly places and situations”, but they do not give an answer to the more specific questions of how (and why) various forms of texts were created

to address such questions, how these texts functioned, and how they have to be understood. On the one hand, these descriptions of the “otherworld” are taking over and reworking existing motifs, forms and genres. But on the other, they surely also mirror concrete problems, ideas, experiences, and questions of the authors and the first readers.

The contributions of this volume are the result of a “joint-venture” conference organised by Biblical scholars of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, and of the Radboud University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands, which took place at the Radboud University, 21–23 March, 2007. Contributors were asked to address aspects of the following three major questions:

1. How do various texts describe the “otherworld”, which ideas, images and metaphors are used to give an overall view of this “otherworld”, and what are their origins?
2. In which way can these ideas and descriptions of the “otherworld” (e.g., places or concepts like heaven and hell) be interpreted as mirroring ethical, theological, social, political, or other problems and/or situations of “this world”?
3. In which way do ideas and descriptions of the “otherworld” influence conceptions, problems and situations of “this world”?

The editors wish to thank the authors for their contribution and also for their patience in awaiting the publication of this volume. The conference was made possible through the generous support of the universities of Leuven and Nijmegen. Thanks are due also to the on-site assistants, in particular to PhD candidate Ms. Gwynned de Looyer, former student-assistant at the chair of Old Testament studies in Nijmegen. The preparation of this volume would not have been possible without the help of Dr. Heike Braun, Mr. Michael Sommer and Ms. Veronika Niederhofer, all at Regensburg.

The editors are much obliged to professors John J. Collins and Florentino García Martínez, the then editors of the *Journal for the Study of Judaism. Supplement Series*, who in 2007 proposed to publish the acts of the conference in the series, and to professor Hindy Najman, the current editor, and her team of editorial assistants (Sherry Corman and Andrew Jones) for accepting the manuscript and assisting in preparing it for publication.

Finally, many thanks are due to the staff of Brill publishing house, above all to Mrs. Mattie Kuiper, for a most enjoyable and efficient cooperation.

Regensburg, Leuven and Nijmegen, March 2010

Tobias Nicklas, Joseph Verheyden, Florentino García Martínez and Erik Eynikel



APPROACHING AFTERLIFE IMAGERY:  
A CONTEMPORARY GLANCE AT ANCIENT CONCEPTS  
OF OTHERWORLDLY DIMENSIONS

Daria Pezzoli-Olgianti

The present volume contains contributions considering afterlife descriptions from different ancient cultures, religious symbol systems and communities. Analyses of Jewish and Christian apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature, New Testament writings, concepts from the Graeco-Roman world and late antiquity give a deep insight into a wide range of otherworldly concepts relating to various images of the world to which each belongs. This collection of various articles about different religio-historical sources is presented under the title: "Otherworlds and their Relation to this World." This format allows a more or less explicit comparison between the afterlife scenes depicted in the different texts.

My contribution is linked to this possible comparative approach and focuses on a few preliminary aspects in approaching ancient imageries of the otherworld. In the context of my discipline, the study of religion, this article remarks upon the opportunities for, and attendant problems of, a comparative approach to such a vast array of conceptions of the otherworld. How might one engage in a profitable exchange with philological, exegetical and theological approaches to this topic? My thoughts on this question are articulated in three interrelated sections. Firstly, I will begin with a few hermeneutical remarks aimed at situating contemporary interest in otherworldly concepts in ancient religions. The second stage will offer some methodological observations on comparative analysis. Finally, attention will be drawn to the various media we are considering to reconstruct religious images on existential and cosmological dimensions of human life.

1. OTHERWORLDLY IMAGERY AS A TOPOS WITHIN THE EUROPEAN  
HISTORY OF RELIGION: A FEW HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Even if it turns out to be a coincidence, it is very striking to observe that as the scientific interest in ancient concepts of the afterlife grows, the

discourse on the same topic in contemporary art and society is equally marked. Are these different levels of reflection about the otherworld related to each other? It is not possible to answer this question in a univocal way, but it is an essential one to ask nonetheless, since it has a crucial hermeneutical relevance. The interest in interaction among different discourses within contemporary society—for instance among scientific and artistic perspectives—helps to establish and define the point of view from which we are reconstructing aspects of ancient religions. Let me illustrate this with a few selected examples.

Over the last decade, several feature films have dealt with death as a crossing from one form of existence to another. Movies such as “Don’t Die Without Telling Me Where You’re Going” (original: “No te mueras sin decirme adónde vas”; Argentina, 1995, directed by Eliseo Subiela), “After Life” (Japan, 1998, directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda), or “Volver” (Spain, 2006, directed by Pedro Almodóvar) can be seen as variations on otherworldly conceptions. The aforementioned films transpose the issue of afterlife into an almost secular key, bringing into cinema a topic belonging traditionally to the domain of religion.<sup>1</sup>

A further illustration of the relevance of the otherworld in social discourse is given by empirical surveys on the impact of religion and religions in western multicultural society. The question about faith in an otherworldly dimension or the belief in the continuation of human existence in a different form after death are seen as significant indicators to delineate a religious orientation. They appear very often in questionnaires within quantitative empirical research projects. In fact, relating monotheistic and other religious systems to an interpretation

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<sup>1</sup> On the correlation and /or concurrence between religion and cinema see as an example: M.R. Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon, 1996); J.C. Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York – London: New York University Press, 2003), 9–139; B. Plate, ed., *Representing Religion in World Cinema: Filmmaking, Mythmaking, Culture Making* (New York – Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003), 1–15; M.J. Wright, *Religion and Film, An Introduction* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 11–31; D. Pezzoli-Olgiati, “Film und Religion, Blick auf Kommunikationssysteme und ihre vielfältigen Wechselwirkungen,” in *Religious Turns—Turning Religions. Veränderte kulturelle Diskurse, neue religiöse Wissensformen* (Eds. A. Nehring & J. Valentin; Religionskulturen 1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008).

of human life towards death and beyond is a common and socially accepted approach.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, comparative approaches to religious symbols systems often afford a central role to their performance in presenting otherworldly dimensions and coping strategies for facing the transiency of human life.<sup>3</sup> Given that religion cannot be reduced to a mere coping strategy for facing death, it seems plausible to consider the whole issue of otherworld imagery as an interesting issue within religious symbol systems, both from the perspective of contemporary media discourses about religion and religions, and from a more scientific—descriptive and analytical—point of view.<sup>4</sup>

The centrality of theological concepts, imagery and rituals linked to the otherworld, can be elucidated with an historical glance at Europe and its peculiar religious constellations. An exhaustive list of case studies in this field does not lie within the limits of the present contribution. As an example, I offer just a brief mention of the importance of afterlife concepts in medieval Christianity on the basis of a very famous Venetian mosaic: the last judgement

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<sup>2</sup> See, as an illustration, R.J. Campiche, *Die zwei Gesichter der Religion. Faszination und Entzauberung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004), 309–95.

<sup>3</sup> See a few illustrations within the history of religion: H.-J. Klimkeit, ed., *Tod und Jenseits im Glauben der Völker* (3rd ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993); J. Figl, ed., *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft, Religionen und ihre zentralen Themen* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2003), 628–50. For a philosophical-sociological conceptualization of religion as a coping strategy to face contingency see H. Lübbe, “Kontingenzerfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung,” in *Kontingenz* (eds. G. v. Gravenitz & O. Marquard; Munich: Fink, 1998), 35–47; N. Luhmann, “Transformation der Kontingenz im Sozialsystem der Religion,” in *Funktion der Religion* (3rd ed., Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> See Fritz Stolz’s functional description of religion: “Die Weltoffenheit des Menschen bringt Probleme mit sich. Einerseits enthält sie beträchtliche Freiheitsgrade des Verhaltens; die menschlichen Handlungsweisen sind zwar traditionell, sie folgen kulturellen Mustern, aber diese lassen doch einen großen Spielraum offen. Die Kehrseite ist eine elementare Unsicherheit. Was ist im Einzelfall zu tun? Welches Handeln ist angemessen? Führt es zu Erfolg oder Misserfolg? Viele Faktoren, die das Handeln bestimmen, bleiben stets unabsehbar. Dem Menschen sind die Zufälligkeiten des Lebens bewusst; die Philosophie bringt dies unter dem Begriff der Kontingenz. Es ist eine menschliche Einsicht, dass die lebensbestimmenden Mächte letztlich nicht kontrollierbar sind,” in his *Weltbilder der Religionen, Natur und Kultur, Diesseits und Jenseits, Kontrollierbares und Unkontrollierbares* (Zürich: Pano, 2001), 12. See from the same author: *Grundzüge der Religionswissenschaft* (3rd ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001 [1988]), 80.

in the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (fig. 1). This extended mosaic on the Western wall of the church—very typical at this time—was originally made in the 11th and 12th century and was restored in various phases, mainly within the 19th century.<sup>5</sup>

The mosaic does not only articulate the general concept of the final judgement as part of a broader reception of apocalyptic traditions in medieval art, but it also represents death as a crossing between different forms of existence. The image transposes a clear anthropological conception of the “otherworld” onto the final judgement scene, and—of particular interest for our volume—shows with a great richness of details positive and negative afterlife scenes: paradise for the good and hell for sinners (figs. 2 and 3). The image contains two representations of limbo where the souls of the innocents are waiting for their liberation (fig. 4).<sup>6</sup>

It is unfortunately not possible to study this marvellous work in depth here; but for the few hermeneutical observations I want to point out, it is crucial to underline how well-structured is this vision of the otherworld. Furthermore, the collocation at the entrance wall of the church implies that the believers see this huge representation by leaving the cathedral, which evidences the significance of the pragmatic level of such an otherworld representation. Therefore depictions of paradise and hell do not only have cosmological but can equally assume moral and ethical implications; they affect not only thinking, but also stimulate and justify practices and rituals.<sup>7</sup>

Since this volume deals with early Christian and other ancient conceptions of the otherworld, it is important, in my opinion, to outline how widespread are contemporary and historical visions of the otherworld and even how great their influence upon our approach to the whole issue may be; in fact our perception is always mediated by the cultural and religious traditions we are living and thinking in.

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<sup>5</sup> R. Polacco, *La Cattedrale di Torcello* (Venezia – Treviso: L'altra riva-canova, 1984), 105–19.

<sup>6</sup> Polacco, *Cattedrale*, 67.

<sup>7</sup> See Ch. Auffarth, *Irdische Wege und himmlischer Lohn, Kreuzzug, Jerusalem und Fegefeuer in religionswissenschaftlicher Perspektive* (Veröffentlichung des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 144; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002).



Fig. 1: General view of the mosaic of the last judgment, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello (I).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Image from: Th. Droste, *Venedig. Die Stadt in der Lagune. Kirche und Paläste, Gondeln und Karneval* (3rd ed., Köln: Dumont, 1988), fig. 90.

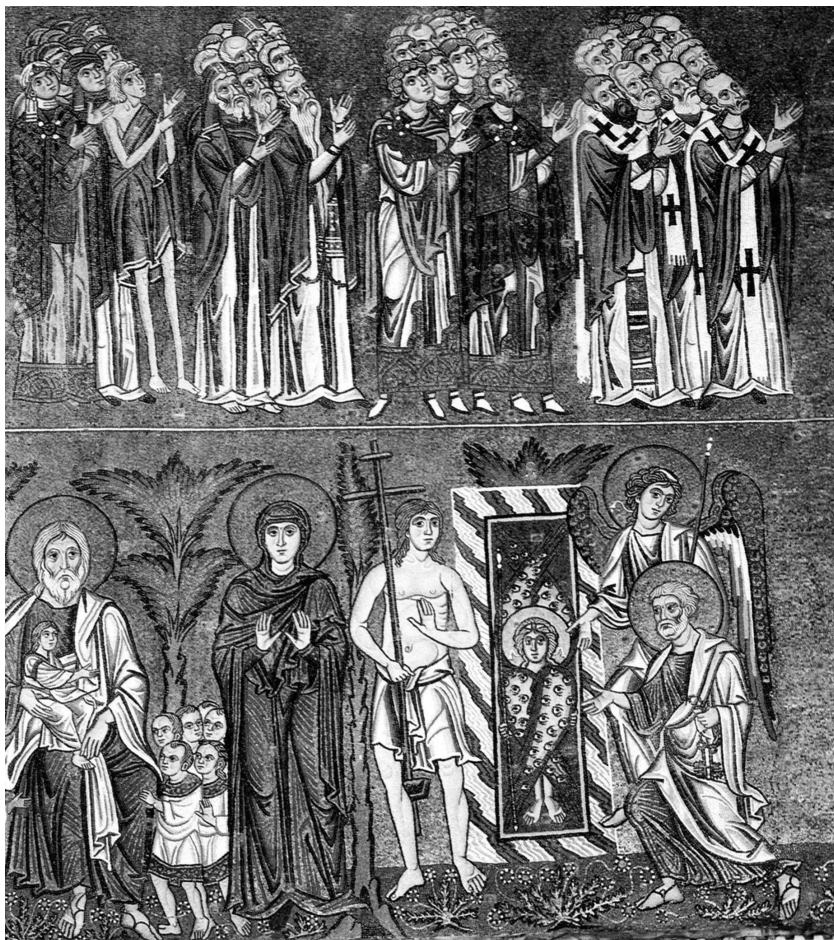


Fig. 2: A paradise scene.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Image from: Polacco, *La Cattedrale di Torcello*, 70, fig. 68 (see footnote 5).

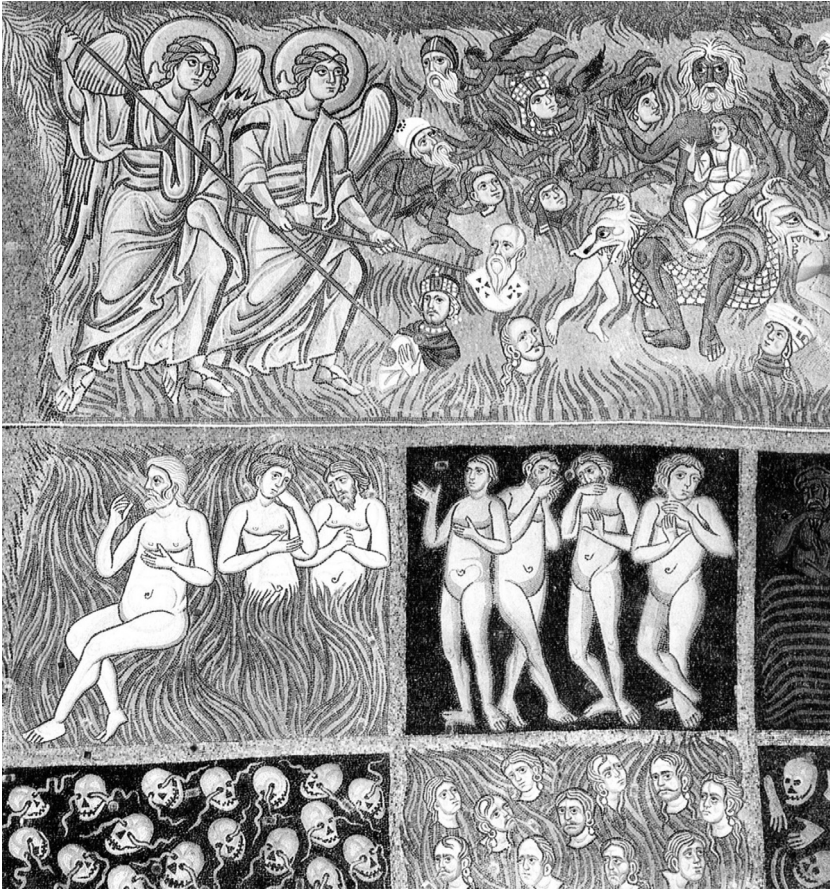


Fig. 3: Different aspects of hell.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Image from: Polacco, *La Cattedrale di Torcello*, 71, Fig. 70 (see footnote 5).



Fig. 4: Detail of the souls in limbo.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. COMPARING THE INCOMPARABLE?

Even when the link between afterlife and religious thought and practice seems useful in Western religious traditions, is it automatically permissible to assume that this constellation is also pertinent for Near Eastern and Mediterranean ancient religious orientations? In fact, what do general concepts such as “religion”, “otherworld”, or “after-life” mean, when applied to these particular contexts? The associations, connotations, and expectations linked with these semantic categories are hardly constant through the different languages and cultures we are dealing with in this comparative approach to ancient sources.

In fact, the German term *Jenseits*, quite similar to the more euphemistic Italian *aldilà* and the French *au-delà*, implies rather a cosmological view of the world that is structured into two domains. Here, i.e., in our

<sup>11</sup> Image from: Polacco, *La Cattedrale di Torcello*, 84, Fig. 83 (see footnote 5).

world, is the *Diesseits* and over there the *Jenseits*, while the crossing is constituted by the moment of decease. On the other hand, the English “afterlife” seems to allude more to a linear chronological development from the present living dimension to a later stage of existence.

If the same question about the correspondence of terms indicating otherworldly dimensions is applied to ancient languages, the issue becomes even more complex. In ancient languages such as Latin, Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, or Akkadian there is no general term for afterlife, but only very specific words relating to ideas of what happens after dying. They can imply a negative or a positive value, or function as a neutral description of a particular cosmological domain.

In Ancient Mesopotamia, for instance, there are many concepts of the otherworld, the cosmological place where various gods, several categories of demons and all the dead reside. In contrast to the highly elaborated imagery of the underworld in Ancient Egypt we know from a comprehensive collection of scripts and illustrations,<sup>12</sup> in Mesopotamian traditions there is just one domain for all the dead, without a distinction in positive or negative places.<sup>13</sup> Similar ideas are found in ancient Greek, where images of differentiated forms of otherworldly possibilities, besides the general concept of Hades, are slowly developed through the centuries and in different genres and levels of cultural productions.<sup>14</sup> Not only is the imagery of the place of the dead very peculiar to a specific religious symbols system, but also an idea of “paradise” as such cannot be seen as an ancient, international,

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<sup>12</sup> For an introductory overview of ancient Egyptian concepts of the otherworld see: A.A. Fischer, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Orient und Alten Testament* (Neukirchen – Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2005), 11–46; J. Assmann, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten* (München: Beck, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Concerning Mesopotamian conceptions of the otherworld see: J.A. Scurlock, “Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” in *Civilisation of the Ancient Near East, III*, (ed. J.M. Sasson; New York – London: Simon and Schuster Mac Millan, 1995), 1883–1893; D. Katz, *The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources*, (Bethesda [Maryland]: CDL Press, 2003); Fischer, *Tod und Jenseits*, 47–64 (see Endnote 12); D. Pezzoli-Olgati, “Die Gegenwelt des Todes in Bild und Text. Ein religionswissenschaftlicher Blick auf mesopotamische Beispiele,” in *Images as Sources. Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Artefacts and the Bible Inspired by the Work of Othmar Keel* (eds. S. Bickel, et al.; OBO; Fribourg – Göttingen: Academic Press – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 379–401.

<sup>14</sup> See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1985), 190–215; A.E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell, Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 19–49; J.N. Bremmer, “Hades,” in *Der Neue Pauly, Enzyklopädie der Antike*, (ed. H. Cancik & H. Schneider; vol. 5; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998), 51–3.

global category, as we might assume from a western, Judaeo-Christian perspective.

Therefore a provisional conclusion is that speaking generally of “otherworld” in ancient religions leads directly to the comparison of incomparable ideas, imagery, and concepts extrapolated from their respective historical, cultural, and religious contexts.<sup>15</sup>

Saying that, I am not arguing that comparison is impossible or useless. On the contrary, both a synchronic and a diachronic comparative approach to conceptualizations and practices linked to the question of the afterlife are crucial for understanding a particular religious symbol system, exchanges between different cultures, developments within traditions and syncretistic constellations. The point is not the (rhetorical) question of whether comparison is practicable or not. I am instead arguing in favour of a reflection on the theoretical and methodological premises for a comparison that is more than a simple projection of contemporary phenomenological categories onto cultural settings which cannot even sustain the questions we are asking of them.<sup>16</sup>

Following approaches within anthropology and the study of religions—as, for instance Clifford Geertz’s or Fritz Stolz’s positions<sup>17</sup>—it appears very useful to link the interest in otherworldly imagery with a functionalistic definition of religion as a communication system. In this way, religious systems are regarded as networks of information

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. D. Pezzoli-Olgiati, “Jenseitsvorstellungen: Schwer zugängliche Welten aus religionswissenschaftlicher Sicht,” in *Lebendige Hoffnung—Ewiger Tod?! Jenseitsvorstellungen im Hellenismus, Judentum und Christentum* (eds. M. Labahn & M. Lang; Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 24; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 5–29.

<sup>16</sup> For an introduction to comparison in the study of religion see J.Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine, On Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); H.-J. Klimkeit, ed., *Vergleichen und Verstehen in der Religionswissenschaft* (Studies in Oriental Religions 41; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997); F. Stolz, “Vergleich von Produkten und Produktionsregeln religiöser Kommunikation,” in *Vergleichen und Verstehen* (ed. Klimkeit), 37–51; K.C. Patton & B.C. Ray, eds., *A Magic Still Dwells. Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); J. Sinding Jensen, “Universals, General Terms and the Comparative Study of Religion,” *Numen* 48 (2001), 238–66; D.M. Freidenreich, “Comparison Compared: A Methodological Survey of Comparisons of Religion from ‘A Magic Dwells’ to ‘A Magic Still Dwells,’” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 16 (2004), 80–101.

<sup>17</sup> C. Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures, Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87–125; Fritz Stolz, *Grundzüge der Religionswissenschaft* (UTB 1980, 3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 80–145.

exchange on a symbolic level that guarantee a general, binding, and collective orientation. In this kind of communication, images and concepts of the world are established, transformed, and transmitted. The otherworld can also be approached from the context of the general image of the world established through religious communication. Particularly significant in this context is the relationship between different cosmological domains, for instance the contrast between the otherworld and the world, where human life takes place.<sup>18</sup>

The theoretical link to communication can be important when analyzing and interpreting sources dealing with otherworldly issues, since it permits interaction between different point of views and interests in a constructive manner. Firstly, it allows one to focus on the conditions of production. Significant questions here are, for instance, where and when a particular image of the otherworld source was composed, or whether it was a mainstream movement or the expression of a minority group. Secondly, the different communication channels of a particularly religious message can be emphasized. Is a selected description of afterlife expressed by a literary or a visual source? Even other means of communication such as music, architecture, rituals and acts are relevant here, although they place the modern scholar amidst problems of interpretation. Even if all these questions cannot be answered in an exhaustive way, I think that they are relevant at least as working hypotheses.

The lens of communication theory, thirdly, allows outlining the reception processes. Here a broad research field opens, ranging from the implicit pragmatic of a selected source to the various religious settings and historical moments where it played a role, up until its function in the course of transmission processes.

On the basis of this theoretical framework philological, historical, and sociological orientated methods may be applied and put in a fruitful mutual interchange. Furthermore, this approach tries to consider not only theological and literary masterpieces as marks of ancient religious symbolic systems, but also popular, everyday concepts, especially tied to visual expression.

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<sup>18</sup> See F. Stolz, "Paradiese und Gegenwelten," in *Religion und Rekonstruktion, Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (eds. D. Pezzoli-Olgiati et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 28–44.

### 3. CONCEPTS OF THE OTHERWORLD AND DIFFERENT MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION

Approaching ancient religions with a model that interprets them as a network for communicating symbolic levels implies a consideration that various “messages”, or “discourses”, can coexist or even contrast with each other. Similar topics can be expressed in very different manners, depending on the media they are transmitted through. Relating these general assumptions to our interest in otherworldly concepts we may ask about the function of a particular afterlife description. Is it meant as a theological description of an integral part of the cosmos? Or is it a praise of a future development of an unstable creation? Is it a vision linked to a ritual practice to help an individual coping with the transience of his/her own life? These are only a few possible illustrations of the broad range of significant questions that can be asked on the pragmatic level.

The focus on the involved media can be enlightening on this subject, as I would like to illustrate with the following example. Since the majority of articles presented here deal with texts, I have instead chosen a visual source. I limit myself to a few essential remarks.

This picture shows the front part of a Mesopotamian amulet dated between the 8th and the 7th century B.C.E., in a Neo-Assyrian context (fig. 5).

The copper artefact preserves two holes above made to hang it up. It is 13.3 cm high and has a strong plastic, almost sculptural character. It represents a typical constellation of demons: Pazuzu, whose head is emerging from the upper side of the amulet and also appears on the left side close to the central figure, and its counterpart, Lamaštu, a female being with a strong negative connotation. This demon is feared for killing newborn babies, and also adults.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For a detailed analysis of this amulet and related images and texts see W. Farber, “Lamaštu,” *RLA* 6: 439–46; A. Green, “Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons. The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia,” in *Visible Religion, Annual for Religious Iconography, III: Popular Religion* (ed. H.G. Kippenberg, Leiden: Brill, 1984), 80–105; Walter Farber, “Tamarisken—Fibeln—Skolopender. Zur philologischen Deutung der ‘Reiseszene’ auf neuassyrischen Lamaštu-Amuletten,” in *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (ed. F. Rochberg-Halton; AOS 67, New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 85–105; F.A.M. Wiggermann, “Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu. A Profile,” in *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible. Its Mediterranean Setting* (ed. M. Stol; Cuneiform



Fig. 5: Collection de Clercq, Musée du Louvre, AO 22205.

I would draw your attention to different visual programmes displayed in the picture. If we follow the register separated by lines we recognise a cosmological structure. In the upper part, there are the symbols of the central gods of the pantheon: from left to the right, the horned cap of Anu, the ram-headed staff of Ea, the three-pronged lightning fork of Adad, the spade of Marduk, the stylus of Nabu, the eight-pointed star in a disc of Ištar, the winged disc of Šamaš, the crescent of Sin, the seven globes of the Seven Gods, the lamp of Nusku. The central register portrays seven anthropomorphic beings with animal heads. In the middle of the central section, the scene depicts a sick person lying on a bed; it provides a reference to the earthly dimension. On the lower level, a stream with fish is represented and it is here that the scary Lamaštu is shown aboard a ship. The cosmological levels of the image allow us to clearly situate Lamaštu as a demon belonging to a non-terrestrial domain.<sup>20</sup> The dominant presence of Lamaštu, as

Monographs 14; Groningen: Styx, 2000), 217–53; D. Pezzoli-Olgiaiti, *Die Gegenwelt des Todes in Bild und Text*.

<sup>20</sup> The interpretation of these beings is controversial: Green, *Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons*, 81 suggests a possible identification with the devil demons *utukkū*; Wiggermann, “Lamaštu,” 248 interprets them as protective, apotropaic

a being causing illness and death, points out the relevance of otherworldly dimensions in this world.

The demoness is characterised by the ship she is travelling on. The ship signals the possibility of a passage between Lamaštu's domain and the world where humans live. She is a liminal being, able to travel through a boundary that usually can be crossed by human beings only in one direction, from this to the otherworld.<sup>21</sup> We could provisionally state that the amulet presupposes a stable cosmos encompassing the domain of Lamaštu, associated with the "other world," an ambiguous, problematic domain that can represent a menace for the world of the living.

If we focus on the image starting with the central scene, a second iconographic programme appears. In a similar way to her counterpart Pazuzu, Lamaštu's head comes out of the place delimited for her and spreads into the scene where a patient is depicted. Therefore, from an optical perspective, the third and fourth registers (from above) appear as strongly related. Seen from this point of view, the image points out the danger Lamaštu represents for humans. The register in the middle of the amulet depicts a room lit by an oil lamp (at the same time providing the symbol for the god Nusku, as illustrated in the first register on the right). A sick person lies on a bed, flanked by two figures, difficult to identify, with fish attributes. Several iconographical and textual parallels indicate that the scene is representing an exorcism against the lethal influence of the demoness.<sup>22</sup> The scene has a self-reflexive aspect, since we can assume that the amulet was used in a similar setting.

Following this second viewing of the image, a different aspect of the otherworld emerges: the other world is not only a necessary place within a stable cosmos, but it is also the terminus of human life. The presence of Lamaštu could suddenly put an end to life; from the human, individual perspective, the underworld can be seen as a constant danger. To be safe from disease and premature death induced by a being such as Lamaštu, there is a great need of practices and

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beings. In the same direction goes the proposition of W. Faber, "ištu api ilamma ezēzu ezzet. Ein bedeutsames neues Lamaštu-Amulett", in *Ana šadī Labnāni lū allik, Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittelmeerischen Kulturen, FS für Wolfgang Röllig* (eds. B. Pongratz-Leisten, H. Kühne and P. Xella; Kevelaer – Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker – Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 115-28, here 118.

<sup>21</sup> A Sumerian/Akkadian denomination for the underworld is "the land of no return" (k u r -n u -g i / eršetū lā târi).

<sup>22</sup> See Wiggermann, "Lamaštu".

artefacts to protect humans. The ritual background of the image links the cosmological representation of the cosmos with the leitmotif of the precariousness of life. This amulet, as a precious artefact with a protective, apotropaic function, can be seen through the link between the semantic and iconographic constellations within the pragmatic dimension. It expresses the relevance of an otherworldly reality at the intersection between a cosmological and an individual reflection.

The visual character of this source does not distinguish between the two dimensions which I have isolated for a didactic purpose: the image depicts a harmonic whole. A further specific possibility of an image like this lies in the possibility to point out a present and existentially very relevant dimension—the other world—without depicting it explicitly.

The aim of the present contribution is to introduce various texts dealing with concepts of the otherworld and afterlife. I hope that these few remarks on hermeneutical, theoretical and methodological premises, and the briefly discussed examples can offer a useful orientation for reading this volume. I do not pretend to have answered all hermeneutical questions nor solved every methodological problem, but simply to have explicitly identified some points that are essential for a sustainable, comparative glance at the history of religions.



## THE “GOD OF HEAVEN” IN PERSIAN AND HELLENISTIC TIMES

Stefan Beyerle

### 1. A PLACE FOR GOD—ZION AND SINAI AS TOPOGRAPHICAL CODES

For several reasons the term “God in heaven” sounds like a hendiadys: first of all, no one among modern Jews and Christians would deny that God’s place is in heaven and nowhere else. Second, several ancient Jewish and Christian authors identified their God with the “heaven” (cf. Dan 4:23; 1 Macc. 3:18–19; 4:10–11; 2 Macc. 3:15), most prominent: the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>1</sup> But if we take a closer look at the earlier sources and if we especially consider attestations from the Hebrew Bible and Jewish Pseudepigrapha, the seemingly close connection between heaven and God turns out to be more or less a Christian bias.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.1. *God at Zion*

The earlier traditions in the Hebrew Bible preserved alternative places for the dwelling of God. E.g., the Book of Isaiah and several Psalms

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the synoptic passages in Matthew where the syntagma βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is replaced by βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν; see esp. the chapter of the parables in Matth 13:11, 31 parr. Nevertheless, the Gospel of Matthew also preserved the syntagma βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43; see H. Merkley, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gotesherrschaft: Eine Skizze* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 111; 3rd ed.; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), 22–23, 37–44. Recently, S. Schreiber argued that Jesus’ look at the afterlife was under the influence of the apocalyptic concept of βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (see his “Apokalyptische Variationen über ein Leben nach dem Tod. Zu einem Aspekt der Basileia-Verkündigung Jesu,” in *Lebendige Hoffnung—ewiger Tod?! Jenseitsvorstellungen im Hellenismus, Judentum und Christentum* [eds. M. Labahn and M. Lang; Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 24, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007], 129–56). It is also noteworthy that the Septuagint sometimes has οὐρανός, where the MT reads God (cf. Isa 14:13; Job 22:26; see J. Nelis, “Gott und der Himmel im Alten Testament,” in *Concilium* 15 [1979]: 150–56, esp. 150).

<sup>2</sup> See especially R. Bartelmus, “šamajim—Himmel: Semantische und traditionsge-schichtliche Aspekte,” in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte* (eds. B. Janowski and B. Ego; FAT 32, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 87–88.

prefer the idea that God's place is at Zion. Especially YHWH's dwelling in Zion is significant (cf. Isa 8:18; Ps 24:3; 47:9; 93:5; 132:13–14).<sup>3</sup> Zion (Ps 9:12; 20:3), mount Zion (Isa 4:5; 10:12; 29:8; Ps 133:3), the temple (Isa 2:3 par. Mic 4:2; cf. 1 Kgs 8,13) or the city of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:31; Isa 24:23), they all function as topographical codes<sup>4</sup> for God's nearness that causes salvation or judgment (cf. Mic 1:1–7). Beside the fact that all topographical codes refer to a certain place on earth, an extension of God's dwelling towards heavenly regions cannot be ruled out from the beginning.

Texts like Isa 31:4 and Ps 14 par. Ps 53 provide good examples for this phenomenon. In Isa 31:4 we read (MT/NRSV):

כי כה אמר יהוה אלי  
כאשר יהגה האריה והכפיר  
על טרפו  
אשר יקרא עליו מלא רעים

מקולם לא יחת  
ומהמים לא יענה  
כן ירד יהוה צבאות  
לצבא על הר ציון  
ועל גבעתה

For thus the LORD said to me,  
As a lion or a young lion growls  
over its prey,  
and—when a band of shepherds is  
called out against it—  
is not terrified by their shouting  
or daunted at their noise, [down]  
so the LORD of hosts will come  
to fight upon Mount Zion  
and upon its hill.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. Metzger, "Himmliche und irdische Wohnstatt Jahwes," *UF* 2 (1970): 139–58; repr. in *Schöpfung, Thron und Heiligtum: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments* (BThS 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003), 1–38; E. Otto, "צִיּוֹן," *ThWAT* 6: 1015; Th.A. Rudnig, "Ist denn Jahwe nicht auf dem Zion?" (Jer 8,19): Gottes Gegenwart im Heiligtum," *ZTK* 104 (2007): 267–86, esp. 268–73; C. Körting, *Zion in den Psalmen* (FAT 48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 160–61, 201–202: God reveals himself both from heaven and from a certain space that is on earth (Zion): see below.

<sup>4</sup> Leaving aside terms like *מָקוֹם* or *מִרְחֹב/רָחֹב*, the Hebrew language lacks in abstracta for "space." Therefore, God's presence in heaven and on earth insinuates a "symbolic" or "mythological" understanding of these spheres. As R.G. Kratz, "Gottesräume: Ein Beitrag zur Frage des biblischen Weltbildes," *ZTK* 102 (2005): 419–34, esp. 423, puts it: "So erscheinen der Mythos vom Königtum Gottes und die durch ihn konstituierten Räume der 'Höhe', der Erde, des Meeres und der Unterwelt in den meisten Texten als theologische Chiffren (Metaphern oder Symbole) für das Verhältnis Jhwhs, des einen und einzigen Gottes, zu seinem auserwählten Volk Israel, zum einzelnen Menschen und den Frommen in Israel oder zur ganzen Welt und allen Menschen." For the importance of "space" within the history of religions, e.g., in apocalyptic eschatology, cf. D. Pezzoli-Olgati, "Jenseitsvorstellungen: Schwer zugängliche Welten aus religionswissenschaftlicher Sicht," in *Lebendige Hoffnung—ewiger Tod?!*: *Jenseitsvorstellungen im Hellenismus, Judentum und Christentum* (eds. M. Labahn and M. Lang; Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 24, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 19–26.

Obviously the God of Israel is located at "Mount Zion," but he has to "come down" (יֵרֵד, impf.) to fight against the Assyrians in order to "protect Jerusalem" (v. 5: גִּנָּן). It is not mentioned from what place God comes.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the destination of the YHWH's descent is clear: Zion, i.e. Jerusalem, the place of God's "fire" (אֹר) and "furnace" (תִּנּוֹר, v. 9). What can be said is that the divine presence at Zion does not contradict God's coming from above.

The references to God's dwelling in heaven and at Zion in Ps 14 (cf. vv. 2, 7 par. Ps 53:3, 7) are also comparable.<sup>6</sup> In v. 2 we read (MT/NRSV):

יהוה משמים השקיף על בני אדם	The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind
לראות היש משכיל	to see if there are any who are wise,
דרש את אלהים	who seek after God.

On the other hand, v. 7 utters divine help coming from Zion (v. 7aα, MT/NRSV):

מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל	O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!
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As in Isa 31, Israel's protection and salvation comes from Zion. But in Ps 14 God is concretely located in *heaven*, from where he looks down (שֶׁקֶף, Hi.).<sup>7</sup> To sum up, both texts determine Zion as a place of God's

<sup>5</sup> Pace H. Wildberger, *Jesaja. 3. Teilband: Jesaja 28–39* (BKAT X/3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982), 1242, who presupposes a "heavenly dwelling" of God in Isa 31:4. Cf. also A. Scriba, *Die Geschichte des Motivkomplexes Theophanie: Seine Elemente, Einbindung in Geschehensabläufe und Verwendungsweisen in altisraelitischer, frühjüdischer und frühchristlicher Literatur* (FRLANT 167; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 42–43, who prefers a heavenly coming of God against (עַל) Zion in vv. 4–5.

<sup>6</sup> See Körting, *Zion*, 126–27, 131–32.

<sup>7</sup> The look from heaven, in a literary composition with Heb. שָׁמַיִם and שֶׁקֶף, has always God as a subject in the Hebrew Bible: cf. Deut 26:15; Ps 85:12 (צִדֵּק appears in metonymy for יְהוָה); 102:20 and Lam 3:50. All references are of a rather late provenance (cf. also B. Ego, "Der Herr blickt herab von der Höhe seines Heiligtums: Zur Vorstellung von Gottes himmlischem Thronen in exilisch-nachexilischer Zeit," *ZAW* 110, [1998]: 556–69). B. Ego has examined YHWH's looking down from heaven in the Psalms (see Ps 11:4–5; 33:13–14, 18; 113:6; cf. also Isa 66:1–2) does not express the idea of a distant or transcendent God. To the contrary, God's help for the righteous requires his dwelling in heaven (see below). Later on, with view to rabbinic texts, Ego states a more elaborated separation of God's heavenly and earthly dwellings; cf. her "Von der Jerusalemer Tempeltheologie zur rabbinischen Kosmologie: Zur Konzeption der himmlischen Wohnstatt Gottes," in *Mitteilungen und Beiträge der Forschungsstelle Judentum der Theologischen Fakultät Leipzig* 12/13 (1997): 47–51.

efficacy. While the pre-exilic tradition in Isa 31<sup>8</sup> combines Zion and a rather shadowy dwelling of God outside, Ps 14 is more concrete: this post-exilic or even exilic prayer<sup>9</sup> expects the deliverance coming from Zion, but, nevertheless, the Lord dwells in heaven. Both ideas did not contradict each other.

### 1.2. *God at Sinai*

The toponym Sinai is one of the central places for a mythological topography in the Hebrew Bible. Sinai, sometimes indicating a mount or a landscape, functions as the place where YHWH revealed the law to Moses (Ex 19–24). Furthermore, Sinai was a starting point for theophanies: “YHWHs coming from the south.” The latter is a determined expression to explain the origin of the God of Israel. God comes from Sinai (Deut 33:2; Ps 68:18), he comes from Teman (Hab 3:3) and out from Seir (Judg 5:4). Consequently, he can be called the “He of the Sinai” (זה סיני cf. Judg 5:5; Ps 68:9).<sup>10</sup> The classical texts (Deut 33, Judg 5, Hab 3, Ps 68), as they express YHWH’s coming from the south, add further toponyms like Paran or Edom. All these places are located on earth, strictly speaking, in the southeast of the Palestinian spit.<sup>11</sup>

Most scholars agree that these traditions date back to the pre-exilic era.<sup>12</sup> And what is more, these texts show at least with two distinct

<sup>8</sup> Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1240, argues for a date probably while the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem under Sanherib in 701 B.C.E. had taken place (see also J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Ancient Israel* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983], 117, 136 n. 102). Against this, O. Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja: Kapitel 13–39* (ATD 18; 3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 253, prefers a late apocalyptic provenance of the text.

<sup>9</sup> Most scholars agree that Ps 14:6–7 is a later addition. While E. Zenger prefers a late pre-exilic date for vv. 1–5 (cf. F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1–50* [NEB.AT 29; Würzburg: Echter, 1993], 99–100), Körting, *Zion*, 131–32, recently argued for a post-exilic provenance of the Psalm as a whole.

<sup>10</sup> See H. Niehr, “He-of-the-Sinai,” *DDD*, 2nd ed.: 387.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. S. Timm, “‘Gott kommt von Teman, der Heilige vom Berg Paran’ (Habakuk 3:3)—und archäologisch Neues aus dem äußersten Süden (Tell el-Meharret),” *OTE* 9 (1996): 308–33.

<sup>12</sup> For a “conservative” view of the textual evidence see Scriba, *Geschichte*, and S. Beyerle, *Der Mosesegen im Deuteronomium: Eine text-, kompositions- und formkritische Studie zu Deuteronomium 33* (BZAW 250; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1997). Recently, H. Pfeiffer, *Jahwes Kommen von Süden: Jdc 5; Hab 3; Dtn 33 und Ps 68 in ihrem literatur- und theologiegeschichtlichen Umfeld* (FRLANT 211; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), argues for an origin of these texts in Persian and Hellenistic times.

features that God's location on earth refers also to a place in heaven. In this regard, the Sinai and Zion texts are comparable. Firstly, the theophanies, and especially their cosmic reactions combined with solar symbolism (cf. Deut 33:2: זֶרַח, יַפֵּעַ),<sup>13</sup> witness a universal divine impact. Secondly, Ps 68 describes the journey of God from Sinai to a high place and to the temple above Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>

In Ps 68:8–9 the Lord goes out (יֵצֵא) and marches (צֶעֶד) through the wilderness. In vv. 19 and 30 follows (MT/NRSV [vv. 18, 29]):

עלית למרום שבית שבי	You ascended the high mount, leading
לקחת מתנות באדם	captives in your train
	and receiving gifts from people...
מהיכלך על ירושלים	Because of your temple 'above' <sup>15</sup> Jerusalem,
לך יובילו מלכים שי	kings bear gifts to you.

Already v. 6 stated that "God is in his holy habitation" (אלהים במעון). Taken together, all toponyms in Ps 68 combine earthly and heavenly dimensions of the presence of God.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, "heaven" is not explicitly mentioned in this context.

### 1.3. Conclusions

Religious concepts in pre-exilic times first of all locate the divine presence within a worldly or earthly topography. Here, the locations of Zion and Sinai are only prominent examples among others. One may think also of the ark and the tabernacle narratives (cf. Josh 3:15; 4:11;

<sup>13</sup> Cf. B. Janowski, "JHWH und der Sonnengott: Aspekte der Solarisierung JHWHs in vorexilischer Zeit," in *Pluralismus und Identität* (ed. J. Mehlhausen; Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 8; Gütersloh: Kaiser, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995), 214–41; repr. in *Die rettende Gerechtigkeit: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments 2* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999), 192–219.

<sup>14</sup> On the topography in Ps 68 see J.A. Emerton, "The 'Mountain of God' in Psalm 68:16," in *History and Traditions of Early Israel: Studies Presented to Eduard Nielsen* (eds. A. Lemaire and B. Otzen; VTSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 24–37.

<sup>15</sup> NRSV has (Ps 68:29): "Because of your temple at Jerusalem:" the Heb. preposition על is ambiguous (HAL 780–83). But the meaning of מְרוֹם in v. 19 that brings together aspects of the earthly and the heavenly dwelling of God (cf. Pfeiffer, *Jahwes Kommen*, 246–48) makes a parallel understanding of the temple (הַיִּכָּל) in v. 30 more probable. Consequently, the temple as God's dwelling place should be located "above" and not "at Jerusalem" (cf. Körting, *Zion*, 151–53).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Körting, *Zion*, 146–55.

6:11; 1 Sam 4–6; 2 Sam 6; 7,5–7),<sup>17</sup> certain sections of temple theology (cf. 1 Kgs 8:12–13)<sup>18</sup> or, more generally speaking, some strands of the holiness concept (cf. Hos 11:9)<sup>19</sup> and of God's promise to be with Israel (cf. Gen 21:22; 28:20; 31:5).<sup>20</sup>

All these early concepts prefer a close connection of the divinity with places and incidents of Israel's history, although they do not exclude a divine relation to heaven. The latter strand was elaborated only after the temple was desecrated at the beginning of the Babylonian Exile.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, a much more elaborated concept of "heaven" and its theological implications appears only in Persian and Hellenistic times, as texts like the *Astronomical Book of Enoch* (1 En. 72–82), Enoch's vision of the heavenly temple in 1 En. 14 or the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* from Qumran show.<sup>22</sup> Friedhelm Hartenstein emphasizes:

Der im fernen Himmel thronende Gott (...) wird angerufen, weil seine Position dort unanfechtbar und er in ständiger Handlungsbereitschaft für die Seinen ist.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See C.L. Seow, "Ark of the Covenant," *ABD* 1: 386–93; C.R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament* (CBQMS 22; Washington, DC.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989), esp. 6–22.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. O. Keel, "Der salomonische Tempelweihspruch: Beobachtungen zum religionsgeschichtlichen Kontext des Ersten Jerusalemer Tempels," in *Gottesstadt und Gottesgarten: Zu Geschichte und Theologie des Jerusalemer Tempels* (eds. O. Keel and E. Zenger; QD 191; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 9–23. For a critical evaluation of Keel's thesis cf. F. Hartenstein, "Sonnengott und Wettergott in Jerusalem? Religionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zum Tempelweihspruch Salomos im masoretischen Text und in der LXX (1Kön 8,12f // 3Reg 8,53)," in *Mein Haus wird ein Bethaus für alle Völker genannt werden (Jes 56,7): Judentum seit der Zeit des Zweiten Tempels in Geschichte, Literatur und Kult. Festschrift für Thomas Willi zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. J. Männchen and T. Reiprich; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2007), 53–70.

<sup>19</sup> See B.A. Levine, "The Language of Holiness: Perceptions of the Sacred in the Bible," in *Backgrounds for the Bible* (eds. M.P. O'Connor and D.N. Freedman; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 253.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. Graupner, *Der Elohist: Gegenwart und Wirksamkeit des transzendenten Gottes in der Geschichte* (WMANT 97; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002), 390–94, who collects arguments for the existence of the "Elohist" as a pre-exilic source in the Pentateuch.

<sup>21</sup> For different strategies within the so-called "Zion theology" to treat the desecration of the Jerusalem temple see Rudnig, *Jahwe*, 274–83.

<sup>22</sup> See B. Ego, "Denkbilder für Gottes Einzigkeit, Herrlichkeit und Richtermacht—Himmelsvorstellungen im antiken Judentum," in *Der Himmel: Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie. Vol. 20* (eds. D. Sattler and S. Vollenweider; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, [2005] 2006), 151–88, esp. 184–87.

<sup>23</sup> F. Hartenstein, "'Der im Himmel thronet, lacht' (Ps 2,4): Psalm 2 im Wandel religions- und theologiegeschichtlicher Kontexte," in *Gottessohn und Menschensohn:*

What Hartenstein calls "God's permanent capacity to act with his people," was later on embellished in traditions referring to God's dwelling (שכן) and also in the religious concepts of the Lord's שם and כבוד.<sup>24</sup> Another alternative was the explicit designation that locates the dwelling of the God of Israel in heaven, e.g., when YHWH's throne is located in heaven (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19; Ps 2:4; 11:4; 103:19; 123:1) or the Lord is called the "God of heaven."<sup>25</sup>

In short: Even if ancient traditions, as they can be found in religious texts from Israel or its neighbors,<sup>26</sup> did not exclude the association of God with heaven at all,<sup>27</sup> there was a change concerning the use of "heaven" in connection with God in Persian and Hellenistic times: a change in terms of quantity and quality. The following paragraphs will examine the question of quality. Therefore, they will consider religious-historical developments within the concept of the "God in heaven" (2.). This will lead to an examination of the concept in the ancient Enochic writings from Hellenistic times (3.).

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*Exegetische Studien zu zwei Paradigmen biblischer Intertextualität* (ed. D. Sänger; BThS 67; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004), 158-88, esp. 178.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. B. Janowski, "'Ich will in eurer Mitte wohnen': Struktur und Genese der exilischen Schekina-Theologie," in *Der eine Gott der beiden Testamente: Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie. Vol. 2* (eds. I. Baldermann and N. Lohfink; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1987), 165-93; repr. in *Gottes Gegenwart in Israel: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testament 1* (2nd ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004), 119-47.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Gen 24:3; Jonah 1:9; Dan 2:18-19, 28, 37, 44; Ezra 1:2; 5:12; 6:9-10; 7:12, 21, 23; Neh 1:4-5; 2:4, 20; 2 Chr 36:23; see also Ps 136:26: אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם; Dan 4:34: מֶלֶךְ שָׁמַיָא, and 5:23: מֶרָא שָׁמַיָא (cf. Bartelmus, *šāmajim*, 103, 116). Furthermore, the title is preserved as יהו אלה שמיא (cf. AP 27:15), יהו מרא שמיא (cf. AP 30:15) or אלה שמיא (cf. AP 30:2; 31:2, 26-27; 32:3-4) in the Elephantine-Papyri. These papyri are texts from a Jewish colony at the island of Elephantine in Egypt, dating from the 5th cent. B.C.E.: see H. Niehr, *Der höchste Gott: Alttestamentlicher JHWH-Glaube im Kontext syrisch-kanaanäischer Religion des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (BZAW 190; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1990), 45; E.S. Gerstenberger, *Israel in der Perserzeit: 5. und 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Biblische Enzyklopädie 8; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 105-15.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., F. Stolz, "Himmels-gott," *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* 3: 142-43, refers to the Sumerian God An (= "heaven").

<sup>27</sup> Cf. K. Schmid, "Himmels-gott, Weltgott und Schöpfer: 'Gott' und der 'Himmel' in der Literatur der Zeit des Zweiten Tempels," in *Der Himmel: Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie. Vol. 20* (eds. D. Sattler and S. Vollenweider; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, [2005] 2006), 114-15.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF THE “GOD OF HEAVEN”

In Hellenistic times, several designations of the God of Israel could be brought together under the concept of the “God of Heaven.” E.g., the Septuagint uses the divine epithet ὕψιστος consequently where the Hebrew and Aramaic texts have עֲלִיּוֹן (cf. Gen 14:18–20, 22; Num 24:16; Deut 32:8; Ps 18:14 par. 2 Sam 22:14; Ps 73:11).<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the ancient Greek version of Papyrus 967 understood the Aramaic אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיָא in Dan 2:18–19 as a designation of the κύριος ὁ ὕψιστος. The papyrus also combined the “heaven” (שָׁמַיָא) in the Aramaic text of Dan 4:23 (cf. Pap. 967: v. 27) with the Greek κύριος who lives “in heaven.”<sup>29</sup>

These examples illustrate that different designations could refer to one and the same religious concept. Proceeding on the assumption that the idea of the highest god was widespread in Hellenistic-Roman times and in Late Antiquity and used firm-names of Baal-Schamem, Zeus, Helios, Sarapis or Iao, scholars like Jan Assmann emphasize that the concept of the highest God “expresses a general conviction [...] about the universality of religious truth and the relativity of religious institutions and denominations.”<sup>30</sup> Having this argument in mind, the intention of the intensified heavenly dwelling of the post-exilic Jewish God could be seen in the dialogue with, and also in the acceptance within, other religious concepts of God in Persian and Hellenistic-Roman times. Therefore, most of the designations that refer to the “God of heaven” in the Hebrew Bible and in the Elephantine Papyri (see above, n. 25) use the title in the mouth of a foreigner (cf. Ezra 1:2: Cyrus of Persia) or, with the epithet, they address foreign people (cf. Dan 2:37, 44: Nebuchadnezzar).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> This is also true of the Book of Daniel, wherein Aram. עֲלִיּוֹן and עֲלִי is analogous to Greek ὕψιστος esp. in Pseudo-Theodotion Dan 3:26; 4:2, 17, 24–25, 32, 34; 5:18, 21; 7:18, 22, 25, 27.

<sup>29</sup> See the synopsis of K. Koch and M. Rösel, *Polyglottensynopse zum Buch Daniel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2000), 34–37, 112–13. On the designation ὕψιστος see C. Breytenbach, “Hypsistos,” *DDD* 2nd ed.: 439–43.

<sup>30</sup> J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge [MA] and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 53. Already the Stoa knew that the idea of the “One” could be expressed in different names (cf. Diogenes Laertius 7:135–36 [SVF 1.102]).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. D.K. Andrews, “Yahweh the God of Heavens,” in *The Seed of Wisdom* (ed. W.S. McCullough; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 48, 54. See also J.J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: For-

Having the Persian provenance of אלה שמיא in mind,<sup>32</sup> it is a small wonder that the title “God of heaven” and its derivatives are suspected to reflect a Persian influence.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the religio-historical background more carefully.

### 2.1. *The Religio-Historical Setting*

The way in which Klaus Koch describes the “God of heaven” in Dan 2 can be applied to the epithet and its concept as a whole in Second Temple Judaism. The designation not only refers to God’s dwelling, but “heaven” becomes a distinguishing characteristic of God. “Heaven” describes the nature of God (see, e.g., Eccl 5:1: כי האלהים בשמים ואותה על הארץ).<sup>34</sup> As can be assumed from the appellative ὑψιστος

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tress Press, 1993), 159, and K. Koch, *Daniel, 1. Teilband: Daniel 1–4* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2005), 162, 164. But see also H. Niehr, “God of Heaven,” *DDD* 2nd ed.: 371: “The fact that the two titles for Yahweh, ‘god of heaven’ and ‘lord of heaven’, are not exclusively used in communication with the Persian overlords, but also in intra-Jewish communication, is a decisive argument against the alleged Persian provenience [sic!] of the title ‘god of heaven’ applied to Yahweh in post-exilic texts.” Niehr consequently prefers the concept of Baal-Schamem as the religio-historical background of the “God of heaven” (cf. Niehr, *Der höchste Gott*, 43–60; see also H. Gese, “Die Religionen Altsyriens,” in *Die Religionen Altsyriens, Altarabiens und der Mandäer* [H. Gese et al.; Religionen der Menschheit 10,2; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970], 182–85). Baal-Schamem was very prominent in Seleucid times and could be identified with Zeus Olympios. Therefore, the association of the “God of heaven” with Baal-Schamem in the Book of Daniel should be excluded. After all, the erection of Zeus Olympios, called the שקון [מ]שמים or βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), in the temple of Jerusalem was the cause for the Maccabean revolt (cf. 1 Macc. 1:54; 2 Macc. 6:2 and Koch, *Daniel*, 163–64).

<sup>32</sup> All references, in the Bible and the Pseudepigrapha, date from Persian times, and not earlier. In Gen 24:7 the reading אלהי השמים is an abbreviation of אלהי השמים ואלהי הארץ in v. 3 and text-critically not certain (cf. LXX). Furthermore, Gen 24:3, 7 represent a late insertion into the narrative: cf. E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984), 383–89; H. Seebass, *Genesis II: Vätergeschichte II* (23,1–36,43) (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999), 243.

<sup>33</sup> The thesis stems from the 19th century. One of the first scholars who suspected the title of being of Persian provenance was Eduard Meyer, a German historian, in his book *Die Entstehung des Judenthums* (1886). Another scholar, Mark Lidzbarski, supported the thesis: cf. C. Houtman, *Der Himmel im Alten Testament: Israels Weltbild und Weltanschauung* (OTS 30; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 100, 320.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Koch, *Daniel*, 161. Nevertheless, R.G. Kratz, *Translatio imperii: Untersuchungen zu den aramäischen Danielerzählungen und ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Umfeld* (WMANT 63; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991), 216–17, is a little optimistic, when he suggests that the “God of heaven” in Dan 1–6\* brings together both, Ahuramazda’s and YHWH’s donation of universal power.

(see above), the concept stresses the supremacy of God.<sup>35</sup> From this follows a much more elaborated distinction between heaven and earth, a feature that resembles especially the ideology of the Achaemenian kings. The Persian king, in highest rank among the people of his earthly kingdom, attributes his greatness and achievements to the goodwill of the highest god: Ahuramazda.<sup>36</sup> E.g., the royal inscriptions of Darius I (522–486 B.C.E.) monotonously emphasize that every royal act is set by the will of Ahuramazda. Ahuramazda's will embraces foreign policy, the preservation of the whole creation and the maintenance of social order. In an inscription of Darius from Susa (DSe 31–41) it is written:

Much that was ill done, that I made good. Countries were turbulent, one man smiting another. The following I brought about by the will of Ahuramazda, that no one ever smites another, each one is in his place. My law—of that they are afraid, so that the stronger does not smite nor destroy the weaker.<sup>37</sup>

Here, Darius acts as a judge, whose law is of divine origin, as his whole kingdom is legitimated by the will of Ahuramazda. Generally speaking, the royal inscriptions regard the kings, especially Darius I and Xerxes I, in straightforward dependency on the god Ahuramazda. And this dependency involves the care for the Persian people and the whole creation, while it excludes a direct bond or contact between god and king. This separation distinguishes Persia from Egypt or other forms of kingship, e.g., the divine kingship, in the Ancient Near East.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 208.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. J. Wiesehöfer, *Das antike Persien: Von 550 v. Chr. bis 650 n. Chr.* (München and Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1994), 89–90, who lists three aspects of the royal legitimation of Darius: affiliation to the Achaemenian kings and to the Persian people; Darius' supremacy over the kings who ruled before him; the divine right of his kingdom. Of special relevance is the Bisutun inscription. See also J. Wiesehöfer, *Das frühe Persien: Geschichte eines antiken Weltreichs* (München: C.H. Beck, 3rd ed., 2006), 47–49, and more detailed: G. Ahn, *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im achämenidischen Iran: Die Voraussetzungen und Struktur ihrer Argumentation* (Acta Iranica 31; Leiden: Brill, 1992); Gerstenberger, *Israel*, 45–51.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted after M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Vol. II: Under the Achaemenians* (HO VIII,1,2,2A; Leiden: Brill, 1982), 121.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. M. Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras: Geschichte—Gegenwart—Rituale* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 163–70.

The Achaemenian royal ideology receives further illustration in the iconography of monumental reliefs from Persepolis.<sup>39</sup> Founded by Darius I and completed by his successors to the throne (Xerxes I. [486–465 B.C.E.], Artaxerxes I. [465–425/24 B.C.E.]), Persepolis preserved several royal scenes with the king sitting on a throne. Two reliefs at the northern and eastern gate of the "Tripylon" show the enthroned Darius underneath a winged disk. The disk is comparable to the winged sun disk, as it was prominent in Assyrian and Egyptian iconography.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes a bearded figure with a tiara and a ring or a lotus in his hand appears in the center of the disk. Both, ring and lotus, symbolize the royal or divine power—the same can be said about the tiara.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of an identification of this figure, two assumptions are important: First of all, the identification of this figure is closely connected with the royal ideology of the Achaemenian kings. Secondly, the figure represents one of the cornerstones for the religio-historical background of the "God of heaven."<sup>42</sup> Many scholars equate the figure with Ahuramazda. Some scholars interpret the notorious position of the winged disk, above the enthroned king at Persepolis and the tomb reliefs at Naqsh-e-Rostam, as well as the canopy that separates the disc from the king as an allusion to the heavenly dwelling of Ahuramazda.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis. Vol. I–III* (OIP 68–70; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953–1970); H. Koch, *Persepolis: Glänzende Hauptstadt des Perserreichs* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> E.g., a seal-amulet from Sichem, dating from Iron Age II B, shows the winged disk in combination with a winged scarab. But see, on the other hand, traces of a conoid from Gezer, dating from Iron Age II C, a winged disk with the moon in Assyrian style (cf. O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* [QD 134; 4th ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1998], 293 plate 258a, 337 plate 293a). Furthermore, it is probable that Darius I invented the winged sun disk in Achaemenian iconography (cf. Boyce, *History*, 102–103).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. C. Oemisch, *König und Kosmos: Studien zur Frage kosmologischer Herrschaftslegitimation in der Antike* (Ph.D. diss., Berlin, 1977), 49–51; Stausberg, *Religion*, 177–78.

<sup>42</sup> For the following see also the examination in S. Beyerle, "Vom Lob des Monotheismus: Der eine Gott Israels nach den Zeugnissen aus hellenistischer Zeit," in *In dubio pro deo: Anfragen an das Christentum* (eds. U. Link-Wieczorek and W. Weiß; Forum Religionsphilosophie 6; Münster: Lit, 2004), 137–39.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Schmidt, *Persepolis, Vol. I*, 116 with plate 79; M.C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (Acta Iranica 19; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 169–76; P. Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse: De Cyrus à Alexandre* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 259–60 (see furthermore the list of scholars in Ahn, *Herrscherlegitimation*, 208–209 n. 156).

In conclusion: The Persian iconography prepares the religio-historical background for the concept of the “God of heaven.”

But this conclusion is open to doubt: First of all, none of the royal inscriptions from Darius I and his successors to the throne calls Ahuramazda “God of heaven” or “God in heaven.” Secondly, Herodotus, the fifth century historian, tells us about the Persians (*Hist.* 1:131):<sup>44</sup>

Πέρσας δὲ οἶδα νόμοισι τοιοῖσ[ι]δε χρεωμένους, ἀγάλματα μὲν καὶ νηοὺς καὶ βωμοὺς οὐκ ἐν νόμῳ ποιευμένους ἰδρύεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖσι ποιεῦσι μωρίην ἐπιφέρουσι, ὥς μὲν ἐμοὶ δοκέειν, ὅτι οὐκ ἀνθρωποφυέας ἐνόμισαν τοὺς θεοὺς κατπάειρ οἱ Ἕλληνες εἶναι: οἱ δὲ νομίζουσι Διὶ μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλότατα τῶν ὀρέων ἀναβαίνοντες θυσίας ἔρδειν, τὸν κύκλον πάντα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ Δία καλέοντες.

I know that the Persians have these customs: it is not their custom to erect statues, temples and altars, but they even make fun of those who do, because—as it seems to me—they have not considered the gods to be of human form, as do the Greeks. But it is their custom to go up to the highest summits of the mountains and sacrifice to Zeus, calling the entire vault of heaven Zeus.

Especially two explorations from this passage are of interest: the explanation that the Persians did not erect statues (ἄγαλμα), temples (νη[α]-ός) and altars (βωμός), and that they called the heavenly firmament (κύκλος πάντα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) Zeus.

The first assumption is closely connected with the notice that the Persians did not consider their gods to be in the likeness of man. Nevertheless, Albert de Jong separates both statements in Herodotus. In his commentary, he recalls the Hebrew Bible when he stresses that an “anthropomorphic conception of the gods obviously does not assume or imply the existence or development of cult statues, as the Hebrew Bible sufficiently shows.”<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the absence of temple and cult-statues in mid-fifth century Persian culture testifies Herodotus’ reliability, when he speaks of statues, temples and altars. And concerning the Persian rejection of anthropomorphic gods, de Jong judges Herodotus of being clearly mistaken: Herodotus’ notice on Persian

<sup>44</sup> Greek text: H.B. Rosén, ed., *Herodoti Historiae. Vol. I: Libros I–IV continens* (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1987), 87. Translation: A. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 133; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 91.

<sup>45</sup> De Jong, *Traditions*, 95.

statues would not contradict an identification of the figure in the winged disk with Ahuramazda.

But de Jong's arguments do not stand the test: First, Herodotus' assumption that the Achaemenian kings before Darius II (425/4–405/4 B.C.E.) reject statues, temples and altars is not reliable, because the archaeological evidence records cultic practice, especially altars, in the times of Darius I and Xerxes I.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, a Greek inscription from Sardes, probably dating to the last third of the fifth century B.C.E. (Artaxerxes I.: 426 B.C.E., or Artaxerxes II.: 365 B.C.E.), reports that a Lydian ὑπαρχος ("viceroys") ordered to erect the statue of Βαραδάτω Δί (SEG 29:1205; cf. SEG 40:1071).<sup>47</sup> But, this unique finding may witness the invention of a private cult and is hardly an authentic record for the veneration of Ahuramazda by means of a statue.<sup>48</sup>

Second, the Persian mockery of anthropomorphic gods finds corroboration in the Achaemenian custom according to which empty chariots with white horses escort the hosts at war. Herodotus (*Hist.* 7:40;<sup>49</sup> cf. 1:189; 8:115) and Xenophon (*Cyr.* 8,3:12) attest that these chariots

<sup>46</sup> The tomb reliefs of Darius I and Xerxes I in Naqsh-e Rostam place the king in front of an altar with fire. Furthermore, they have found altars in the northern district at Pasargadae (cf. Koch, *Persepolis*, 79–82, 97). See also Oemisch, *König*, 156–59; H. Koch, *Es kündigt Dareios der König...: Vom Leben im persischen Großreich* (Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt 55; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 3rd ed., 2000), 277–84. Pace de Jong, *Traditions*, 93–95.—Furthermore, de Jong's comparison with the Hebrew Bible concerning the interpretation of "statues" (ἄγαλμα) as idols in a cultic context seems to be problematic: the Greek noun ἄγαλμα determines "statues," "pictures," "images" and "portraits" and is commonly used in pagan Greek literature (cf. *LSJ*, 5a). The LXX and Pseudepigrapha use ἄγαλμα only four times to designate Non-Jewish idolatry: Isa 19:3; 21:9; 2 Macc. 2:2 (cf. Bar 6); *Let. Arist* § 135. More prominent is the noun εἰδωλον: Ex 20:4; Deut 5:8; Lev 19:4. This term lacks the neutral and broad semantic range of ἄγαλμα, because εἰδωλον designates polemics against idolatry, especially in Hellenistic Egypt (cf. Wis 14:11–12, 27, 29–30; 15:15 and T. Griffith, "ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ as 'Idol' in Non-Jewish and Non-Christian Greek," *JTS* 53 [2002]: 95–101).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Boyce, *History*, 255–57, 259.

<sup>48</sup> For this interpretation see P. Frei, "Zentralgewalt und Lokalautonomie im Achämenidenreich," in *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich* (eds. K. Koch and P. Frei; OBO 55; Fribourg and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed., 1996), 23–26, 90–96 (cf. also de Jong, *Traditions*, 92–93 with n. 57). The inscription is a copy from Roman Times (ca. 150 C.E.).

<sup>49</sup> The text reads: ὅπισθε δὲ τούτων τῶν δέκα ἵππων ἄρμα Διὸς ἱρὸν ἐπετέτακτο, τὸ ἵπποι μὲν εἰλκον λευκοὶ ὀκτώ (H.B. Rosén, ed., *Herodoti Historiae. Vol. II: Libros V–IX continens* [Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana; Stuttgart and Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1997], 194).

represent the invisible god Zeus-Ahuramazda.<sup>50</sup> A third and final point: de Jong combines arguments stemming from Achaemenian evidence and Zoroastrian sources (Avesta). But, neither should be taken for granted that Zoroastrianism was the Achaemenian religion,<sup>51</sup> nor attest the old hymns of the Avesta Ahuramazda as “God of heaven.”<sup>52</sup>

All in all, Herodotus portrays an un-iconic religious concept in mid-fifth century Persia that is not reliable in all instances. While the ancient historian fails, when he reports the lack of altars and temples, his judgment on a non-anthropomorphic devotion seems plausible. Consequently, it is rather unlikely that the figure in the sun disk represents Ahuramazda, the “God of heaven.”<sup>53</sup>

## 2.2. God as Heaven

What remains is the notice in Herodotus that the Persians called “the entire vault of heaven Zeus” (*Hist.* 1:131: τὸν κύκλον πάντα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ Δία καλέοντες). First of all, Herodotus envisages the Persian religion in correspondence with Greek thought: Already Hesiod located Zeus in heaven (*Theog.* 71: ὃ δ’ οὐρανῷ ἐμβασιλεύει).<sup>54</sup> Plato called Zeus “the great ruler in heaven” (*Phaedr.* 246e: μέγας ἡγεμὼν ἐν οὐρανῷ Ζεὺς), and Cleanthes’ stoic “Hymn to Zeus” spoke about the δαίμων without whom not a single deed takes place on earth nor in “the

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Boyce, *Historie*, 216; Ahn, *Herrscherlegitimation*, 216–17; P. Calmeyer, “Zur Genese altiranischer Motive: II. Der leere Wagen,” *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran N.F.* 7 (1974): 49–64.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. de Jong, *Traditions*, 89–91, but see recently Stausberg, *Religion*, 157–58.

<sup>52</sup> There is the notion in *Yasna* 30:5 that “the most prosperous spirit, who is clothed in the hardest diamonds, (chooses) truth”; for text and translation cf. H. Humbach, *The Gāthās of Zarathushtra and Other Old Avestan Texts. Part I: Introduction—Text and Translation* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. Reihe 1: Lehr- und Handbücher; Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991), 124. The text has “hardest stones,” obviously lapis lazuli diamonds. They can be identified with “heaven.” Yaçt 13:2–3 reads: “the heaven in which Mazdā is clothed as a garment;” cf. H. Humbach, *The Gāthās of Zarathushtra and Other Old Avestan Texts. Part II: Commentary* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. Reihe 1: Lehr- und Handbücher; Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991), 51; de Jong, *Traditions*, 97–98.

<sup>53</sup> Houtman, *Himmel*, 98–107, discusses alternative models of derivation. For a balanced and very careful approach see also K. Koch, “Weltordnung und Reichsidee im alten Iran und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Provinz Jehud,” in *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich* (eds. K. Koch and P. Frei; OBO 55; Fribourg and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed., 1996), 164–71, 178–84.

<sup>54</sup> For the text see A. von Schirnding (ed.), *Hesiod: Theogonie—Werke und Tage* (Sammlung Tusculum; München and Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1991), 10.

divine ethereal vault of heaven" (SVF 1.537 [3], l. 15–16: κατ' αἰθέριον θεῖον πόντον).<sup>55</sup> Also comparable to the Greek role of Zeus as a weather god is the narrated sacrifice on "the highest summits of the mountains" (*Hist.* 1:131: ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλότατα τῶν ὀρέων ἀναβαίνοντες θυσίας ἔρδειν).<sup>56</sup> However, the identification of heaven and god makes also sense in the Persian religion. The royal ideology, already mentioned above, explores the legitimacy of Darius I and Xerxes I by referring to the divine rights of the king. This also includes a sharp separation between god and king. Insofar, the royal inscriptions trace the relationship between the king and Ahuramazda the same way as the reliefs describe the earthly kingdom's relationship to heaven. Whoever was meant,<sup>57</sup> the figure in the sun disk represents a person in the divine sphere that is separated from the human sphere of the king—and the iconography preserves also the sun disk without the figure.<sup>58</sup> An interpretation of the Persian iconography that heeds the knowledge from contemporary royal inscriptions should focus at the different spheres of heaven and earth. And, lately, a further conclusion: in the heavenly sphere appears frequently a figure with divine characteristics.

Whether the examined religio-historical background of the "God of heaven" influenced ancient Jewish concepts, is first of all a matter of guess. However, the proposed interpretation lays special emphasis on

<sup>55</sup> For the text see G. Zuntz, *Griechische philosophische Hymnen* (eds. H. Cancik and L. Käppek; STAC 35; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 31. Cf. M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr.* (WUNT 10; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 3rd ed., 1988), 420–21. For the form of the hymn as a whole cf. J.C. Thom, "Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus and Early Christian Literature," in *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70th Birthday* (eds. A.Y. Collins and M.M. Mitchell; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 486–88; see also idem, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (STAC 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 36.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. F. Graf, "Zeus," *DDD* 2nd ed.: 934.

<sup>57</sup> Among those scholars who deny an identification of the figure with Ahuramazda, some think of *fravaçi*, representing (protective) daemons or spirits, some prefer a symbolization of *farnah*, a kind of a Tyche (cf., e.g., Stausberg, *Religion*, 178–79).

<sup>58</sup> The sun disk without the centered figure is preserved on seals from Persepolis: cf. Koch, *Es kündigt Dareios der König...*, 41: illustration no. 20; 49: illustration no. 22, and plate 31, and from Gilan: cf. W. Seipel, ed., *7000 Jahre persische Kunst: Meisterwerke aus dem Iranischen Nationalmuseum in Teheran* (Bonn: Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2001), 212 plate 124. See also Schmidt, *Persepolis*, Vol. II, 7, 18, 22 with plate 3 and 5; B. Kaim, "Das geflügelte Symbol in der achämenidischen Glyptik," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran N.F.* 24 (1991): 31–34.

the Persian royal ideology. And the Behistun inscription, one of the main sources of this ideology, was preserved in an Aramaic copy at Elephantine. Consequently, Jews from this colony should have been aware of Persian royal ideology. Not in the least, the Jews of Elephantine also used the title “God of heaven” frequently.

### 3. THE “GOD OF HEAVEN” IN ENOCHIC APOCALYPTICISM

In order to proof the semantics of the religious concept in Hellenistic Judaism, a look at the early Enochic traditions may function as a test case.<sup>59</sup> The references to the “Lord of heaven” in *1 En.* 13:4 and 106:11 are the only explicit attestations of the title. Besides this, we have several passages, wherein God is mentioned as ὁ ὑψιστος.<sup>60</sup> None of these texts are preserved in the fragments of Aramaic Enoch from Qumran. Consequently, we cannot reconstruct with certainty, which Aramaic phrase was under consideration. The only exception is a paragraph from the *Book of Giants* (4QEnGiants<sup>b</sup> ar [4Q530] frg. 2, col. ii, 16–18).<sup>61</sup> This composition has been suspected of counting among the Enochic writings in Second Temple Judaism.<sup>62</sup> However, the Aramaic fragment does not speak of the “God” but of the “Ruler of heaven” (שלטן שמיא).<sup>63</sup> The passage counts among a pair of dream visions by the giants. Here, ’Ohyah’s dream reports that the “Ruler of heaven” came down and thrones were erected, the “Great Holy One” (קדישא רבא) sat down and crowds of heavenly beings were serving

<sup>59</sup> On the semantics and functions of “heaven” in *1 Enoch* as a whole see Bartelmus, *šāmajim*, 119–22; J.E. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119–28, 140–42.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *1 En.* 9:3–4; 10:1; 94:8; 97:2; 98:7; 99:3, 10; 100:4; 101:1, 6 (cf. Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 208, who lists also *1 En.* 46:7; 60:1, 22; 62:7 from the “Book of the Similitudes”).

<sup>61</sup> For a critical text edition of 4Q530 frg. 2 see É. Puëch, “4QLivre des Géants<sup>b</sup> ar,” in *Qumrân Grotte 4, XXII: Textes araméens, Premier Partie* (DJD 31; Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), 28–38.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 8, 10–11, 172–73, who provides a very careful comparison of the material from the *Book of Giants* with *1 Enoch*; cf. also J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (The Biblical Resource Series; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids and New York, 1998), 43, who states that the *Book of Giants* in Qumran was copied in the place of the “Similitudes” (*1 En.* 37–71).

<sup>63</sup> As for the tenth week, the *Apocalypse of Weeks* speaks of a new heaven in which “the powers of the heavens will shine forever.” A suggested reconstruction of the fragmentary Aramaic text could be, to read the pl. שמיא [שלטני] (cf. 4QEn<sup>s</sup> ar [4Q212] iv, 24).

him or standing in front of him. The reaction of the giants and the "Nephilim" is one of fear. What follows is an investigation of Mahawai to consult Enoch in order to expose the interpretation of dreams.<sup>64</sup> The "Ruler in heaven" acts in this context as a judge. He provides a judgment considering the inclination of the watchers (cf. *1 En.* 6:1–2; 7:1–3) and the misdeeds of the giants (cf. *1 En.* 7:4–6). In a scene, comparable with the introduction of the Enochic composition (*1 En.* 1:1–9), God comes from heaven in a theophany to judge his advisories.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the motives of the passage in 4QEnGiants<sup>b</sup> are call to mind the description of the fiery throne with the thousand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand in Dan 7:9–10 (cf. *1 En.* 60:1–2).<sup>66</sup> To sum up, God is called the "Ruler of heaven" in a textual setting with eschatological overtones. Furthermore, the title not only determines God's dwelling in a transcendent sphere. In addition, the "Ruler of heaven" is distinguished by his overwhelming supremacy and power that surpasses the capabilities of the watchers, the "sons of heaven" (cf. *1 En.* 6:2; 13:8; 14:3), and the giants.

In the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 En.* 1–36), chaps. 12–16 reinterpret the watchers myth in chaps. 6–11.<sup>67</sup> After Enoch's mission to the watchers, they ask him to intercede for their salvation in the presence of God. The passage in *1 En.* 13:4–5 reads as follows:

4 And they asked that I write a memorandum of petition (ὑπομνήματα ἐρωτήσεως) for them, that they might have forgiveness, and that I recite the memorandum of petition (ὑπομνήματα τῆς ἐρωτήσεως) for them in the presence of the Lord of heaven (ἐνώπιον κυρίου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)

5 For they were no longer able to speak or to lift their eyes to heaven out of shame for the deeds through which they had sinned and for which they had been condemned.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Cf. F. García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (STDJ 9; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 104. For a discussion of the text see L.T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, and Commentary* (TSAJ 63; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 100–41.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. S. Beyerle, *Die Gottesvorstellungen in der antik-jüdischen Apokalyptik* (JSJSup 103; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 58–83.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. S. Beyerle, "Der mit den Wolken des Himmels kommt: Untersuchungen zum Traditionsgefüge 'Menschensohn'" in *Gottessohn und Menschensohn: Exegetische Studien zu zwei Paradigmen biblischer Intertextualität* (ed. D. Sänger; BThS 67; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004), 1–52, esp. 40–41.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 229.

<sup>68</sup> Translation: G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam (eds.), *1 Enoch: A New Translation. Based on the Hermeneia Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004),

Despite the fact that the exact phrases “Lord of heaven” and “memorandum of petition” occur only here in *1 En.*, the petition as a written record, brought to the heavenly God (ὑψιστος) and read out in his presence, is a prominent composition of motives in the “Epistle of Enoch” (*1 En.* 91–105).<sup>69</sup> George W.E. Nickelsburg compares the judgment against the sinners in *1 En.* 97:6. In Enoch’s second discourse, all the lawless deeds will be read out before the “Great Holy One” ἐν[ώπιον] τοῦ μεγάλου ἁγίου).<sup>70</sup> Again, God’s heavenly dwelling appears in connection with an eschatological function of the “Most-High.” Again, the “Lord of Heaven” is not simply shrouded in other-worldly spheres, but “the present passage may refer to a heaven-earth polarity at the sacred place,” as Nickelsburg has emphasized.<sup>71</sup> This “heaven-earth polarity” is also apparent, if one examines the terminology that describes the watchers within the context. In *1 En.* 13:8, God commissions Enoch to announce judgment to the watchers. They are called “sons of heaven,” referring to Gen 6:2 where the בני האלהים take the בנות האדם for themselves as wives. The designation “sons of heaven” is “a typical circumlocution”<sup>72</sup> for the “sons of God” (cf. also *1 En.* 6:2; 14:3). Furthermore, those terms make clear that the watchers are members of the heavenly court. They belong to the heavenly sphere.<sup>73</sup> But, significantly, the watchers are “no longer able to speak or to lift their eyes to heaven” because of their shame (*1 En.* 13:5). And consequently, the watchers, the “sons of heaven,” will not have access to the divine, i.e. heavenly, realm anymore (cf. *1 En.* 14:5; see also for the “giants:” 15:6–12).<sup>74</sup>

32 [Nickelsburg]. The Greek text is preserved in Codex Panopolitanus: M. Black (ed.), *Apocalypsis Henochii Graece* (PVTG 3; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 27.

<sup>69</sup> See *1 En.* 97:6 (ἐν[ώπιον] τοῦ μεγάλου ἁγίου); 98:7 (ὑψιστος); 99:3 (ὑψιστος with θεός) and 104:1 (ἐνώπιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου), and for the Greek texts of Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus: Black, *Apocalypsis*, 37–39, 42.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 237–38.

<sup>71</sup> Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 238.

<sup>72</sup> So Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 176 (cf. also 141).

<sup>73</sup> The close connection between “sons of heaven” and “sons of God” reminds us of the ancient divine terminology of *bn il* that is already attested in Ugaritic texts. In the Hebrew Bible, combinations such as בני האלהים (Gen 6:2, 4), בני עליון (Ps 82:6–7), בני אלים (Ps 29:1; 89:7) or בני אל חי (Hos 2:1) are possible (cf. S.B. Parker, “Sons of [the] God[s],” *DDD* 2nd ed.: 794–800). They represent gods or members of the heavenly assembly. Sometimes they designate the Israelites. Only in later traditions was the semantic range enlarged towards “angels.”

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 253. For a completely different understanding of the “sons of heaven” in the texts from Qumran (cf. 1QS XI,7–9; 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI,21–22;

Finally, the appended chapters on the birth of Noah refer to the "Lord of heaven" (1 En. 106:11; cf. vv. 3, 13). But the passages reveal text-critical problems. A child, Noah, is born to Lamech. His form and appearance are not like the form of humans (1 En. 106:10), but like the "sons of the angels of heaven" (v. 5; cf. vv. 6, 12).<sup>75</sup> In vv. 3 and 11 Noah opens his mouth and praise the "Lord of eternity". This reading follows the Old Latin version in both verses.<sup>76</sup> Only one Ethiopic manuscript in v. 11 reads "the Lord of heaven." The Greek Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus reads: Noah praises the "Lord" (v. 3: κύριος) or the "Lord of eternity" (v. 11: εὐλόγησεν τὸν κύριον τοῦ αἰῶνος). At last, Enoch looks back and resumes that the generation of Jared "transgressed the word of the Lord/the covenant of heaven" (v. 13). The Greek version obviously combines the idioms "Lord of heaven" and "covenant of heaven."<sup>77</sup> This conflation could have been caused by a confusion of Aramaic קִימָא ("covenant") and קוֹמְתָא ("heights").<sup>78</sup>

The third record in 1 En. 106 resembles the passages already discussed. And it could also round off the thematic functions of supremacy and judgment, as they are related to the "God of heaven," because the birth of Noah envisions the end of judgment and the destruction of evil. But the textual evidence in this paragraph reveals no undisputed attestation of the "Lord of heaven."

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up: Beate Ego has examined the motive of YHWH's throne in heaven in exilic and post-exilic prayers. She came to the conclusion that God's heavenly dwelling does not imply his distance and inaccessibility. To the contrary, being enthroned in heaven means that

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XXIII,8–10; XXVI,10–11) see C.A. Newsom, "Heaven," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*: I.339; J.J. Collins, "Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. J.J. Collins and R.A. Kugler; Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 23–24.

<sup>75</sup> The Greek text from Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus (Black, *Apocalypsis*, 43) has: τοῖς τέκνοις τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

<sup>76</sup> The Latin text reads: *dominum uiuentem in secula et laudauit*; see M.R. James, "A Fragment of the Book of Enoch in Latin," *TS* II,3 (1893): 148.

<sup>77</sup> The Greek text reads (Black, *Apocalypsis*, 44): παρέβησαν τὸν λόγον κυρίου ἀπὸ τῆς διαθήκης τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

<sup>78</sup> For the textual discussion see the notes in Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 537–38.

God is looking down in order to ease the pain of the praying person who counts among the “righteous.”<sup>79</sup> YHWH is not a transcendent or unattainable God, and this is also true of the “God of heaven” in the examined passages of *1 En.* and the Book of the Giants. Nevertheless, the concept of the “God of heaven” is much more elaborated in the Enochic works. The surplus is due to the apocalyptic eschatology and the enlarged concept of heaven in these writings.<sup>80</sup> Concerning the latter, heaven has received angelic beings. And the watchers as fallen angels and opponents count among them. Therefore, the title “God of heaven” has to emphasize much more the divine power and supremacy. As for the apocalyptic eschatology, the function of the “Most High” or “God of heaven” is to sit in judgment upon the evil world. The religio-historical background of the epithet “God of heaven” in connection with the invention of the title in Jewish literature from Persian times remains rather shadowy. Nevertheless, the examined concept of “God in heaven” in Enochic apocalypticism could have benefit from the Persian tradition with its stress on the divine authority and legitimacy.

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. B. Ego, *Herr*, 556–69; eadem, *Tempeltheologie*, 36–52. Cf. also Houtman, *Himmel*, 331–37.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. R. Schwindt, “Weltbilder im Umbruch: Himmelsvorstellungen in der Antike,” in *Der Himmel: Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*. Vol. 20 (eds. D. Sattler and S. Vollenweider; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, [2005] 2006), 3–34 argues that only Greek cosmography since Plato and Aristotle imagined heaven and earth as a compound sphere. This would be the precondition to think of God as a heavenly being in otherworldly spheres.

THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE, THE PRISON IN THE VOID AND  
THE UNINHABITED PARADISE:  
OTHERWORLDLY SITES IN THE *BOOK OF THE WATCHERS*

Kelley Coblenz Bautch

The *Book of the Watchers* presents a view of space in which the cosmos is saturated with liminal sites. The plethora of sites do not collapse into one; it is not the case, in this second temple period work, that there is one cosmic mountain that serves simultaneously as home to God, paradise and the realm of the dead.<sup>1</sup> The *Book of the Watchers* knows, instead, many sites divinely appointed for specific purposes. In this essay we concern ourselves specifically with representations of otherworldly realities in the *Book of the Watchers*. That is to say, many of the sites we might associate with the sacred from the perspective of the ancients were inaccessible and available to only the divine, celestial or liminal beings or certain elect few. Such sites we might define as “otherworlds,” realms that bear relationship to our own but are, in fact, as a rule inaccessible to humankind.

The *Book of the Watchers* communicates interest in geography and cosmology, otherworldly or no, by taking its readers on a tour of the cosmos. In the text, the tour is keyed to a character familiar from Gen 5, Enoch, one of the early patriarchs, who is the protagonist of the narrative. Brief reference is made to Enoch in the genealogy of Gen 5 where this seventh patriarch is said to walk with God and is then taken by God.<sup>2</sup> Although Enoch is a rather obscure figure in contemporary times, the unusual account in Gen 5:21–24 fostered much speculation about the fate of the patriarch in the second temple period.

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<sup>1</sup> See K. Coblenz Bautch, “Geography, Mythic,” in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism* (ed. J.J. Collins and D. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> J. VanderKam astutely notes that Gen 5:22 and 5:24 feature Enoch associating with האֱלֹהִים—note the definite article—which in some biblical texts (cf., for example, Pss 8:6; 82:1, 6) refers to angels. In contrast, a second reference to אֱלֹהִים in Gen 5:24 lacks the definite article; according to VanderKam, the priestly author is distinguishing between האֱלֹהִים and the deity in this passage. See his *Enoch: A Man for All Generations* (Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament; Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 13.

Literature associated with Enoch makes explicit that to which Genesis only alludes concerning the fate of the patriarch by positing that Enoch was relocated to the company of angels. By means of such illustrious companions, Enoch is taken to a variety of places throughout the cosmos. One can argue that along with the natural and cosmological phenomena that the seer encounters in his travels, Enoch visits especially those sites inaccessible to humankind.<sup>3</sup> In fact, *1 En.* 19:3 articulates this very sentiment as the seer proclaims: “And I Enoch alone saw the sights, the ends of all and no one has seen what I have seen.”

While so much of the *Book of the Watchers* concerns cosmology and environs usually remote we limit our discussion to three sites taken up in the *Book of the Watchers*: the heavenly temple in which the divine resides, the prison for the seven stars, and the Paradise (or *Pardes*) of Righteousness or Truth, the garden home to the first couple. The three sites are presented in the *Book of the Watchers* as unambiguously located beyond the inhabited earth and the three appear unavailable to people in general.

### 1. THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE (*1 En.* 14:8–25)

The *Book of the Watchers* is concerned, in part, with boundaries: the maintenance of boundaries and the prohibited crossing of boundaries. One important boundary, significant to our study of the otherworld, is that between the heavenly realm and the earthly realm and most importantly, the boundary that is to be maintained between the inhabitants of these two realms. Thus, the heavenly world is the first otherworld we consider in the *Book of the Watchers*. The distinctiveness of this realm is communicated by the watchers’ descent to earth and mating with mortal women, which is presented as illicit and problematic (*1 En.* 6; 12:3–4; 15); the two *spheres* are not to mix. As we read in *1 En.* 15:7, celestial spirits (τὰ πνεύματα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) are to remain in heaven whereas terrestrial spirits are intended for the earth (*1 En.* 15:7, 10). The focal point of this heavenly otherworld is “the holy, eternal place” (*meqwama qeddusa zala’alam*), following the Ge’ez, or in

<sup>3</sup> See K. Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19* (JSJSup 81; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003) for further discussion of the tours of Enoch.

the Greek, “the sanctuary of the eternal place” (Gr<sup>Pan</sup> τὸ ἀγίασμα τῆς στάσεως τοῦ αἰῶνος; *1 En.* 12:4). In these instances “place” is comparable to the Hebrew מקום, a synonym for the temple; unlike the references to מקום in Deut 12:5, 11, 14 (see also 1 Kgs 8:30; 2 Chr 6:20) for example, this temple is located in the high heaven (*samāya le’ula*; τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸν ὑψηλόν; *1 En.* 12:4).<sup>4</sup>

We are given a tour of the heavenly sanctuary in the context of Enoch’s ascent to the divine throne room. In what is explicitly presented as a vision (*1 En.* 14:8, 14), the seer describes being lifted by winds which bring him into the heavens (*1 En.* 14:8). The otherworldly temple which Enoch visits appears modeled on the earthly temple as it features two houses analogous to a *temenos* or to the היכל (a main room) and to the דביר (or “holy of holies”).<sup>5</sup> Martha Himmelfarb also argues that the οἰκοδομή (or “building”) in the Greek of *1 En.* 14:9—the Gé’ez preserves, instead, *teqm* or “wall”—should be understood in this context as a third, outer chamber, which would correspond to the אולם or vestibule of the temple (cf. 1 Kgs 6:3 and also Ezek 40:48).<sup>6</sup>

This particular otherworldly region is forbidding by design. The initial wall or building of *1 En.* 14:9 and subsequent house (οἶκος /*bet*) are made of hailstones (λίθοις χαλάζης) or snow (*1 En.* 14:10) and

<sup>4</sup> This is not to challenge the idea that the Jerusalem temple or Zion had assumed mythic qualities, such as motifs associated with the Canaanite mountain of the gods (see R.J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972], 131–60) or that earthly temples in antiquity were thought to correspond to heavenly counterparts (for example, M. Himmelfarb, “The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of Ben Sira,” in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* [ed. J. Scott and P. Simpson-Housley; Contributions to the Study of Religion 30; New York: Greenwood Press, 1991], 63–78, esp. 68). We merely observe that the Enochic text establishes that the protagonist makes an ascent to heavenly environs. On *1 En.* 12:4, see M. Black, in consultation with J. VanderKam, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes* (SVTP 7; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 143, who observes that Tana 9’s variant (*meqwam qeddus*) also suggests a Semitic expression like מקום הקדש that was rendered in Greek στάσις τοῦ ἁγίου; a similar translation occurs in LXX Lev 10:17. G.W.E. Nickelsburg reads this expression in 12:4 as “the sanctuary of the eternal station” of the watchers. See *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 234. With regard to identifying this heavenly site as a temple, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:256.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, G.W.E. Nickelsburg, “Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 575–600; esp. 580 and M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14; 119–120 n. 27–29.

<sup>6</sup> Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 14, but see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:263.

surrounded by fire.<sup>7</sup> In this otherworldly realm, fire and ice co-exist. Further, the holy of holies, the second house, consists entirely of blazing fire (*1 En.* 14:15). Anticipating the difficulties and challenges faced by seers in later *merkabah* ascent traditions, Enoch does not pass easily through this otherworldly realm.<sup>8</sup> From initial fright (*1 En.* 14:9), to the seer's quaking, trembling and falling to his face (*1 En.* 14:14), the tour underscores the patriarch's fear and trembling as he approaches the divine; Nickelsburg is correct to identify these components of the temple as "a series of perilous barriers that threaten and impede the seer's progress."<sup>9</sup>

The blazing fire of the דביר and the splendor (μεγαλοσύνη) of the deity, here called the Great Glory (ἡ δόξα ἡ μεγάλη; 14:20), ultimately prevent Enoch from entering the innermost chamber where God is enthroned; the seer describes, rather, what he observes through an open door (*1 En.* 14:15, 19, 25). Indeed, we are told, no angel could enter this house and no human could look upon the deity's face (*1 En.* 14:21). Whereas aspects of the throne—namely, its size and appearance, as well as wheel(s) and the streams of fire that flow from underneath—are recalled, the seer demurs when it comes to the deity; Enoch is able only to speak of the divine's raiment.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the narrative underscores the transcendence of the divine, and more so, the utter inaccessibility of this heavenly realm.<sup>11</sup> We should note that much of the description of this otherworld, that is, the heavenly temple, is familiar to us from theophanies and scenes of prophetic commissioning found in biblical texts. George W.E. Nickelsburg, Martha Himmelfarb and David Halperin, among others, have well documented the extent to which *1 Enoch* 14 recalls various traditions associated with the Hebrew Bible in its articulation of both the visionary experience and the heavenly temple. Isaiah 6 and other theophanic scenes from the Hebrew Bible may have contributed to the depictions of the divine enthroned in

<sup>7</sup> Other references to snow and hail in association with heavenly storerooms or as the means of divine chastisement may be found respectively in Job 38:22 and Ezek 38:22.

<sup>8</sup> So also Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:259–260.

<sup>9</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:260.

<sup>10</sup> Nickelsburg notes that unlike the book of Daniel which comments on physical aspects of the deity such as hair and form, the Enochic work is comparable Isa 6:1 in that it recalls only the garments of the divine. *1 Enoch*, 1:264.

<sup>11</sup> So Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:265.

the *Book of the Watchers*.<sup>12</sup> We explore, however, only a few of these verbal echoes in Enoch's vision of the heavenly temple and deliberate on those aspects which seem to derive from Ezekiel since the visionary experience and tour of an otherworldly region in the Enochic text are most reminiscent of the latter.

Familiar from Ezekiel is the role of a cloud and wind in the commencement of the vision (Ezek 1:4). In *1 Enoch* 14, the clouds call the seer to the vision and the winds cause the seer to ascend; a closer analogue may also be found in Ezek 3:13–15 and 8:3, where רוח, “spirit” or “wind,” lifts up and relocates the prophet. The firmament is described as ice in Ezek 1:22 and fire issues from the cloud in Ezek 1:4, calling to mind the hailstones and fire that comprise the heavenly temple in the *Book of the Watchers*. The living creatures of Ezek 1:5–14, later identified as cherubim in Ezek 10:20, support the mobile throne; cherubim are also to be found in *1 En.* 14:11 where they are presented as fiery. This detail as well recalls the burning coals of fire or torches that move about Ezekiel's living creatures (Ezek 1:13–14).

Another interesting shared tradition is that of the wheels associated with the divine's throne. The אופנים, also referred to as the “wheelwork” (גלגל), are presented in elaborate fashion in Ezek 1:15–20 and 10:9–17. In these selections we learn that the unusual wheels have rims full of eyes and gleam with the appearance of chrysolite. Similarly, the throne in the *Book of the Watchers*, according to the Greek of *1 En.* 14:18 (τροχὸς ὡς ἡλίου λάμποντος; it refers to only one wheel), has a wheel like the shining sun.<sup>13</sup> For Himmelfarb, this detail indicates, in fact, the *Book of the Watchers*' dependence upon Ezekiel; whereas Ezekiel's vision of a mobile throne requires wheels, they serve no purpose on a static throne located in a heavenly temple.<sup>14</sup> We might note, however,

<sup>12</sup> One outstanding example is that the throne is described as lofty in *1 En.* 14:18, recalling the lofty throne of Isa 6:1 (see also LXX Isa 6:1). Cherubim, which are seen and heard in *1 En.* 14:11, 18, are well known as throne bearers of the deity, as one recalls from Pss 80:2 and 99:1. We note also that dark clouds and fire (*1 En.* 14:8–12) are common characteristics of theophanies (cf. Exod 20:21 and Zeph 1:15).

<sup>13</sup> Following the translation of Nickelsburg, who emends *1 En.* 14:18 on the basis of the parallel in Dan 7:9. See *1 Enoch*, 1:255, 257–258; also 264. The Ge'ez suggests something like “its surrounds like the shining sun” (so M.A. Knibb in consultation with E. Ullendorff, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments* [2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 2:99). Knibb, *Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 99, n. for *1 En.* 14:22 wonders whether the Ge'ez could be dependent on the Aramaic גלגל.

<sup>14</sup> Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 10.

that the imagery of wheel or wheels could derive from the description of the Solomonic Temple in 1 Kgs 7:27–34, which included ten stands of bronze with wheels made to resemble chariot wheels.<sup>15</sup>

The several references to the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel 1, 3 and 10 (1:28; 3:12; 10:2, 4, 18–19, 22–23) remind us of the appellation of the deity, “the Great Glory,” in *1 En.* 14:20. The glory of the deity is such in Enoch’s visionary experience that none can look upon the divine (*1 En.* 14:21). Moreover, in both Ezekiel and the *Book of the Watchers*, the prophets respond to their vision of the divine with fear (they fall prone), and subsequently receive prophetic commissioning.<sup>16</sup>

There are aspects to Enoch’s visionary experience and to the heavenly temple that are unique, while there is much of chapter 14 that is indebted to biblical texts like Ezekiel. The most significant difference between the biblical accounts and the Enochic work, in terms of the vision of the divine, is the sphere or realm of activity. The *Book of the Watchers* features Enoch journeying to the heavenly temple, to an otherworld.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. THE OTHERWORLDLY PRISON AND THE SEVEN STARS (*1 EN.* 18:12–16 AND 21:1–6)

After his journey to the heavenly temple, Enoch is given a tour of various cosmological phenomena, like the storehouse of the winds (*1 En.* 18:1), and of sites associated with judgment. Moreover, much of these travels in the second half of the *Book of the Watchers* take the seer to the ends of the earth. Whereas some of these places associated with the impending eschatological drama are situated in the very center of the earth—for example, Jerusalem will serve as home to the elect in the future (*1 En.* 25:5–6; 26:1) and the valley of Hinnom is to be a site of judgment (27:1–3)—Enoch is led to what are essentially

<sup>15</sup> Further, panels were set between the frames of the stands that featured reliefs of lions, oxen and cherubim.

<sup>16</sup> So also Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:255.

<sup>17</sup> It is the case that the temple itself may be conceived as an otherworld due to the sanctity afforded to it among Israelites and the extent to which its architecture and artwork mimicked paradisiacal features (see Himmelfarb, “The Temple and the Garden of Eden,” 68–69).

prisons for certain celestial beings at the edges of and just beyond the inhabited world.

Returning to the story of the rebellious angels who mate with women (see *1 Enoch* 6–16), the seer encounters an abyss with pillars of fire that serves as a place of confinement for the watchers who mated with women (see *1 En.* 18:11; 19:1–2 and the parallel tradition in *1 En.* 21:7–10). *1 En.* 18:9–10 locates the prison at the end of earth, κακεινα τῶν ὁρέων τούτων τόπος ἐστὶν πέρας τῆς μεγάλης γῆς, where the heavens come to an end (אשׁתִּי יצִי שְׁמִיא / συντελεσθήσονται οἱ οὐρανοί / yetgābē’u samāyāt) or where the firmament meets the earth. Thereafter, Enoch’s journey continues beyond the abyss to a place that has neither firmament of heaven above it, nor foundation of earth below it (*1 En.* 18:11–12; cf. *1 En.* 21:2). Likewise, the site lacks both water and fowl and is presented as a desert or wasteland (ἔρημος / makāna badew). This veritable void is the second of the otherworldly realms we consider in the *Book of the Watchers*.

Regarding this otherworldly site, *1 En.* 18:12 and 21:2 indicate that the seer has traveled to a place both outside of the inhabited world and seemingly the bounds of the cosmos as well. Enoch is beyond the terrestrial disk, the atmosphere and the heavens; Enoch is beyond even the waters that surround the earth disk and make up the firmament. Indeed, this otherworldly prison is described subsequently by an interpreting angel as the end of heaven and earth (τὸ τέλος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς/ tafṣāmētu la-samāy wa-la-medr) in *1 En.* 18:14, and the Greek of *1 En.* 18:15 includes a gloss indicating that “the place outside the heaven was empty” (ὅτι τόπος ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κενός ἐστιν).

In this otherworldly realm, the seer observes seven stars which appear like burning mountains (ἑπτα ἀστέρας ὡς ὄρη μεγάλα καίόμενα / sab’ata kawākebta kama ‘abayt ‘adbār za-yenadded). Enoch learns in *1 En.* 18:14 from the angel who accompanies him that the place serves as a prison (δεσμωτήριον/ bēta moqeh) for the stars and the host of heaven (the parallel tradition in *1 En.* 21:6 speaks merely of the stars of heaven). The stars, which failed to come out at their appointed times, will be held in this void until the time of the consummation of their sin (*1 En.* 18:16 || 21:6).

The disobedient stars in both *1 En.* 18:13–16 and *1 En.* 21:1–6 appear in the narrative with little introduction. Stars and other heavenly bodies were understood in antiquity to be sentient beings and as such could be obedient or disobedient. The reference in *1 En.* 18:14 to the powers of heaven (ταῖς δυνάμεσιν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) or host

of heaven (xāyla samāy) is reminiscent of Isa 24:21. In that text, the Isaianic apocalypse, God will punish the host of heaven (עֲבֹא הַמְרוֹם) and kings of the earth by throwing them into a pit where they will be imprisoned. Yet, what is meant in the Enochic texts by the seven stars which fail to rise at the proper time (1 En. 18:15)?<sup>18</sup> The assertion that stars of 1 En. 18:13–16 and 21:3–6 refer to the seven recognized planets in antiquity<sup>19</sup> has been challenged by scholars who have noted that because the planets change their movements regularly amid fixed stars, there would not have been an expected time for the planets' rising during a year's orbit.<sup>20</sup>

Instead more likely candidates for the stars are the Pleiades, a cluster of seven stars well known in antiquity for their heliacal rising which conveyed information about weather, phases of the stars and the agricultural calendar.<sup>21</sup> In the ancient Near East, the rightly timed rising of the Pleiades could serve as a positive omen for the land.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, evil portents were communicated by the Pleiades not arising at the expected time.<sup>23</sup> The Pleiades were also associated with the *Sibettu*, seven rebellious demons bound in the eastern horizon; these appeared in the form of a constellation.

The bound stars of the *Book of the Watchers* resemble the *Sibettu*-Pleiades which provide an important parallel for this enigmatic tradition.<sup>24</sup> This otherworld is something like a penal colony inasmuch as it

<sup>18</sup> ὅτι οὐκ ἐξῆλθον ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς ἀνατολῆς αὐτῶν / 'esma 'i-mašu ba-gizēhomu 'em-qedma šebāhomu. Here the stars represent disobedience because they were inattentive to their appropriate schedule. In fact, they stand in contrast to 1 En. 2:1's "lights of heaven" which rise and set at their proper time, and do not transgress their laws.

<sup>19</sup> Black, *Book of Enoch or I Enoch*, 160, for example, associates the stars with the planets.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, M. Albani, "'Der das Siebengestirn und den Orion macht' (Am 5,8) Zur Bedeutung der Plejaden in der israelitischen Religionsgeschichte," in *Religionsgeschichte Israels: Formale und materiale Aspekte* (ed. B. Janowski and M. Köckert; Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 139–207; esp. 168.

<sup>21</sup> Albani, "Siebengestirn," 168.

<sup>22</sup> Albani, "Siebengestirn," 163, 168. On the Pleiades, see also K. Coblentz Bautch, *Geography*, 147–49, and the contribution of D. Pezzoli-Olgati in this volume. On the notion of celestial bodies appearing in the sky at their appointed time, see "Assurbanipal's Hymn to Assur" (K3258/ ABRT 1 32) l. 19 and l. 22 in A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (SAA 3; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989), 4–5.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, *Enuma Anu Enlil* Tablet 51, Text IX in E. Reiner with D. Pingree, *Enuma Anu Enlil Tablets 50–51* (Babylonian Planetary Omens: Vol. 2, Part 2; Bibliotheca Mesopotamica; Malibu: Undena, 1981), 59.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. also Job 38:31. Albani, "Siebengestirn," 168.

is removed from civilization and is remote, so much so that this prison is in a cosmic void. Unlike the heavenly temple of *1 Enoch* 14 which demonstrates familiarity with and expansions of traditions from the Hebrew Bible, we see in the narrative of the seven bound stars of *1 En.* 18:12–16 and 21:1–6, an otherworld that may reflect or be informed especially by the ancient Near Eastern milieu. I suggest that we think of the seven bound stars in light of comparable Pleiades traditions; even if one does not opt for that interpretation, one cannot deny that this prison is presented as otherworldly in almost every respect—no firmament, no earth, no water—and inaccessible.

### 3. THE PARADISE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS OR TRUTH (*1 EN.* 32:3–6)

Following his tour of such holding places as the prison of the seven stars, Enoch returns to *terra firma*, visiting Jerusalem and then traveling eastward. He journeys through various mountainous regions and encounters aromatic trees and plants until he reaches ἡ ἐρυθρὰ θάλασσα (יֹמָא שְׂמוּקָא), the Erythrean (or Red) Sea. As Nickelsburg notes, this body of water was understood in antiquity variously; it could refer to the Arabian Gulf and at the same time to larger bodies of water such as the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. Enoch is transported over the water and then also crosses over what is described as a realm of darkness.

The cosmology assumed by the *Book of the Watchers* and the earlier *Astronomical Book* is that of an earth disk encircled by a body of water. Thereafter, one encounters, in this mythic geography, a realm of darkness. This view of the cosmos is more widely reflected in antiquity; we might think, for example, of the river Okeanos encircling the earth disk on Achilles' Shield in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 18:840), a view Herodotus knows and mocks (*Hist.* 4:36). The Babylonian "Mappa Mundi," a tablet of the seventh century BCE, features *marratu*, or "the Bitter River," which also encompasses a land mass. It is possible that the dark realm in *1 Enoch* 32 signifies the realm of the dead or could simply indicate the other side of the vault of heaven, as is suggested by Józef Milik.<sup>25</sup> I understand this realm of darkness to signal to the reader that Enoch

<sup>25</sup> See J.T. Milik, "Hénoch au Pays des Aromates (ch. XXVII à XXXII): Fragments Araméens de la Grotte 4 de Qumran (Pl. I)," *RB* (1958): 70–77; esp. 77.

has now ventured to the otherworld, environs no longer a part of the *oikoumene*.<sup>26</sup>

In what appears to be the highlight of the eastern travels, Enoch approaches the *Pardes* (in the Aramaic) or Paradise (in the Greek) of Righteousness or Truth. Though he is said only to pass by it, the seer glimpses trees distinguished by their plentitude and height. Among these, Enoch observes a distinctive tree, the tree of wisdom, which is described in some detail. Enoch shares his admiration of the tree with the *angelus interpres*. The angel then reports that Enoch's "aged father" and "aged mother" took from the tree of wisdom and acquired wisdom (*1 En.* 32:6).<sup>27</sup> Once the couple—apparently Adam and Eve, though here unnamed—becomes cognizant of nakedness, they are subsequently driven from the paradise.

One may ask whether the text depends upon Genesis 3. Indeed, several studies have taken up the extent to which one can observe analogous elements of plot and comparable language.<sup>28</sup> There are also some distinct aspects to the accounts of Gen 3 and *1 En.* 32:3–6 which are relevant to the discussion of literary dependence.<sup>29</sup> While impor-

<sup>26</sup> A comparable example from the ancient Near East may be observed in Epic of Gilgamesh 9, where the protagonist travels to sites along the periphery of the earth and traverses ultimately the "path of the sun," ironically an utterly dark route, in his quest to find *Utnapishtim* and learn the secret of immortality. The "path of the sun" may refer to the idea of the sun traveling at night through either northern regions or the underworld as it makes its way to the East.

<sup>27</sup> On recent efforts to date the *Book of the Watchers*, see J.H. Charlesworth, "A Rare Consensus among Enoch Specialists: The Date of the Earliest Enoch Books," *Henoch* 24 (2002): 225–234. J.T. Milik reconstructs the Aramaic of *En* I 27 thus: [אבוך רבא] [אמך רבתא ויד] [עו מנדע ואתפתחו עיניהון ואתבוננו] [די ערטליין] [... See *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 235–236.

<sup>28</sup> For example J. VanderKam, *Enoch: A Man for All Generations*, 59, observes numerous parallels between Genesis 2–3 and *1 Enoch* 32. See also E.J.C. Tigchelaar, "Eden and Paradise: The Garden Motif in Some Early Jewish Texts (*1 Enoch* and Other Texts Found at Qumran)," in *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G.P. Luttikhuisen; TBN 2; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 37–62, here 40–42 and K. Coblentz Bautch, "Adamic Traditions in the Parables? A Query on *1 En.* 69:6," in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (ed. G. Boccaccini and J. von Ehrenkrook; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 352–360, here 352.

<sup>29</sup> There are several aspects of the account of the first couple in Genesis 3 that are not reflected in the Enochic text; there are no references, for example, to the deception of a serpent or to the forbidden nature of the tree. See Tigchelaar, "Eden and Paradise," 42–44 and Coblentz Bautch, "Adamic Traditions in the Parables?," 353. Though the description of the first couple in *1 En.* 32:6 is exceedingly brief and offers no elaboration on divine prohibition or punishment, J.J. Collins, "Before the Fall:

tant for study of *1 En.* 32:3–6, we do not revisit all the similarities and differences, especially as they pertain to the topic of protoplasts; we focus at present, instead, on *pardes* or paradise as an otherworld.

Interestingly, neither *1 Enoch* 32:3 nor 32:6 refers to a tree of the knowledge of good and evil (עץ הדעת טוב ורע) as we find in Gen 2:9, 17 (cf. also Gen 3:3–5); the Greek manuscript tradition names the tree τὸ δένδρον τῆς φρονήσεως which is comparable to the expression that Josephus uses in his retelling of Genesis 2–3 in the *Antiquities* (τὸ φυτὸν τῆς φρονήσεως; *Ant.* 1.1.3–4 § 37–43).<sup>30</sup> The tree of wisdom is described in *1 Enoch* 32 as surrounded by magnificent trees, and as having the height of a pine or fir, leaves like those of a carob, and fruit like clusters of a vine. Its fragrance is potent and far reaching. Prior to the seer's travels to the paradise he passes by aromatic trees and plants. The detail is reminiscent of Sir 24:13–22, where hypostatized Wisdom describes herself as comparable to various trees, commenting on height, foliage, fruit and fragrance. While it is debated as to whether *1 Enoch* 32 and Ben Sira share a common tradition here, it is interesting that both texts take up numerous spices and aromatics in association with trees and with wisdom.<sup>31</sup>

The depiction of this Paradise of Righteousness or Truth deserves further comment. We note the following. 4QEnoch<sup>e</sup> preserves the Aramaic name of this site: פִּרְדֵּס קִשְׁטָא. *Pardes* here is a transcription of a Persian loanword which is best translated as “orchard,” “forest” or “nursery of trees”; in the Hellenistic period it seems to have connoted a “royal park” as well.<sup>32</sup> As one can see, *pardes* in *1 Enoch* 32 is described solely by the trees, thus calling to mind these earlier definitions. As Nickelsburg observes, one would expect the Aramaic of the

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The Earliest Interpretations of Adam and Eve,” in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (ed. Hindy Najman and Judith Newman; JSJSup 83; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 293–308, here 305, remarks that “since Adam and Eve are driven out from the garden, presumably they did something wrong.”

<sup>30</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:328. The Aramaic is not extant in this selection from the *Book of the Watchers*, however, one might anticipate that the Greek noun φρόνησις could have rendered יָדַע or חִכְמָתָא. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:328; Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 235; cf. also R. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment* (SBLEJL 8; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 132–135.

<sup>31</sup> Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 93–94, has suggested the existence of a tradition concerning the Tree of Wisdom's attributes which was utilized both within the *Book of the Watchers* and Ben Sira. See, however, Tigchelaar, “Eden and Paradise,” 42 n. 12.

<sup>32</sup> J.N. Bremmer, “Paradise: From Persia, via Greece, into the Septuagint,” in *Paradise Interpreted*, 21–36; esp. 5.

*Book of the Watchers* to read ܐܬܬܐ (that is, “the garden” in Aramaic), in light of ܥܕܢ-ܕܢ of Genesis.<sup>33</sup> The author chose, instead, a loan word. Also of interest is that the paradise is associated with ܐܬܬܐ, which can be understood as “righteousness” or “truth.”

Like the LXX which uses παράδεισος to render the garden of Eden, the Greek of the *Book of the Watchers* also chooses a transcription of this loanword, referring to the site as παράδεισος τῆς δικαιοσύνης. Interestingly, the Ge'ez of *1 Enoch* 32 does not employ a form of the loan word; it reads, instead, *gannata sedq*, recalling more closely the Hebrew of Genesis, by opting for a form of *gan*.

The notion of a paradise, let alone a paradise of righteousness or truth might suggest to contemporary audiences a sort of heavenly abode for the deceased. The *pardes* of *1 Enoch* 32 clearly does not serve in that capacity. We see other locales functioning as such in the *Book of the Watchers*. That is, one recalls that the cosmos depicted in the *Book of the Watchers* is saturated with liminal spaces; thus Enoch is escorted earlier in the narrative (in chapter 22) to the realm of the dead. This realm of the dead is actually a mountain to the west with hollow places in which spirits of the deceased wait until a future day of judgment, not at all a garden paradise.

Moreover, in *1 Enoch* 18 and 24, the seer is taken to see the mountain of God, one of seven mountains which consist of precious stones. This mountain, presented as the future throne of God, serves as a temporary dwelling for the tree of life according to chapter 24. The interpreting angel also shares that this tree will be transplanted to Jerusalem at the time of the great judgment and that by the Temple, the pious and righteous will be given the fruit of this tree and will enjoy a long life on earth (*1 En.* 25:5–6). Jerusalem and the Temple complex, not the *Pardes* or Paradise of Righteousness or Truth, serve as the “paradise” for the elect following the time of judgment.

Also striking is the name of this garden: in Aramaic, the “*Pardes* of Truth” or the “*Pardes* of Righteousness.” Inasmuch as the centerpiece of the paradise, the Tree of Wisdom, conveys knowledge to those who eat of its fruit (*1 En.* 32:6; cf. also 32:3), it is comprehensible for the orchard to be associated with truth, veracity or clarity. Nickelsburg also proposes that since *1 En.* 32:3–6 focuses upon the Tree of Wisdom and an initially righteous first couple that the garden takes

<sup>33</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:327.

its name from the original state of these inhabitants.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps this is the case, although one wonders why Adam and Eve, if their morality were at all at issue in the work, are presented in such a minimalist or likewise, ambivalent manner; the first couple does not appear otherwise in the *Book of the Watchers* and they are not made exemplars in service of the work's thoroughgoing eschatology, unlike Abel and Cain, for example, in *1 Enoch* 22.<sup>35</sup> Are there other likely referents to be we could associated with righteousness? Argall and Nickelsburg emend the Greek text of *1 En.* 32:3 such that the narrative refers to "holy ones" eating the fruit of the tree and learning wisdom.<sup>36</sup> Although the identity of such "holy ones" (ἁγίοι) is not clear from the text, the term is used elsewhere in the Enochic work to speak of angels. Because an emendation is required to come upon the reading of "holy ones" and the Ge'ez of the same text lacks the word for "holy" (the basis for the emendation in 32:3), one might be inclined to challenge this proposed reading for *1 En.* 32:3, however.<sup>37</sup> The description of this otherworld does not provide information about inhabitants of the paradise who enjoy fruit from the tree and there is apparently no eschatological import to the Tree of Wisdom either, in contradistinction to *1 Enoch* 24–25's veritable "tree of life."<sup>38</sup> Though the reader is given no explanation as to why this garden is associated with truth or righteousness, one observes that the *Astronomical Book* also features a *Pardes* of Righteousness or Truth, which like *1 Enoch* 32, is preserved in fragmentary form in Aramaic. In 4Q209 and 4Q210 (Enastr<sup>b</sup> 23 and Enastr<sup>c</sup> I ii 13–20) the *Pardes* of Righteousness or Truth, given no description, is presented as the outermost of three concentric circles which make up the world (*1 En.* 77). Like the *Book of the Watchers*,

<sup>34</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:327.

<sup>35</sup> Adam and Eve also appear in the *Animal Apocalypse*, a second century BCE booklet from *1 Enoch* that presents an allegory of biblical history from creation until the time of the work's composition. The *Animal Apocalypse* opts to recast exclusively events familiar from Genesis 2 and 4. The events described in Genesis 3 and *1 Enoch* 32—Adam and Eve in the garden, the trees and expulsion—do not appear in the *Animal Apocalypse*.

<sup>36</sup> Nickelsburg's translation for *1 En.* 32:3 reads: "I saw from afar . . . the tree of wisdom, whose fruit the holy ones eat and learn wisdom." See his *1 Enoch*, 1:320. See also Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 33 n. 80.

<sup>37</sup> See Collins, "Before the Fall," 305. Black translates the expression in *1 En.* 32:3 as follows: "the tree of wisdom, of the fruit of which those who partake understand great wisdom." See *Book of Enoch* or *1 Enoch*, 41.

<sup>38</sup> So Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 1:328.

this earlier tradition also situates the *Pardes* of Righteousness or Truth far from the inhabited world. Comparably, there is brief mention of a “Garden of the Righteous” in the *Parables of Enoch* (1 *En.* 60:23), a work most Enochic scholars date to the first century BCE or CE.<sup>39</sup> While no further details are given for this site in the *Parables*, it seems to be like the “garden of life” where the righteous dead and the chosen are said to dwell in 1 *En* 61:12. In any event, the depiction of such a paradise in the *Parables of Enoch* is quite different from the fate of the dead in the *Book of the Watchers* whose disembodied spirits await the day of judgment in mountain hollows.<sup>40</sup>

A final point about the *Pardes* of Righteousness in 1 *En.* 32:3–6 is in order. The site, whatever its purpose, seems to be largely inaccessible. Not only is it located beyond the inhabited world, in what is evidently an otherworldly realm, but even Enoch, the protagonist, does not enter the *pardes*. 4QEnoch<sup>e</sup> preserves the reading that Enoch “draws up alongside” (לִיד in the Aramaic) the site. In this respect, the paradise of the *Book of the Watchers* is reminiscent of Eden in Gen 3:24, inasmuch as that garden too becomes inaccessible after the first couple has eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The protoplasts are barred from the garden, one reads in Genesis, to keep them from eating of the tree of life. The *Pardes* of Righteousness or Truth in the *Book of the Watchers* is home to many fragrant trees, and the Tree of Wisdom, but is otherwise vacant. Further, unlike the fruit of what appears to be the Tree of Life which is to be given to the elect at the time of judgment (cf. 1 *Enoch* 24–25), the Tree of Wisdom, at least in this stratum of the *Book of the Watchers*, plays no role in the eschatological future. In this respect, the *Pardes* of Righteousness or Truth is as superfluous to the cosmos as Eden is rendered in the Hebrew Bible. Although motifs and imagery associated with the garden come to be associated with Jerusalem and the temple in proto-apocalyptic works, Genesis 2–3 are practically absent from the perspective of the biblical narratives. Eden, likewise, suggests an unattainable utopia, outside of the reach of humankind.

What role, then, does the *Pardes* of Righteousness or Truth play in the narrative of the *Book of the Watchers*? It would seem not much

<sup>39</sup> On the dating of the *Parables*, see P. Sacchi, “The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar on the *Parables of Enoch*: Summary and Prospects for Future Research,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 499–512, here 505–511.

<sup>40</sup> See also Tigchelaar, “Eden and Paradise,” 48–49.

of one. As Eibert Tigchelaar has stated, "It...seems that the short description of the *Pardes* of Righteousness was placed at the end of Enoch's journey to the East in order to complete the description of the East, and not because of some special importance of this location."<sup>41</sup> Situated beyond a body of water and darkness the *pardes* appears to be merely the former home of Adam and Eve, and is otherworldly inasmuch as it is inaccessible. Even so, we might ask further about the relationship of *1 En.* 32:3–6 and the biblical tradition of the primordial couple in the garden. Does examination of *1 Enoch* 32 betray knowledge of Genesis 2–3? Can we assume that the author of this work utilizes in some form the account of the protoplasts in Eden and includes a numinous or sacred site that depends upon a biblical *Vorlage*? While some argue that knowledge of Genesis and in fact, close reading of the biblical text is reflected in this brief passage from the *Book of the Watchers*, Tigchelaar maintains that "the Enochic account (of the *Pardes*) represents a separate stream of tradition independent of Genesis 2–3."<sup>42</sup> Tigchelaar's perspective is bolstered by various traditions related to Eden or a garden of God in the Hebrew Bible. For example, in addition to the gan-Eden of Genesis 2–3, there is Eden the garden and mountain of God in Ezekiel 28 (Ezek 28:13; 14; 16) and Eden, garden of God which is home to many striking trees in Ezekiel 31. The variety suggests that there is not one fixed tradition concerning Eden and the trees. Hence, one should not be surprised to see in the Enochic corpus a variant of these traditions as well.

As one considers whether *1 Enoch* 32 works from knowledge of Genesis 3, one should consider the following questions. First, does the author recast the account of Genesis 2–3 so that readers come upon a new understanding of the text or take away another message from the account? If so, what is this message? Does *1 Enoch* 32 provide in any respect an explication of Genesis 2–3? Second, if the author is reflecting upon Genesis 2–3, what is the rationale for situating the tree of life beside the mountain of God in chapter 24 (which is to be replanted by the Temple, according to chapter 25, at the end of the age) and for placing the Tree of Wisdom in a paradise that seems analogous to

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<sup>41</sup> Tigchelaar, "Eden and Paradise," 42.

<sup>42</sup> Tigchelaar, "Eden and Paradise," 46.

Eden, the garden of Genesis 2–3?<sup>43</sup> Third, why is Enoch taken to this site? Does this journey to the *pardes* simply underscore his abilities as a seer?<sup>44</sup> Through our study of this otherworldly site from the *Book of the Watchers*, one possible way to understand the development of this tradition is to see the Paradise of Truth or Righteousness in *1 Enoch* 32 as evidence of the varieties of traditions concerning Eden or some type of garden associated with the first couple that flourished in the Second Temple period.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

We have examined three very different sites associated with the otherworld in the *Book of the Watchers*: the heavenly temple, the prison of the stars and the *Pardes* of Righteousness or Truth. One of these otherworldly sites functions as the eternal home for the divine, one serves as the temporary holding cell for disobedient celestial beings, and one relates to traditions concerning ancestors, the first couple and an unusual tree.

What did these views of otherworlds communicate to an ancient audience? If we take the case of the heavenly temple of *1 Enoch* 14 we

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<sup>43</sup> Although P. Grelot, “La géographie mythique d’Hénoch et ses sources orientales,” *RB* 65 (1958): 33–69, esp. 43, has suggested that the *Book of the Watchers* presents two gardens or paradises (one described in *1 Enoch* 18 and 24–25 and the other in *1 Enoch* 32) in order to harmonize the garden of Eden in the east from Gen 2, the divine mountain in the north of Isa 14 and the mountain identified as Eden in Ezek 28, his view has been challenged by Tigchelaar, “Eden and Paradise,” 44, 47 and the present author, *Study of the Geography*, 166–167.

<sup>44</sup> How shall we decide? Consider the following: whereas *1 Enoch* 6–11 responds to scriptural conundrums and explicates Gen 6–9, the minimal account of Adam and Eve in *1 Enoch* 32 leaves us with more questions than answers. If the author of *1 Enoch* 32 is aware of Gen 2–3, the author does not clearly recast the text so that we come upon a new meaning. The narrative that follows also does not assist us in this regard. After his journey to *pardes*, Enoch travels to the ends of the earth, sees various beasts and birds, and then makes a counterclockwise journey to gates of heaven. Moreover, as many scholars have observed, the distinctive settings for the tree of life and the tree of wisdom or knowledge—the former is next to the mountain of God and is to be replanted by the Temple and the latter is in the *pardes* to the East—is also curious and requires some explanation if one is to assume that the author of *1 Enoch* 32 knows and works from the account in Genesis.

<sup>45</sup> One might ask whether the Enochic account of the primordial couple in the garden derives from oral tradition. The second option does not seem impossible to me in the instance of *1 Enoch* 32, though unlikely for the *Animal Apocalypse*. Cf. also P. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch* (SBLEJL 4; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 230.

see adoption and adaptation of theophanic traditions in the Hebrew Bible. So many of the details of the visionary experience, the prophetic commissioning and the heavenly temple derive from Ezekiel and yet the most important difference is that these aspects of theophany are now located in heaven and at a remove from humankind. Further, the author stresses the divine's transcendence by avoiding descriptions of the deity's physical appearance.

The second otherworld we examined, the prison for the seven stars, presents a view of an inaccessible place that serves well the themes of eschatology and judgment in the *Book of the Watchers*. Places for judgment do exist in the cosmos, the *Book of the Watchers* emphasizes, and all of humanity and all cosmological phenomena will be subject to such judgment. The stars provide in the narrative an example of disobedience because they were inattentive to their appropriate schedule. In fact, they stand in contrast to the lights of heaven, presented in *1 Enoch* 2:1, which rise and set at their proper time, neither changing course nor transgressing their law.

The third otherworld, the Paradise of Righteousness or Truth, is especially interesting and perplexing as an otherworld. While we may continue to debate whether *1 Enoch* 32 presumes knowledge of and offers a reinterpretation of Genesis 3, there is little the narrative accomplishes through the description of *pardes* than to solidify Enoch's credentials as seer. Is it possible that there is an ironic aspect of this otherworld? The tree of wisdom, a source of wisdom, is inaccessible, not unlike the scenario that a later tradition communicates in the Parables: Wisdom did not find her dwelling among the sons of men and retreats to the company of angels (*1 En.* 42:1). Or, does the text underscore that wisdom, which is presented in *1 Enoch* 82:1 as beyond the thought and capabilities of humankind, is only available through revelation and from very few sources?<sup>46</sup> Perhaps this otherworld, much like the heavenly temple and prison of the stars, reminds the reader of human limitations vis-à-vis the divine, putting us finally in our place. It is clear, in any event, that the study of otherworldly realms provides a fascinating entrée into the *Book of the Watchers* and its background and to be sure, when it comes to otherworldly traditions in this rich text, we have only just begun the discussion.

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<sup>46</sup> So also Collins, "Before the Fall," 305 n. 45.



## FOUR WORLDS THAT ARE “OTHER” IN THE ENOCHIC BOOK OF PARABLES

George W.E. Nickelsburg

For the purposes of this paper, I take “otherworld” to refer to those places that are different from the familiar, inhabited worlds that are occupied by the author of this text and his audience—different from that world to the point of being “other than” it. There are four such worlds that are “other.”

1. Heaven, where God dwells together with His entourage, including the Son of Man/ Chosen One/ Righteous One/ Anointed One, and where the righteous and holy dead dwell.
2. Heaven, or the sky, the location of the astronomical and meteorological elements.
3. Those parts of the terrestrial disk that are also removed from human access and in which the places of judgment and punishment exist now and will exist in the future.
4. Earth as it will be transformed into the place of blessing for the righteous.

All of these worlds are “other” in that they are qualitatively different from, and in a certain sense the very opposite of, the phenomenal world of the author and his audience, and in that they are inaccessible to this audience. Paradoxically, however, they are accessible to the seer, allegedly Enoch of old, but in reality the author of the text. From one point of view, the *Enochic Book of Parables* is, from start to finish, an account of Enoch’s journeys through these other worlds.

My discussion will touch on the following issues:

1. How does the seer describe these other worlds?
2. How are these other worlds related, positively or negatively, to the world of the author and his audience? That is, how do they reflect the circumstances and problems of the author’s world?

3. How do these worlds transform and ameliorate these circumstances and problems?

My thesis is as follows: For the author and his audience, the present time and world are marked by violence, oppression, and chaos. The coming judgment will change this. Meanwhile, the author had revealed to him, and he reveals to his audience, other worlds, where order rules rather than chaos, where God's authority is honoured and God's will is done, and where the mechanisms of judgment are in place or are being prepared to reverse the ills of this world and the present time.

1. THE PROBLEM WITH "THIS WORLD": THE KINGS AND THE MIGHTY WHO POSSESS THE EARTH, THE DEMONS THAT LEAD HUMANITY ASTRAY, AND WRONGFUL DEATH

The *Book of Parables* provides relatively little information about the world in which its author and audience live. The allusions that do occur centre primarily around the activity of "the kings and the mighty (and the exalted / the strong) (and those) who possess the earth."<sup>1</sup> Variations on the formula occur fourteen times in the book (38:4; 46:4–6; 48:8; 53:5; 54:2; 55:4; 62:1, 3, 6, 9; 63:1, 12; and 67:8, 12 in a Noachic interpolation). The evil character of these individuals is evident from the fact that in all but one instance (55:4) their judgment and ultimate destruction is the subject of the discussion.<sup>2</sup> The exact nature of their sin is, for the most part, vague. The one specific reference is the following:

These are they who †judge† the stars of heaven,  
and raise their hands against the Most High,  
and tread upon the earth and dwell on it. All their deeds manifest  
unrighteousness,  
and their power (rests) on their wealth.  
Their faith is in the gods they have made with their hands,  
and they deny the name of the Lord of Spirits. And they persecute the  
houses of his congregation,  
and the faithful who depend on the name of the Lord of Spirits (46:7–8).

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of *1 Enoch* are the author's, drawn from G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> In 55:4 the "mighty kings who dwell on the earth" are told that they will witness how "my Chosen One" will judge the demon Azazel and his associates.

Thus their sin is both religious and social. They reject the authority of the God who has given them their kingdom and refuse to pay homage to that God (46:4–5; on this denial, see also 41:2; 45:1; 60:6; 63:7), choosing instead to worship the idols they have fabricated. A function of this hubris is their persecution of the righteous and their unjust use of wealth (46:7). Here “unrighteousness” and “wealth” stand in parallel, while 63:10 speaks of their “unrighteous wealth.”<sup>3</sup> Chapter 52 describes their abuse of God’s created world through their use of metallurgical technology both to refine gold and silver and to forge the weapons of war (see also 65:5–8 regarding the casting of idols). In addition to the “kings” and “mighty,” the author employs the vaguer term “sinners” (38:1–3; 41:2; 41:8; 45:2, 6; 46:4; 50:2; 53:2, 7; 56:8; 60:6; 62:2, 13; 69:27). Their identity is usually vague. In a few of cases, however, they are mentioned in the same breath as the kings and the mighty (46:4; 62:1, 13). Moreover, their sins parallel those of the kings and the mighty. They deny God and God’s judgment (41:2; 45:1–2; 60:6), and they oppress the righteous and lawlessly devour their labour (53:2, 7; cf. *1 Enoch* 103:10–13).

There is also a less visible side to the phenomenal world of evil, namely the activity of the demons, identified in the Parables as Azazel and his hosts, who lead humanity astray, in part through false knowledge (54:1–6; 55:3–56:3; and 67:4–7, a Noachic interpolation). In a list of rebel angels, their revelations include metallurgy, the use of pen and ink, and sorcery (69:6–12; see also 65:6–8, a Noachic interpolation). Reference is also made to the myth of the watchers and the women (69:4–5; see also 39:1). It is uncertain if this myth implies an identification of the kings and the mighty with the offspring of the angels, as seems to be the case in *1 Enoch* 6–11.<sup>4</sup>

Finally there is the issue of some kinds of wrongful death described in 47:1, 2, 4 (“the blood of the righteous”) and in this resurrection passage:

And these measures will reveal all the secrets of the depths of the earth,  
and those who were destroyed by the desert,

<sup>3</sup> For the expression “mammon of unrighteousness” (*newaya ‘ammada*), see also Luke 16:9 Eth. = *mamōna tēs adikias*.

<sup>4</sup> On the three forms of the myth of the rebel angels, see *1 Enoch* 6–11. On Shemihazah and the angels who beget giants and the possible identity of these giants with the Hellenistic kings, see G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 165–70. On Asael the revealer, see *ibid.*, 191–3. On the revelation of the magical arts, see *ibid.*, 197–8.

and those who were devoured by beasts,  
 and those who were devoured by the fish of the sea;  
 so that they may return and rely on the day of the Chosen One,  
 for no one will be destroyed in the presence of the Lord of Spirits,  
 and no one can be destroyed (61:5).

In short, the world in which the author and his audience live is marked by oppression and persecution by those in power and perhaps others who make common cause with them. If we date this text around the turn of the era, or even later into the first century, the persons in question are the Roman generals and triumvirs and perhaps others in the ruling class.<sup>5</sup> It is in response and in contrast to this context of persecution, oppression, and religious hubris, as well death itself, that the author of the Parables presents the ancient seer's account of the other worlds that he has visited.

## 2. THE PLACE OF GOD, GOD'S ENTOURAGE, AND THE RIGHTEOUS AND HOLY DEAD

Heaven would seem to be the "otherworld" par excellence. It is the place of transcendence, far removed from the earth, the residence of God and God's entourage and the place of rest for the righteous and holy dead, who have left the confines and distress of this world. Different from the *Book of the Watchers*, however, with its graphic portrayal of Enoch's progress through belts of fire, walls of hailstones and snow, under its ceiling of shooting stars and lightning flashes, up to the roaring inferno that constitutes the divine throne room (*1 Enoch* 14:8–23), this text describes the architecture and furniture of the heavenly palace or temple in only the most general terms, mainly "dwellings" and "resting places." One has no sense—as one does in *1 Enoch* 14—that Enoch is moving from place to place. Indeed, in the sections that recount Enoch's heavenly visions, there are—different from chapter 14—no verbs of motion, only adverbial references to "there" or "here" or "in that place" and the frequent verb "see." With few exceptions, Enoch's account of what he sees focuses on who is there, and what they are doing, or what is happening to them. Let's follow his account.

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<sup>5</sup> On the dating of the Parables, see G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 254–5.

*The First Parable (chaps. 38–44)*

Enoch’s first parable begins, as the other two parables will, with a prophetic-like oracle about the coming judgment (chap. 38). After a summary of the story of the watchers (39:1–2), Enoch begins the account of his heavenly journeys with an antithetical reference to his ascent:

And in those days a whirlwind snatched me up *from the face of the earth* and set me down *within the confines of the heavens* (39:3).

He has moved from one world to another. Remarkably his first vision begins as

I saw the dwellings of the holy ones,  
and the resting places of the righteous (39:4).

That is, heaven is the place of the righteous dead, who dwell and rest with the righteous and holy angels (v. 5ab), who are interceding for humanity (v. 5cd). The imagery of dwellings and resting places will run like a thread through the Parables. That the righteous dead find rest contrasts with their prior circumstances under the domination of the kings and the mighty who possess the earth. The final tristich of 39:5 employs the metaphor of ever-flowing water:

And righteousness was flowing like water before them,  
and mercy like dew upon the earth;  
thus it is among them forever and ever.

The point of comparison and implied contrast is between the plenteousness of righteousness and the refreshing character of mercy and the oppression of the kings and the mighty. The metaphor may be an interpretation of the refreshing fountain of water in *1 Enoch* 22:2, 9.<sup>6</sup> An abundance of righteousness is present for the righteous. In his next vision, which occurs without movement “in that place” (v. 6a), Enoch sees “the *Chosen One* of *righteousness* and faith,” and before him “the *righteous* and *chosen*” (vv. 6–7). That is, those who are persecuted on earth have and will have their champion in heaven. The “dwelling” (39:7) of the Chosen One is “beneath the wings of the Lord of Spirits” (v. 7a), which seems to imply that he is in God’s throne room, as is also suggested by the fact that Enoch indicates no movement as his

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<sup>6</sup> See also Luke 16:24, about which see Outi Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke’s Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (NovTSup 123; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

visions focus increasingly and explicitly on God's presence: "I blessed him" (39:10); "those who sleep not stand *in the presence of your glory*" (39:12–13); "I saw thousands of thousands...standing *before the glory of the Lord of Spirits*" (40:1); "I looked and *on the four sides of the Lord of Spirits* I saw four figures" (40:2). The portrayal of the Chosen One reiterates the notion of plenteousness expressed in the metaphor in 39:5e–g:

And righteousness did not fail before him,  
nor did truth fail before him (39:7ef).

The four sections in 39:6–8, 9–11, 12–14; and 40:1–10 all depict liturgical activity, expressed in the verbs "praise," "bless," and "exalt" and their respective nouns and/or adjectives. Heaven is where God is properly and unceasingly worshiped by the righteous and chosen, Enoch himself, "those who sleep not" (39:12–13), and the myriads that stand before the throne (40:1). Again this stands in contrast to the earth, where the kings and the mighty have not glorified and praised God (63:2–7), nor acknowledged the authority of the One who gave them kingship (46:5–6), but have put their faith in the gods they have made with their hands (46:7).

After his vision of God's throne and the four archangels, Enoch "saw all the secrets of heaven" (41:1–2). The section appears to be a summary:

There I saw the dwelling places of the chosen,  
and the dwelling places of the holy ones (41:2).

This is a veritable repetition of 39:4, which is also a distich. Then he briefly anticipates the judgment process that will be described in much greater detail in chapters 62–63:

And my eyes saw there all the sinners who deny the name of the Lord of Spirits  
being driven away from there,  
and they dragged them off and they could not remain because of the scourge that went forth from the Lord of Spirits (41:2).

Thus, heaven is the place where judgment is exacted against those who sin on earth. According to chapter 42, heaven is also the dwelling place of Wisdom, which, by contrast, could not find a place on earth. We shall hear more of this in the second Parable.

*The Second Parable (chaps. 45–57)*

After the introductory oracle (chap. 45), Enoch's account takes us once more to the heavenly throne room. Here Enoch sees the one whom he had previously seen under the name of the "Chosen One of righteousness and faith" (39:6). Here he is "the Son of Man who has righteousness" (46:3). The section is introduced with a summary of Dan 7:13–14:

There I saw one who had a head of days,  
and his head was like white wool.  
And with him was another, whose face was like the appearance of a human;  
and his face was full of graciousness like one of the holy angels (46:1).

Thus it is clear that the figure in Dan 7:13 who looks like a human is, in fact, a heavenly being. His close association with God and God's hidden world of righteousness is emphasized in *1 Enoch* 39:3:

This is the Son of Man who has righteousness,  
and righteousness dwells with him.  
And all the treasures of what is hidden he will reveal;  
for the Lord of Spirits has chosen him,  
and his lot has prevailed through truth in the presence of the Lord of Spirits forever.

The reference to his revelation of hidden things again underscores the contrast between the earth from which things are hidden and heaven where all is known and whence will come the knowledge of things hidden. In addition, as we learn in the following verses (46:3–8), his function, different from Dan 7:13–14, is not to rule the kingdoms of the world, but to execute judgment against the rulers of those kingdoms, the kings and the mighty, who have defied God's authority and who

...persecute the houses of his congregation,  
and the faithful who depend on the name of the Lord of Spirits (46:8).

Thus in the heavenly world Enoch sees the agent of God's judgment against those who oppose God and God's people on earth.

Chapter 47 combines elements from *1 Enoch* 8:4–9:11 and Dan 7:9–10. The prayer of the righteous and the blood of the righteous dead ascend to heaven, where the holy ones intercede in their behalf, and where God is seated on his throne, ready to hear what is written in the books of the living. Once again the polarity of heaven and earth is evident.

Blood is shed on earth, but in heaven the angels intercede, the books containing the names of the righteous are read, judgment is prepared, and the holy ones rejoice because the bloodshed is about to cease.

Chapter 46 has introduced the Son of Man, who is "(going) with" the Head of Days (vv. 1, 2) and focuses on the impending judicial function of the Son of Man. In chapter 47 the Head of Days sits down on his throne among the entourage of his holy ones. Chapters 48–49 return to the Son of Man, who is also identified as the Chosen One (Second Isaiah's Servant) and God's Anointed One (from Psalm 2 and Isaiah 11).

The introduction to this scene places it in God's throne room ("in that place") and expands on the metaphor in 39:5e–g, 7ef.

In that place I saw the spring of righteousness, and it was inexhaustible,  
and many springs of wisdom surrounded it.  
And all the thirsty drank from them and were filled with wisdom;  
and their dwelling places were with the righteous and the holy and the  
chosen (48:1).

Again righteousness is inexhaustible and is associated with the Son of Man / Chosen One, as it is in chapter 39. That wisdom exists in heaven has already been mentioned in chapter 42. Its association with the Son of Man has been implied in his revelatory function (46:3) and will be emphasized in 49:2–4. That this scene involves the actual presence of the Son of Man / Chosen One will become explicit in 49:2, but the association is stated already in v 2. Verses 2–4 draw their language from Isaiah 49. The naming (prophetic call) of the Servant of the Lord has become the naming (commissioning) of the Son of Man / Chosen One. Different from Second Isaiah's Servant, he has been named not from his mother's womb (Isa 49:1), but before the creation of the cosmos (*1 Enoch* 48:3, 6). This emphasizes his transcendent character, and also associates him with the figure of Wisdom (Prov 8; Sir 24), just as this verse follows immediately after the reference to the springs of wisdom. Verses 4–7 describe him as the champion and support of the righteous and, more broadly, "the light of the nations." Again the notion of revelation and wisdom appears, here also in connection with the righteous: the one who has been hidden is revealed to the righteous (*1 Enoch* 48:6–7; cf. Isa 49:2, where the Servant is hidden). As the vindicator of the righteous, the Son of Man / Chosen One will also be the judge of their persecutors, the kings and the mighty who possess the earth (48:8–10; 49:4).

The Chosen One’s association with the ideology of the Davidic monarchy is evident in 48:8, 10 and 49:3:

In those days, downcast will be the faces of *the kings of the earth*... (48:8; cf. Ps 2:2).<sup>7</sup>

For they have denied *the Lord of Spirits and his Anointed One* (48:10d; cf. Ps 2:2).

And in him dwell *the spirit of wisdom and the spirit of insight,*  
and *the spirit of instruction and might,*  
and *the spirit of those who have fallen asleep in righteousness* (49:3; cf. Isa 11:2).

Thus, as Second Isaiah’s Servant has become a transcendent figure, language about God’s human king is now associated with the heavenly Son of Man / Chosen One. His wisdom, moreover, is related to his function as judge of the kings and the mighty (49:4ab; see 62:2–3). The section ends by reiterating this heavenly figure’s identity as God’s Servant:

For he is the *Chosen One* in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, according to his *good pleasure* (49:4cd; cf. Isa 42:1).

To summarize: these parts of the second Parable are set in God’s heavenly throne room, where God is preparing the coming judgment that will vindicate the righteous on earth and punish their persecutors. Heaven is the place of copious wisdom hidden from the earth, but revealed to the righteous. The Son of Man / Chosen One, the agent of God’s judgment, is a heavenly figure who has taken on characteristics previously associated with the human Servant of the Lord and the Davidic monarch.

### *The Third Parable (chaps. 58–69)*

Our first peek into the heavenly world in the third Parable occurs in 60:1–6, a fragment associated with Noah rather than Enoch that

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<sup>7</sup> Although the kings and the mighty are often said to possess the earth, this is the only occurrence of “kings of the earth” (see Ps 2:2), although 53:5 comes close: “the kings and the mighty of this earth.” Nonetheless, the exact phrase found in Psalm 2 is striking here in v. 8 in the context of v. 10d.

appears to be an interpolation into the book.<sup>8</sup> Again the Head of Days is enthroned in the midst of his angelic entourage. The transcendence of the scene is so overwhelming that the terrified seer loses control of his kidneys (v. 3). Judgment is about to be unleashed on sinners, while their opposites, the righteous, will enjoy the blessings of God's covenant. Thus, heaven is again the scene of activity that will set right what is wrong on earth.

The second heavenly scene in the third Parable brings us, finally, to the event to which the entire book has been alluding and for which it has been preparing the book's audience, namely, the great judgment (61:6–63:12). The scene opens as the heavenly chorus bursts into a massive paean of praise. The verbs “bless,” “exalt,” “glorify,” and “sanctify” run like a thread through this section, as they did in chapters 39–40.<sup>9</sup> The rationale for this musical extravaganza—described at considerable length and with a good deal of repetition in order to give a sense of its massiveness (61:6–7, 9d–13)—is, finally, the enthronement of the Chosen One, who will judge first of all, the deeds of the holy ones in heaven (vv. 8–9c).

Chapters 62–63 describe the great heavenly tribunal. The Lord commands “the kings and the mighty and the exalted and those who possess the earth to open their eyes and see if they can recognize the Chosen One” before whom they are arrayed (62:1). That is, they are to see in the Chosen One, his clients, the chosen whom they have persecuted.<sup>10</sup> God has seated him on God's glorious throne and has poured upon him the spirit of righteousness that will enable him to judge rightly and to slay the sinners with “the word of his mouth” (62:3; cf. Isa 11:2, 4–5). The sixfold recurrence of “who possess / rule the earth” (62:1, 3, 6, 9; 63:1, 12) emphasizes their oppressive earthly activity, which is about to be requited in the heavenly tribunal. Their helplessness and the pain and terror that seize them and contort their faces (62:3–5, 10; 63:11; see also 48:8) stands in contrast to the oppressive

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<sup>8</sup> On the textual problems here, see G.W.E. Nickelsburg, “Discerning the Structure(s) of the Enochic Book of Parables,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (ed. G. Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 34–7.

<sup>9</sup> The verb “praise” (*sabbeḥia*), frequent in the earlier chapters, does not occur; “sanctify” (vv. 9–12) is the counterpart to the trisagion in 39:12.

<sup>10</sup> For this interpretation, see G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Expanded edition; HTS 56; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 94–5.

power that they had previously exercised (kings, mighty, exalted), and those who had been enthroned now prostrate themselves before the Son of Man and the Lord of Spirits. Those who had been the recipients of petition are now the suppliants (62:9; 63:5–9). Those who had denied God's authority now bless and praise and glorify God (63:1–8). Those who previously wielded the power of life and death are now sent into darkness and retribution (62:10–12; 63:10–11). Their situation has been completely reversed. Moreover, as a mirror image of this, the persecuted righteous will rejoice at this outcome (62:12) and no longer have their faces downcast (62:15), and they will enjoy the Company of God and their champion, the Son of Man (62:13–16).

To summarize: heaven is the place where the final judgment will take place, where the Chosen One, the patron of the chosen who have been persecuted and oppressed on earth, will vindicate them and execute retribution on their persecutors, the kings and the mighty—thus completely reversing their respective situations.

### 3. THE PLACE OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES AND THE METEOROLOGICAL ELEMENTS (41:3–8; 43–44; 59:1–5; 60:11–22)

The Parables' second "otherworld" is also located in the upper reaches of the cosmos. It is the place of the storehouses of the luminaries—the sun, the moon, and the stars, as well as the meteorological elements—the thunders and the lightning flashes, the rain and snow, frost and hail, the mists and the clouds and the dew, and the winds that drive them. It is unclear exactly where these storehouses are located in relation to the throne room of God and dwellings of the righteous. In the first Parable, they are mentioned in immediate juxtaposition to the dwellings of the righteous and the dwelling of Wisdom.<sup>11</sup> In the third parable, Enoch's visit to the heavenly elements constitutes a separate unit whose connection with Noah's account of the heavenly throne room is problematic.<sup>12</sup>

However one resolves this problem, certain motifs tie Enoch's description of this heavenly realm to motifs in his description of the

<sup>11</sup> On the textual problem and the likelihood of a displacement, see idem, "Structure(s)," 28–9.

<sup>12</sup> On the textual problem, see above, n. 8.

heavenly palaces. First, it is a “hidden” (*hebu’*) realm, a place of “secrets” or “hidden places” (*hebu’*) (41:1, 3; 43:3; 59:1, 2, 3; 60:11) that can be known and understood only by revelation—to Enoch in the company of an interpreting angel (43:3; 60:11), and by Enoch to the audience of his book.<sup>13</sup> Second, it is a place of order and of obedience to the Creator. The sun and the moon have their respective storehouses, and the orderly manner in which they follow God’s command constitutes praise to the Creator (41:5–7; see also *1 Enoch* 2:1–5:3). Moreover,

I saw other lightnings and the stars of heaven,  
and I saw that he called them by their names,  
and they listened to him. (43:1)

In 60:11–22 the order of the cosmos is described in a different way with reference to the manner in which the winds are appropriately distributed among the elements (v. 12) and how the elements function in an appropriate manner in relation to one another and “according to x.” It is a realm where everything has its place, literally and figuratively. Third, the heavenly realm is related to humans on the earth, according to the command of God.

The sun (makes) many revolutions for a blessing and a curse,  
and the course of the path of moon is light to the righteous and darkness  
to the sinners (41:8).  
...the voice of the thunder is for peace and blessing, or for a curse  
according to the word of the Lord of Spirits (59:2).  
and all the...luminaries and the lightnings...flash for blessing and for  
satisfaction (59:3).

At another point Enoch sees the motion of the stars according to the number of the angels, which the interpreting angel explains as follows:

The Lord of Spirits has shown you a parable concerning them;  
these are the names of the holy ones who dwell on earth  
and believe in the name of the Lord of Spirits forever and ever (43:4).

That is, there is a correspondence between the holy ones on earth and their patron angels in heaven.

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<sup>13</sup> See J. Ben-Dov, “Exegetical Notes on Cosmology in the Parables of Enoch,” in *Enoch and the Messiah* (ed. Boccaccini), 144–7, who argues that “hidden things” or “secrets” can denote the same thing as “treasures” or “storehouses,” a usage that reflects Isa 45:3.

In short, that part of the hidden realm of heaven that houses the luminaries and the elements has been set in an orderly arrangement, and these elements obey the commands of their Creator—this in contrast to the arrogant defiance of the kings and the mighty and the sinners. In some respects the luminaries and the elements execute God’s blessing on the righteous and God’s curse on the sinners—this in contrast to earth, which is possessed by the sinners, who oppress the righteous. Thus, Enoch’s revelation of the heavenly realm of the luminaries and the elements provides assurance that God is in charge, all evidence on earth to the contrary.

#### 4. EARTH’S DISK BEYOND THE INHABITED WORLD, WHERE JUDGMENT IS PREPARED (52:1–56:4; 64:1–2; 65–68)

In chapters 52–56, Enoch’s narrative moves from the vertical to the horizontal. Apart from the reference to Enoch’s ascent (39:3, repeated here in 52:1 and in chapters 70–71), it is the one part of the Parables where Enoch is associated with verbs of motion: “they had taken me to the west” (52:1b); “and I looked and turned to another part of the earth” (54:1).<sup>14</sup> The section corresponds in part to chapters 17–19 of the *Book of the Watchers*, where Enoch moves on to see the mountains and two different chasms of punishment. Enoch here describes earthly topography that consists of mountains and the valleys that are, by the nature of things, associated with them. He begins with a vision of six mountains (52:2–9). They appear to correspond to the seven mountains in 17:6–9 and 24:2–7, and like its counterparts, the narrative takes the form of vision-seer’s question-angel’s interpretation. The two sets of mountains are strikingly different, however. In the *Book of the Watchers* the six mountains are studded with precious stones and may function as a stepped platform that supports the towering mountain throne of the deity.<sup>15</sup> Here we have only six mountains, whose main characteristics are their veins of precious and base metals. He sees “a mountain of iron, and a mountain of copper, and a mountain of silver, and a mountain of gold, and a mountain of soft metal,

<sup>14</sup> On the Parables’ lack of verbs denoting motion, see M.A. Knibb, “The Structure and Composition of the Parables of Enoch,” in *Enoch and the Messiah* (ed. Boccaccini), 49–50.

<sup>15</sup> See 24:2 of the six mountains, “one on the other”.

and a mountain of lead" (52:2). The text provides two related angelic interpretations of these mountains (52:4; 52:5–9). The second of these reminds us that gold and silver (the possession of the kings and the mighty) are the means by which one can bribe one's way to freedom (52:7; cf. the ironic challenge of 100:12), and iron, bronze, tin, and lead are the material of the implements of the wars waged by the kings and the mighty (52:8). Both interpretations emphasize that the people who control these metals will fall under the wrath of God's judgment as it is executed after the epiphany of God's duly appointed agent.

All of these things that you have seen will serve the authority of his Anointed One, so that he may be powerful and mighty on the earth (52:4).

The language ("powerful, mighty") suggests the object of the judgment: the kings and the mighty and the strong who possess the earth.

All of these will be before the Chosen One like wax before the fire,  
and like water that comes down from above upon these mountains,  
and they will be *weak* before his feet.  
And in those days *none* will save himself either by gold or silver,  
and *none* will be able to flee,  
And there will *not* be iron for war,  
*nor* a garment for a breastplate;  
bronze will be of *no* use  
and tin will *not* be reckoned,  
and lead will *not* be desired.  
All these will be *wiped out* and *perish* from the face of the earth,  
when the Chosen One appears before the Lord of Spirits (52:6–9).

These verses, which amplify aspects of the theophany in 1:4, attributing them to the epiphany of the Anointed One and Chosen One, are shot through with negative rhetoric (see the italics) that underscores the total helplessness and the annihilation of the kings and the mighty.

This is taken a step further in 53:1–7 + 54:2,<sup>16</sup> where alongside these mountains Enoch sees the deep valley where the angels are forging instruments for the punishment of the kings and the mighty. The sequence again follows the order of the *Book of the Watchers* and its form of vision-question-interpretation (18:10–11 + 19:1–2 [there of

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<sup>16</sup> 54:2 has been displaced. The kings and the mighty belong in the first Valley (53:5), not in the next one, which is designated for the rebel angels (54:5).

the rebel angels] after 18:6–9).<sup>17</sup> The section here ends with another allusion to the epiphany of God's agent of the judgment that will not only punish the kings and the mighty, but bring rest to the oppressed righteous (53:7), and with the statement that this valley is also the place of punishment for the kings and the mighty (54:2).

As in the *Book of the Watchers*, Enoch now sees a second place of punishment removed from the first. In the prototype (18:10–11 + 19:1–2 and 18:12–16), the two places relate, respectively, to the rebel angels who mated with mortal women and whose spirits lead humanity astray, and to certain stars that transgressed the commandments of the Lord. Here they pertain, respectively, to the kings and the mighty and to the hosts of Azazel, who lead humanity astray. As in the prototype the form is vision-question-interpretation. In the second valley, "iron chains of immeasurable weight" and bronze chains as well are being forged for the hosts of Azazel. Although reference to iron and bronze as the material of the chains is natural, it is reminiscent of the previous section, where the mountains are said to be under the authority of the Anointed One, and iron and bronze will be of no use to the kings and the mighty. Since the rebel angels have revealed metallurgical secrets (69:6; see also 65:6–8 in an interpolation), the punishment is appropriate. The section in 54:4–6 shows the influence of the tradition in 10:4–6, where Asael is thrown onto jagged rocks and will later be thrown into the burning conflagration. In this section of the Parables, then, Enoch sees a part of the earth, hidden from the inhabited world that is possessed and ruled by the kings and the mighty—a place where final and eternal punishment is being prepared for the kings and the mighty, as well as for the demons who lead humanity astray. Here the metals that provide the instruments of war for the kings and the mighty are being forged into the instruments of punishment for them and their demons. God's hidden world is "other" in that it prepares for the reversal of conditions in the inhabited world.

The second section of the third Parable that treats the parts of the earth apart from the inhabited world is in the Noachic interpolations in chapters 65–68. According to chapters 65–66 Noah must go to the ends of the earth to find Enoch, who forecasts the coming destruction through the flood. Thus it is a hidden place of revelation. In 67:4–69:1,

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<sup>17</sup> On the textual displacement in 18:6–19:2, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 287.

Noah sees the valley near the six mountains and learns of the punishments that await the kings and the mighty as well as the rebel angels.

#### 5. THE TRANSFORMED EARTH, THE PLACE OF ESCHATOLOGICAL BLESSING (45:4–6; 51:1–5; 58:1–6)

The last of the Parables' otherworlds, and perhaps the least obvious, is the earth itself as it will be transformed in the *eschaton*.<sup>18</sup> The notion is present already in most of the earlier strata of *1 Enoch*. In 10:16–11:2, the description of the post-diluvian world in Gen 8:2–9:17 is revised into an eschatological scenario about the everlasting fruitfulness of the earth and the removal of sin and impurity forever.<sup>19</sup> Chapter 25 anticipates an earth on which the righteous will live long lives as did the patriarchs (vv. 4–6).<sup>20</sup> The Animal Vision (chaps 85–90) concludes with the building of a New Jerusalem and the transformation of the human race (90:32–38).<sup>21</sup> At the end of the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (93:1–10 + 91:11–16), we are told that sin will be removed from the earth:<sup>22</sup>

...righteous law will be revealed to all of sons of the whole earth,  
and all the deeds of wickedness will vanish from the whole earth and  
descend to the everlasting pit,  
and all humankind will look to the path of everlasting righteousness.  
(91:14).

Thereafter

the first heaven will pass away...,  
and a new heaven will appear,  
and all the powers of the heavens will shine forever with sevenfold  
brightness (91:16).<sup>23</sup>

The uneschatological *Book of the Luminaries* anticipates “a new creation lasting forever” (72:1). These portrayals of a transformed earth

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<sup>18</sup> In this section I draw on my comments in the relevant section of *1 Enoch 1* and on the findings in my article, “Where is the Place of Eschatological Blessing?” in *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone* (eds. E.G. Chazon, D. Satran and R.A. Clement; JSJSup 89; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 54–63.

<sup>19</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 226–28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 406–7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 449–50.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

(and new heaven) probably reflect Third Isaiah's oracle about a new heaven and a new earth and a New Jerusalem (Isa 65:17–25).<sup>24</sup>

The notion of a transformed earth is explicitly introduced in oracular introduction to the second Parable:

On that day, I shall make my Chosen One dwell among them,  
and I shall transform heaven and make it a blessing and a light forever;  
and I shall transform the earth and make it a blessing.  
And my chosen ones I shall make to dwell on it,  
but those who commit sin and error will not set foot on it.  
For I have seen and satisfied my righteous ones with peace.  
and have made them to dwell in my presence.  
But the judgment of the sinners has drawn near to me,  
that I may destroy them from the face of the earth (45:4–6).

The formulation is clear. God will transform the earth and the heaven over it; the chosen and righteous will dwell on the new earth, and the sinners will be removed from it. The introduction to the third Parable appears to present the same idea:

Blessed are you, righteous and chosen,  
for glorious (will be) your lot.  
The righteous will be in the light of the sun,  
and the chosen, in the light of everlasting life.  
The days of their life will have no end,  
and the days of the holy will be innumerable...  
(there will be) peace for the righteous in the name of the Eternal Lord...  
for the sun has risen upon the earth,  
and darkness has passed away.  
There will be light that does not cease,  
and to a limit of days they will not come;  
for darkness will first have been destroyed,  
and light will endure before the Lord of Spirits,  
the light of truth will endure forever before the Lord of Spirits (58:2–3,  
4b, 5c–6).

Here the sun and its light correspond to the transformed heaven in chapter 45, and "light" is extended to have ethical connotations and is opposed to the removal of the darkness of evil that is the counterpart to the destruction of the sinners in chapter 45. Great length of life corresponds to the same notion in chapter 25 (and 1:6d–9).

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<sup>24</sup> On the wide use of this section of Third Isaiah in *1 Enoch*, see *ibid.*, 57. For its broader use in the literature of this period, see Nickelsburg, "Eschatology (Early Jewish)," *ABD* 2:583–85.

Chapter 51 offers the most concrete description of the transformed earth:

- 1 In those days, the earth will restore what has been entrusted to it,  
and Sheol will restore what it has received,  
and destruction will restore what it owes.
- 5a For in those days, my Chosen One will arise,
- 2 and choose the righteous and holy from among them,  
for the day on which they will be saved has drawn near.
- 3 And the Chosen One, in those days, will sit upon my throne,  
and all the secrets of wisdom will go forth from the counsel of his  
mouth,  
for the Lord of Spirits has given (them) to him and glorified him.
- 4 In those days the mountains will leap like rams,  
and the hills will skip like lambs satisfied with milk;  
and the faces of all the angels in heaven will be radiant with joy,
- 5b and the earth will rejoice,  
and the righteous will dwell on it  
and the chosen will go upon it."

First comes the resurrection, then the judgment presided over by the Chosen One. Then the righteous and chosen will dwell on a transformed (presumably) and lively earth. A resurrection is also mentioned in 61:5 albeit without reference to life on a transformed earth (see above section A).

Taken together, the first three of the passages cited above, attest belief in a transformed heaven and, beneath it, a transformed earth, free of sin and sinners, on which the righteous and chosen will live long, if not everlasting lives. This earth is qualitatively different from and other than the one previously described in the Parables, an earth that is repeatedly said to be possessed by the kings and the mighty and the exalted. This is already hinted at in the introduction to the first Parable:

And when the Righteous One appears in the presence of the righteous,  
whose chosen works depend on the Lord of Spirits,  
and light appears to the righteous and chosen who dwell on the earth;  
where (will be) the dwelling place of the sinners...  
When his hidden things are revealed to the righteous,  
the sinners will be judged,  
and the wicked will be driven from the presence of the righteous and  
chosen.  
*And thereafter, it will not be the mighty and exalted who possess the  
earth,  
and they will not be able to look at the face of the holy,*

for the light of the Lord of Spirits will have appeared on the face of the holy,  
righteous and chosen (38:2–4).

The motifs are familiar: the appearance of the Chosen (here Righteous) One, judgment, light (here of the theophany), the banishment of the kings and the mighty, and the glory of the holy, righteous, and chosen. The negative formulation of the italicized sentence both refers to the present possession of the earth by the kings and the mighty and to the fact that this will no longer be the case; it may also imply that after the judgment it will be the righteous and chosen who will possess the earth. This idea may reflect a text like Psalm 37, where the repeated formulation ((vv. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34) refers to "the land" (rather than the earth) that is now in the hands of the wicked, who oppress the righteous. The same polarity occurs in the Qumran pesher on this Psalm (4Q171).

## 6. SYNTHESIS: OTHER WORLDS BOTH UNLIKE AND LIKE THIS WORLD

### 6.1. *The Portrayal of Other Worlds as a Reflection of, and Response to, the Problems of this World*

If we are to speak of "other" worlds, we must consider how their otherness differentiates them from this world. According to the *Parables of Enoch*, this world is dominated by the kings and the mighty and the exalted who possess the earth. They defy the sovereignty of the Lord of Spirits by worshiping idols, persecuting the houses of his congregation, and otherwise oppressing them; and they have their way by abusing God's creation, using their wealth of gold and silver and employing metallurgical technology to wage war and manufacture idols. Alongside the kings and the mighty are the hosts of Azazel, who have brought into the world the knowledge that spawns violence and magic. And finally there is death itself. For the righteous and chosen, then, this world is a place of darkness and misery.

The author's message is the revelation of hidden worlds that are and will be totally other than this world, indeed where the ills of this world are in the process of being ameliorated and healed. *In heaven*, God's dwelling, the deity receives due praise, the righteous dead rest in peace, wisdom and righteousness abound, and the Chosen One, God's

agent of righteous judgment, stands ready to exact that judgment in behalf of his clients, the chosen ones, and against their persecutors and oppressors. God's Anointed One will take on the kings of the earth. *On the outer edges of the earth*, God's angels prepare the places and instruments of the punishment that will be executed against the kings and the mighty and the rebel angels who brought sin into the world. *In the ethereal regions*, the luminaries and elements are set in their created order and carry out the tasks that Creator has appointed, and they function as agents of God's judgment on earth even now. *In the future*, when the dead have been raised and judgment has taken place, the righteous and chosen will dwell beneath a transformed heaven and *a transformed earth* from which God has banished sin and the kings and the mighty who have possessed it. Thus, the author depicts these other worlds as the polar opposites of the present world and the places where the ills of this world are and will be reversed.

Central to the Parables' world view are the complementary notions of hiddenness and revelation. The author frequently underscores the notion that he has been privy to, and is now transmitting the revelation of "secrets" or "hidden things." These things—these worlds—are hidden from humankind. Until the judgment they will remain hidden to the sinners, but the function of the book is to comfort the righteous and chosen by revealing to them the hidden things that pertain to their salvation. Thus qualitative otherness is not only the very essence of these other worlds, but it is tied to a hiddenness that can be broken through only by revelation to the righteous and chosen now and the sinners in the future, when it is too late. This world view offers certain *structural* and *functional* parallels to that of the later Gnostics, where the revelation of what is hidden separates the good insiders from the evil Outsiders. One particular problem arises as one compares the Parables' other worlds to one another. In 39:5 the dwellings and the resting places of the righteous dead are in heaven with the angels. Other texts suggest that the righteous will live immensely long lives on a transformed earth. We might resolve this conflict by suggesting that those who have died in this sinful world have ascended to heaven, where they will remain, while in the future the righteous will live long on the earth and then ascend to heaven. The problem with this lies in chapters 51 and 61 (and perhaps 62:13–16),<sup>25</sup> which envision a resur-

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<sup>25</sup> "And the righteous and the chosen will be saved on that day; // and the faces of the sinners and the unrighteous they will henceforth not see. // And the Lord of Spirits will

rection of the dead from destructive Sheol and, at least in chapter 51, a long life on earth. We can best explain these alternative scenarios not by attempting to harmonize the differences, but by allowing the author to have expressed in two different ways how God's other worlds will heal the ills of this world.<sup>26</sup>

## 6.2. *The Use and Limits of Imagery and Metaphor in the Book of Parables*

In all four of the Parables' other worlds, a sense of space is very much present; one is aware of setting, of where the seer is and what he sees. The material is heavily visual, whether or not the verb "see" occurs—as it often does. Even when it does not, there are detailed narratives of what Enoch sees. In instances where the seer makes predictions of the future rather than recounting what he sees, the content is graphic and not very different from the descriptions of what Enoch actually sees.

Sometimes the author employs (traditional) metaphors or similes that provide a point of comparison with the world that is familiar to the audience. The springs of righteousness and wisdom flow like water. The heavens comprise the dwelling places or resting places of the angels, of the righteous dead, as well as the dwelling of Wisdom. The luminaries and elements emerge from their storehouses. God and God's vice-regent sit on a glorious throne. At the time of the judgment, the kings and the mighty are terrified and seized with pain like a woman during a difficult birth, and their faces are distorted with shame. In other cases, again sometimes working with traditional motifs, the author describes characters, phenomena, or activities that have counterparts in the familiar world. The Chosen One is God's Anointed, who is appropriately counterpoised to the kings of the earth. The angels function as a heavenly chorus engaged in unceasing day and night liturgical activity,

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abide over them, // and with that Son of Man they will eat, // and they will lie down and rise up forever and ever. // And the righteous and the chosen will have arisen from the earth, // and have ceased to cast down their faces, // and have put on the garment of glory. // And this will be your garment, the garment of life from the Lord of Spirits; // and your garments will not wear out, // and your glory will not fade in the presence of the Lord of Spirits." The passage employs language from Isa 52:1–2 to refer to a resurrection of the righteous dead. It is uncertain, however, whether their glorious garment refers to a transfigured state in heaven or a glorious existence on a transformed earth. The "presenee" of God can denote a cultic place and need not imply heaven; see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 237.

<sup>26</sup> This is my conclusion in "Where is the Place of Eschatological Blessing," 63.

whose content can related to known Jewish liturgies.<sup>27</sup> Other angels function as attendants in the court of the heavenly king. One particular angel serves as Enoch's guide through unknown territory.<sup>28</sup> The mythic world of the six mountains is rich with the metallic ores of the earth, next to which plunges a deep valley in which the kings and the mighty will be punished. In another valley, angels, working like blacksmiths, forge the iron and bronze chains that will bind them when they are thrown into another deep valley and are covered with jagged rocks, until eventually they are hurled into a burning furnace, perhaps like the mouth of an erupting volcano. This use of imagery notwithstanding, in one particular respect, the author is reticent in his use of concrete visual imagery. He gives us very little sense of the architecture and furnishings of the heavenly temple and palaces and of the dwellings and storehouses that are located there. One is never aware of Enoch's movement from one place to another; he is simply "here" or "there" or "in that place." Instead, the seer focuses on the personnel that populate the heavenly realm and their activity, and apart from the deity's hair "like white wool" and the Son of Man's appearance both "like a human" and "like an angel," we have no "physical" descriptions of the heavenly beings. In all of these respects, the Parables differ from their prototype in the *Book of the Watchers*.

## 7. SUMMARY AND SOME FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The author of the Parables depicts (sets of) worlds closely related to one another, both in their similarities and their differences or otherness. His other worlds are, indeed, other than this world—the world in which he and his audience live. These other worlds solve the problems of this troubled world, and yet he cannot describe those other worlds without borrowing imagery at home in this world. On balance, he has far more to say about those other worlds than about this world, and that says worlds about how much this world troubles him.

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<sup>27</sup> Unpublished paper by D. Kudan, "Sabbath Worship in the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71)," presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Washington, D.C.

<sup>28</sup> See also the Book of Tobit, where Raphael acts as a tour guide and interpreter for Tobias.

My discussion raises another question about otherness. In what ways are the Parables similar to, and different from other literature of the period?

1. Do the brief descriptions of the heavenly liturgies reflect knowledge of mystical traditions akin to those in the Qumran Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, in addition to knowledge of more traditional Jewish liturgies?
2. What is the relationship between this text and still other texts and traditions that are normally labelled "mystical?"
3. What indications might there be of oral performance and other aspects of the this-worldly "Sitz im Leben" and social setting in the *Book of Parables*?
4. How might we compare the Parables with other contemporary Jewish apocalypses, and not just its predecessors in the Enochic corpus? This is not simply a matter of rightly distinguishing historical apocalypses from accounts of heavenly journeys, as has been done by the *Society of Biblical Literature* Genres Project (*Semeia* 14 [1979]). Both 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra imply knowledge of descriptions of the heavenly Jerusalem, but do not indulge in such descriptions. Yet they do not simply include historical apocalypses. What leads authors such as these to write disputation dialogues that embody historical apocalypses and imply heavenly journeys, and what leads an author like ours to write what is almost from start to finish a journey narrative? Both deal with the issue of theodicy, but they express themselves generically in very different ways.
5. Is it true to say (as I think it is) that the *Book of Parables* provides the closest contemporary generic parallel to the New Testament Book of Revelation?
6. What hermeneutics were at work as the author of the Parables reworked the traditions that he shaped into his unique literary and theological work?



## THE “OTHERWORLD” AND THE *EPISTLE OF ENOCH*

Loren T. Stuckenbruck

### 1. INTRODUCTION

At first glance, it might not seem that the *Epistle of Enoch* (henceforth *Epistle*) would have a great deal to say about the “otherworld”. At no point does any part of it<sup>1</sup> offer a vision *per se* of post-mortem places inhabited by the dead, whether these dead are “sinners” or those who are “righteous”. Moreover, at no point is anything narrated or described about a heavenly journey during which a seer is permitted to look, for example, at holding places between the time of death and the *eschaton* or, more specifically, at places of punishment, whether in anticipation of the *eschaton* or after final judgement has taken effect.

This does not mean, of course, that the *Epistle* is not concerned with the otherworld. After all, the writer claims, “I have read the tablets of heaven, and I have *seen* the holy books, and I have found what is written in them...” (1 *En.* 103:2, Eth.).<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, cosmology is not the predominant concern of the *Epistle*. Instead, the work is shaped, on the one hand, by repeated

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<sup>1</sup> The following texts, excluding the *Exhortation* (1 *En.* 90:1–10, 18–19) and *Apocalypse of Weeks* (1 *En.* 93:1–10 + 91:11–17) may be assigned to the *Epistle of Enoch*: 1 *En.* 92:1–5 + 93:11–105:2. This description of the textual boundaries shows how misleading many are when facetiously referring to the *Epistle* as consisting of 1 *En.* chapters 91–105, 91–104, or even 91–107. Furthermore, this delineation of the *Epistle* does not necessarily mean that we have to do with a product that ultimately goes back to one author; on the source-critical distinction between the frame of the *Epistle* (1 *En.* 92:1–5 + 93:11–94:5 and 104:9–105:2) and the main body of the work (94:7–104:8), see L.T. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), section B.3 in the “Introduction to the *Epistle*”, though the Interpretation of this distinction differs from those advanced, respectively, by G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 25–26, 426 and G. Boccaccini, esp. *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Essene Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 104–13.

<sup>2</sup> The translation here and remaining citations of the *Epistle* are based on Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108*. Unless otherwise stated, they are based on the older Eth. I recension.

assurances of justice to the righteous and, on the other hand, an almost uncompromising polemic against a group most often designated as “sinners”, upon whom doom and eschatological punishment are pronounced.

This overriding focus on eschatology is formally sustained in the *Epistle* through a series of woe oracles, authorial declarations of knowledge and oaths all directed to the wicked. Over and over again the text declares that these opponents of the righteous will suffer punishment. Since these pronouncements of judgement will be significant to the discussion of the *Epistle*’s perspective on Sheol and life after death below, we take note of the prominent examples in the *Epistle*:

- 94:7 “...they will be overthrown from their entire foundation”  
       “...they will fall by the sword”  
       “...in the judgement they will be quickly destroyed”
- 94:10 “...the One who created you will overturn you...”
- 95:5 “...you will be repaid according to your deeds”
- 95:6 “...you will quickly be destroyed”
- 95:7 “...you yourselves will be delivered over and persecuted by iniquity, and its yoke will be heavy on you”
- 96:6 “...quickly you will become exhausted and dry up...”
- 96:8 “...the day of your destruction comes”
- 97:1 “...sinners will become the (object of) reproach and will be destroyed on the day of iniquity”
- 97:10 “...your wealth will not remain, but will quickly go up from you”
- 98:3 “...they will be destroyed together with their possessions and with all their glory and their honour”  
       “...(in) shame and in slaughter and in great poverty their spirit will be thrown into a fiery furnace”
- 98:9 “...goodness will not find you”
- 98:10 “...you are prepared for the day of destruction”  
       “...you will depart and die”  
       “...you have been prepared for the day of great judgement...”
- 98:11 “...You have no peace.”
- 98:12 “...you will be given into the hand of the righteous ones”  
       “...they [the righteous] will cut off your necks and kill you and will have no mercy on you”
- 98:13 “...graves will not be dug for you”
- 98:14 “...you will have no hope of life”
- 98:16 “...they will have no peace”  
       “...will die a sudden death”
- 99:1 “...you will be destroyed”  
       “...you will not have a good life”
- 99:2 “...they will be trampled upon the ground”

- 99:9 "...they will be destroyed in an instant"  
 99:11 "...you will be slain in Sheol"  
 99:12 "...through it [bitterness] they will be brought to an end"  
 99:13 "...you will have no peace"  
 99:16 "...he [God] will overthrow your glory, and he will bring affliction into your heart"  
 "...he will arouse the spirit of his anger in order to destroy you all with the sword"  
 100:4 "...the Most High will rise on that day (of) judgment in order to execute the great judgement among all sinners"  
 100:7 "...you will be recompensed according to your works"  
 100:8 "...fear will find you"  
 "...there will be no one to help you"  
 100:9 "...in the blaze of a flaming fire you will burn"  
 100:11 "...every cloud and mist and dew and rain he [God] will make to witness against you, for they will all be withheld from you, so that they do not descend upon you"  
 "...they will call your sins to mind"  
 100:13 "...in those days you will not be able to endure before them [frost, snow]"  
 101:3 "...you will have no peace"  
 102:3 "...you sinners are cursed forever"  
 "...you will have no peace"  
 103:7 "...they will bring their spirits down to Sheol"  
 "...evils will come upon them"  
 "... (their) suffering (will be) great"  
 103:8 "...in darkness and in a snare and in flames which burn your spirits will enter into the great judgement"  
 "...you will not have any peace"

These pronouncements relate to a future which is sharply distinguished from the present order of things. A comparison with other Enochic tradition (see below), however, raises the problem: *when*, according to the writer, will these pronouncements become reality? Is there a single answer or are there multiple answers to this question? Or, to what extent does this represent a misleading line of inquiry, especially if one considers the possibility that the pronouncements should rather be interpreted collectively and read for their cumulative effect (i.e. that the wicked will be exposed and punished) and less for clues about a chronology of events?

One way of approaching the issue raised above is, however, to return to the primary question of this paper: What does the otherworld of the dead look like in the *Epistle*? If there is very little in the document that describes the world outside of earthly life in the present, to what extent

do the text traditions that preserve the *Epistle* (in Ethiopic, Greek and Aramaic) provide us with clues from which to draw inferences? How does the eschatology of the *Epistle* relate to and reflect an understanding of the world which the writer(s) assumed?

In the discussion to follow, I would like to argue that, to a significant degree, the cosmology of the *Epistle* was based on its reception and adaptation of an earlier Enochic seer's vision of places for the dead in the *Book of Watchers*, especially as described in *1 Enoch* chapters 21–22. After a comparison between the earlier and later Enochic traditions, we shall then consider how the religious and social climate underlying the *Epistle* may have affected its cosmology.

## 2. THE *BOOK OF WATCHERS* CHAPTERS 21–22: A SUMMARY

Here we may remind ourselves of the Enochic seer's vision of the abodes for the dead in the *Book of Watchers*. From the outset, we should acknowledge that in the *Book of Watchers* the descriptions of places inhabited by the dead are closely bound up with a concern with places of punishment to be carried out against evildoers. In *1 Enoch* 17–36, Enoch's visions occur during the course of two journeys through the cosmos. In the first journey, chapters 17–19, the patriarch claims to have been shown<sup>3</sup> the contours and organisation of the cosmos.<sup>4</sup> Initially he sees a mountain; the positions of the luminaries, the stars and meteorological phenomena; the waters of life and a river of fire flowing into a sea in the west; chambers for the winds and how they affect the earth and heavens; the foundations of the earth; and the paths of angels (17:1–18:5). This is followed by a vision of seven

<sup>3</sup> The extant Dead Sea Aramaic fragments preserving the *Book of Watchers* often describe the seer's activity in the visions as passive. Though in some instances the verbs for Enoch's seeing can be in the active voice (i.e. *pe'al* חזית; so the 4QEn mss. to 13:8; 22:5; 31:1), the causal passive forms predominate: אַחְצִיאת ("I was shown"—31:2; 32:1, 3; 34:1 and possibly 14:4), אַדְבִּיקֶת, ("I was brought near"—14:10), אַחֲלַפֶת and אַעֲבִרֶת ("I was brought over"—cf. 32:2, 3), אַוְבִּלֶת, ה/ו ("I was brought"—23:1; 36:2), and אַרְחֶקֶת ("I was removed"—30:1; 32:2). The translations into Greek and Ethiopic and the later parts of the *1 Enoch* corpus (e.g. *1 En.* 103:2) display a strong tendency to make the seer the subject of the action (e.g. "I saw", "I went", etc.).

<sup>4</sup> For a welcome thoroughgoing study of Enoch's first journey, see K. Coblenz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: "No One Has seen What I Have seen"* (JSJSup, 81; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 159–274.

mountains, three to the east and three to the south, with the seventh at the centre (18:8; cf. 17:2). Just beyond these mountains, probably to the south, the seer is given to see a "deep abyss with pillars of celestial fire" (18:11).<sup>5</sup> It is beyond this abyss (probably even further to the south) that there are places of punishment for "the stars and the heavenly hosts... which transgressed the commandment of the Lord" by not keeping to their appointed times in the sky (18:14–15). As the text bears out, these burning stars have been bound (or imprisoned) in the abyss "until the time of their punishment comes to an end: ten thousand years" (18:16). These stars are identified as the fallen angels who defiled women (18:16–19:1; cf. 6:1–8:3 and 10:9–15); although they stay in the abyss assigned for their punishment, their spirits continue to corrupt humanity by leading them into idolatry.<sup>6</sup> The first journey ends with the seer claiming (19:3) that he was alone among humankind to have seen all these things.

The second journey opens with a list of the seven angels and their functions (ch. 20:1–8), followed by a second description, resumptive of 18:11–16, of the places of punishment of the wayward stars and the fallen angels who, unlike the account in the first journey, are distinguished into two separate groups. On the one hand, seven of the prominent stars are hurled down and bound into "a chaotic and horrible place" for ten thousand years because they have violated "the commandment of the Lord" (21:3, 6; cf. 18:16). On the other hand, there is a "more terrifying place" (21:7, 9) which is "the prison of the angels" where "they will be imprisoned for all time" (21:10).

<sup>5</sup> Following here and below for the *Book of Watchers* the translation of D.C. Olson, *Enoch: A New Translation* (Waco, Texas: Bibal Press, 2004), 51.

<sup>6</sup> Similarly, it is the spirits of their offspring, the giants, which attack humanity and bring them sorrow and destruction (15:8–16:1). Concerning the ongoing influence of the rebellious angels and their progeny amongst writers of the Second Temple period, see e.g. L.T. Stuckenbruck, "The 'Angels' and 'Giants' of Genesis 6:1–4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation: Reflections on the Posture of Early Jewish Traditions," *DSD* 7 (2000): 354–77 (esp. the treatment of the *Book of Giants* and the Dead Sea Scrolls materials); P.S. Alexander, "The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls", in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Comprehensive Assessment* (eds. P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1998–99), 1.331–53; and H. Lichtenberger, "Qumran and the New Testament", in *The Changing Face of Judaism, Christianity, and Other Greco-Roman Religions in Antiquity* (eds. I.H. Henderson and G.S. Oegema; Studien zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit 2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 103–29.

At this point, beginning with chapter 22, the vision of Enoch's second journey moves away from the southern places of punishment to the west where there is a high mountain. Here the vision focuses more specifically on the world inhabited by the souls of dead humanity. Enoch is shown four separated rooms or caverns where "the spirits of the souls of the dead" have their abode (22:1-3). Of these four rooms, one is bright and three are dark. Enoch is told that the chambers are holding cells until the time of final judgement. The groups assigned to these four chambers are as follows. The first chamber is inhabited by spirits of the righteous dead (22:9), and it is from there that the spirit of Abel raises a lament against his brother Cain until the latter's offspring are completely destroyed (22:5-7).

The other three chambers of the vision are inhabited by different classes of sinners. The second room is reserved for sinners who had not been punished during their lives, but are being set apart to undergo pain "until the great day of judgement" when they will be scourged and tormented as "those forever accursed". Both the Ethiopic and Greek versions emphasize the retribution that will come "on their spirits" and that they will be found for eternity (22:10-11).

In the third room, it is less clear exactly who is there; its inhabitants are called "the spirits of those who have a complaint to present and disclosures to make concerning their destruction, when they were killed in the days of the sinners" (22:12). While this is one of the three "dark" chambers (cf. 22:3), it is not as obvious that those who dwell there are "sinners". Nor is there anything to suggest that these are the spirits of the righteous, even though the text states that "they were killed in the days of sinners".<sup>7</sup>

The fourth and last of the chambers is once again—as the second—for "sinners". The inhabitants are described as those who are "allied with the lawless ones", that is, with the group dwelling in the second chamber.<sup>8</sup> They too undergo punishment in this chamber but do not suffer as badly as the "lawless ones" and, in addition, will not suffer anything worse at the time of the final judgement (22:13).

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<sup>7</sup> It is possible that the *Epistle*, based on this text and an ironic interpretation of Deut. 28, applies the imagery to the righteous who complain about the unjustness of their maltreatment (1 *En.* 103:14-15).

<sup>8</sup> In the *Epistle* this language of calumny is applied to those who have helped or given aid to the sinners (1 *En.* 97:4; 100:4; cf. 99:10 and 104:6).

We may summarise the four holding places for the dead as follows: chamber one has the spirits of the righteous; chamber two has the spirits of "the sinners"; chamber three has an unclassified group who were murdered during the time of "the sinners" (of chamber two); and chamber four has a class of "sinners" who, because they had colluded with the wicked (of chamber two), were guilty but not to the same degree. While these caverns are holding places between the time of death and the great judgement, chambers two and four, which are inhabited, respectively, by the two classes of sinners, are permanent (22:11, 13). As is well known, the *Book of Watchers*, then, clearly distinguishes between an initial post-mortem existence and an ultimate state of things that follows "the Great Day of Judgement" (22:4, 11, 13).

As a whole, the *Book of Watchers*—if we include chapters 10, 12–16, 17–19 and 20–21—is concerned with transgressors of three kinds: the rebellious angels, their progeny i.e. the giants, and human beings (whether they have been corrupted by the angels and giants or who are simply described as "sinners"). Though some interpreters have interpreted the angels and giants as codes for notorious evildoers or regimes in the human world,<sup>9</sup> it seems more appropriate to me to recognise that the *Book of Watchers* itself is able to speak of human evildoers alongside the malevolent activities of mythological figures. Therefore, the writers and editors of these traditions did not regard the angelic and gargantuan evildoers as *merely* codes for reprehensible forms of culture ushered in through the influence of particular groups of people (Hellenizers, for example), but deliberately retained the mythological dimension of evil, regarding it (and not humans themselves; cf. *1 En.* 10:21–22!) as the more ultimate cause of sin, violence and suffering in the world. With respect to punishment and afterlife, the cosmology of the *Book of Watchers* reflects a concern to take each of the classes of transgressors into consideration and to ensure that they will all be held to account.

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<sup>9</sup> Most widespread are the explanations by G.W.E. Nickelsburg and D. Suter. Nickelsburg discerns behind the activities of the angels and giants the conflicts between and influence of the *diadochi* in the aftermath of Alexander the Great; see his "Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977): 383–405 and *1 Enoch I*, 170. Suter has argued that the giants (cf. *1 En.* 10:9) in the text are representative of wayward priests; see his "Fallen Angels, Fallen Priests," *HUCA* 50 (1979): 115–35. For a detailed account of allusions to the *Book of Watchers* in the *Epistle*, see Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch* 91–108, section B.4 in the Introduction to the *Epistle*.

### 3. THE *EPISTLE*: A COMPARISON OF 102:4–104:8 WITH THE *BOOK OF WATCHERS*

As noted at the outset, the *Epistle* does not describe any places of the place of post-mortem existence. However, near the end of the document, an Enochic writer engages in a discourse (102:4–104:8) that focuses on four classes of people in the following order: the dead righteous (102:4–103:4), the dead sinners (103:5–8), the living righteous (103:9–15; 104:1–6) and the living wicked (104:7–9; cf. 103:9–11). In several general aspects, the *Epistle* adheres to the worldview of the *Book of Watchers*. First, like the *Book of Watchers*, the *Epistle* adopts the distinction between the eschatological state of things and the intermediate conditions in which the dead reside. Second, both works share the view that humans survive into post-mortem existence in the form of “souls” or “spirits”. Third, the *Epistle* retains from the *Book of Watchers* the problem of sinners who die without being punished for the deeds they have committed. These similarities, in addition to a number of more specific verbal allusions, establish the influence of the *Book of Watchers* upon the *Epistle*.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the departures taken in the *Epistle* may be expected to reveal something about the particular problems with which its author was concerned. Before engaging in a comparison with the *Book of Watchers*, we briefly consider each of the four groups in the *Epistle*.

First, the writer opens with an address to the righteous dead (102:4–103:4). The writer regards them as being in need of encouragement, and so exhorts them at the beginning and the end of the passage not to be fearful (102:4; 103:4). The reason for the discouragement of the righteous is that even after death, they cannot discern that justice is at work on their behalf: both their souls and those of the wicked have descended into the “darkness” of Sheol “in sadness” and “anguish” (102:5, 7, 11). Correspondingly, and similar to the *Book of Watchers*, the sinners are described as those who have not experienced any divine judgement while alive (102:10; cf. 22:10). Already, however, we see how the *Epistle* develops ideas that go beyond what is found in the *Book of Watchers*.

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed account of allusions to the *Book of Watchers* in the *Epistle*, see Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108*, section B.4 in the Introduction to the *Epistle*.

(a) Formally, the problem of divine justice is communicated very differently. In the *Book of Watchers* the need for justice against the wicked is exemplified by the complaint in the first chamber by Abel against his brother Cain (22:7). Divine justice, then, is the punishment and destruction of Cain's descendants. In the *Epistle* the problem of theodicy is more acute: after death, the lot of the righteous and sinners is seemingly undifferentiated; this dilemma is not only put into the mouths of the dead sinners (102:5–7), but is even a point conceded by the author himself (102:9–11). Divine justice in this case is declared by the Enochic seer himself who claims that he has been given special revelation regarding what is written in "the tablets of heaven". This disclosure gives him the warrant to pronounce that "all good and joy and honour" will come to the righteous and that they will be given "many and good things" (103:3), a promise that will be in effect for "all the generations of eternity" (103:4).

(b) Another difference has to do with how the dead souls of the righteous and wicked relate to one another. The *Book of Watchers* states nothing about the awareness souls in one chamber may have of those who inhabit another; the inhabitants of each chamber are destined for an outcome that depends on the manner they have conducted their lives on earth. In the *Epistle*, however, the words attributed to the wicked in 102:5–7 presume a certain degree of social awareness amongst all the dead. On the one hand, the observations about the righteous by the wicked (102:5–7) assume that the latter know something about the post-mortem existence of the righteous (cf. Luke 16:23, where this idea is more explicitly developed) and, on the other hand, the righteous know what the wicked are saying about them (102:4). This shift in the *Epistle* again reflects the writer's wish to underscore how acute the problem of divine justice has become for his readers.

(c) The *Epistle's* acknowledgement that rewards and punishments for the righteous and sinners are not yet manifested immediately after death looks even more problematic given the further emphasis in the work that these are postponed until the time of the final judgement itself.

The second category addressed by the seer is the dead sinners, who are denounced by a "woe-oracle" (103:5–8). Again, the problem articulated is not only that the sinners went unpunished during their lives (103:6), but also that the sinners have lived happy lives (103:5) and therefore, on balance, have come out better than "the righteous". As in the previous passage (102:5–11), the text presumes, without offering

further description, the same equality of lot between the righteous and wicked in their respective post-mortem states. Any real separation or even physical compartmentalization between the groups does not occur at this stage. Whereas, however, the preceding address to the righteous in (103:1–4) might lead one to expect that the separation will happen at the great judgement, the writer's emphasis ends up being slightly different: closer to the *Book of Watchers* at 22:11,<sup>11</sup> the text specifies that the wicked will experience "evil and great tribulation" and be "in darkness and in nets (or chains) and a flaming fire", and *it is in this state that they will be brought to the great judgement* (103:8; cf. 99:11). Whereas *now* the souls of the righteous and the sinners are not distinguished, the souls of the wicked, even *before* the great judgement, will begin to suffer for the misdeeds they have committed.

As just seen from 103:8, the punishments to be suffered by the sinners will involve "snares" (or "nets", perhaps "chains") and "flaming fire". Neither of these details is mentioned in relation to the four chambers described in the *Book of Watchers* (22:1–14). Significantly, however, the image of "snares" in which the sinners shall be held (103:8) is reminiscent of the bound and imprisoned state of the wayward stars and rebellious angels described in *Book of Watchers* chapter 21 (cf. vv. 3, 10; cf. what is said about the binding of disobedient stars in 18:16).<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the "fire" in the *Book of Watchers* is the image of punishment reserved for the stars and fallen angels (18:6, 11, 13, 15; 21:3, 7). Not even in the "accursed valley" (27:1–5) into which all the wicked will be gathered for punishment<sup>13</sup> is there any mention of punishment or judgement by fire. This comparison underlines the emphasis of the *Epistle* on the degree to which the impious opponents of the righteous are held to account. Motifs of punishment associated in the received Enochic tradition with demonic forces are now

<sup>11</sup> This is less clear from the translation of the Eth. II recension of M.A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 2.111. See esp., however, Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch I*, 300 and 308, who distinguishes for *1 En.* 22:11, between what happens "here"—i.e. "great torment", "scourges" and "torture"—and "there" when the spirits of the sinners are bound forever.

<sup>12</sup> For the motif of the binding or imprisonment of the fallen angels, see also *1 En.* 10:4, 11–12; 14:5; 88:1; *Book of Giants* at 4Q203 8.14–15; cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 713–36.

<sup>13</sup> The passage has *human* sinners in view, describing them as those "who speak with their mouths against the Lord, using inappropriate language, uttering hard words against his glory" (27:2).

applied to "the sinners".<sup>14</sup> This is an interpretive move within Enochic tradition that was also happening in *Animal Apocalypse*, in which the fiery judgement includes the blinded sheep alongside the fallen stars and seventy shepherds (90:24–27).<sup>15</sup> Here, if the writer's mention of fire reflects the influence of the *Book of Watchers*, it is significant that precisely "the sinners" of the book are given the punishment reserved for heavenly beings held responsible for the introduction of sin into the cosmos. Such an interpretive move accords with the *human* origin and responsibility for sin in the *Epistle* (cf. 98:3–7).

The third class of addressees are the righteous who are still alive (103:9–104:6). The section in which the living righteous feature opens with a speech put into their mouths in the form of a complaint that catalogues the ways in which they have suffered at the hands of "the sinners" (103:11; cf. v. 15). Drawing on language borrowed largely from Deut. 28, the righteous utter deep disappointment that they are being made to suffer the terrible things that should be happening to those who are disobedient to the covenant (e.g. Lam. 5:1–22; Deut. 31:17b). The complaints of the living are even more detailed than those of the (righteous) dead in the *Book of Watchers* who have suffered at the hands of the giants (9:4–11; cf. 22:5–7, Abel's complaints against Cain). The injustices of their present experience run counter to what the writer of the *Epistle* has been promising will be inflicted upon the wicked when they are judged.<sup>16</sup> The irony of the suffering of the pious receives further emphasis in the conditions attributed to the wicked who flourish at their expense. Instead of comforting the righteous by affirming the grounds of their complaint, the writer actually rejects what he regards as a mistaken presumption behind their speech: the living righteous ones are mistaken when they correlate their present misery with the purposes of God. Rather than openly telling them they are mistaken, however, the writer refutes their perspective by speaking out on their behalf, declaring in 104:1–6 that their ultimate state will be angelic (104:2, 6). The complaint of the pious expresses a categorical weariness with the present life in which nothing

<sup>14</sup> This holds elsewhere in the *Epistle*: On punishment of the wicked by fire, see 98:3; 100:7, 9; and 102:1.

<sup>15</sup> Less clear is whether this happens in the *Exhortation*, since it is difficult to determine whether the text of 91:9 refers to the destruction by fire of the wicked or of their idols.

<sup>16</sup> Compare, for example, the yielding by the righteous of their necks in 103:12 with 98:12 and their failure to find any place of safety in 103:13 with 97:3 and 102:1.

testifies that divine justice is actually at work. Of particular interest for the present discussion is the author's introduction of another class of the wicked: the righteous state that they complained "to the rulers" about those who were oppressing them. These authorities are faulted because they did not listen to their cries for help and, instead, gave support to their opponents by hiding and refusing to remember their misdeeds (103:13–15). The passage in 103:9–15, which levies the charge of a miscarriage of justice, contrasts with the divine hearing given to the souls of murdered humanity in the *Book of Watchers* (cf. 8:4–9:11; 22:5–7).

Taken together with the lack of justice in the initial phase of post-mortem existence of Sheol described in the earlier passage addressed to the righteous dead (102:4–11), the terrible circumstances experienced by the pious press the author to find an *eschatological* resolution (cf. 103:5–8 and 104:1–6). Here, a consideration of the *Book of Watchers* allows for two further observations:

(a) The final, angelic, state of the righteous extends beyond what is promised them in passages from *Book of Watchers* which describe the *eschaton* in terms of inheritance of the earth, bliss and unprecedented reproductivity (cf. 5:6b–9; 10:17–19, 21). If we consider the discourse of 102:4–104:8 as a whole, the notion of a future angelic state exposes an important nuance regarding the post-mortem distinction between the righteous and the sinners: whereas the author anticipates that the reward of the righteous will happen at the very end (i.e. after eschatological judgement), the crimes of the sinners are so heinous that their punishment can be brought forward, even to an undisclosed time *before* the final judgement is carried through (103:7–8). Thus, while the *Book of Watchers* also refers to some degree of affliction for the sinners before the final judgement (22:11), in the *Epistle* this motif has received even more emphasis.

(b) The identification of authorities who are unable to carry out divine justice and co-operate with "the sinners" is an expansion of the group assigned to the fourth chamber described in the *Book of Watchers* (22:13). In that fourth chamber, there dwell those who are "allied with the lawless ones" of the second chamber; as those who have cooperated with "the sinners", they are "sinners" to the second degree.<sup>17</sup> In

<sup>17</sup> For the *Epistle* particular interest in vilifying "companions of sinners", see also 97:4 and, by inference, 104:6.

both the *Epistle* and its Enochic predecessor this second class of sinners is not as bad as the first, but still subject to judgement. The *Epistle*, however, does not speculate on how these merciless authorities will fit into the post-mortem world; rather, the writer's disappointment with them reflects his view that the solution to the plight of his pious community lies not within the present order of things, but rather wholly in the eschatological activity of God on their behalf.

The fourth class of addressees are the sinners who are still alive (104:7–8). The substance of what the living sinners say is a resumption of the attitude attributed to them throughout the *Epistle*: they suppose they will not be held to account for their misdeeds. To this claim the writer responds that all the sinners' deeds are not only recorded "every day", but also the cosmos itself—in the form of corresponding contrasts between light and darkness, and day and night—bears witness against them (cf. 98:6–8 and 100:10–11). Here nothing is said about the other or post-mortem world as such. However, the problem addressed is the same as that with which the author began the discourse in 102:4–103:4: the sinners, even after death, seem not to be suffering punishment for what they have done.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In a number of ways, the *Epistle's* discourse with the four classes of addressees is shaped around and grows out of the paradigmatic passages of the *Book of Watchers*. First, if the *Book of Watchers'* account of the four chambers does not place an emphasis on describing the reward to be embodied by the righteous, the *Epistle* streamlines afterlife into very clear and distinct *eschatological* outcomes for the righteous (who will become like angels) and the wicked (who will be punished by fire), respectively.

Second, in comparison to its Enochic predecessor, the *Epistle* may be said to 'demythologise' the tradition about fallen angels and wayward stars. The *Book of Watchers*, to be sure, recounts both the complaints of the souls of those who were killed by the gargantuan offspring of the rebellious angels in 8:4–9:11 and the complaints of Abel against Cain and Cain's descendants in 22:5–7. In the *Epistle*, however, the complaints of the righteous (both dead and alive) are continuously raised against "the sinners", that is, those who according to the text (103:9–15; cf. 94:6–7, 8; 95:4–7; 96:4–8; 97:7–10; 98:9,11–99:2;

99:11–16; 100:7–9; 103:5–8) have oppressed, murdered and subjected the righteous to shame. Symbolic of this shift of focus away from the demonic to the human sphere is the motif of judgement by “fire”, which as we have seen is applied in the *Book of Watchers* to the disobedient stars and fallen angels, while in the *Epistle* “fire” becomes the lot of “the sinners” who have caused the righteous to suffer. The comparison shows how much the mythological account about the origin of evil has been recast and applied to the opponents of the writer’s righteous community: *they* (the opponents) are, in effect, demonised while the stories about the fallen angels—who are nowhere openly mentioned in the *Epistle*—function mainly, if not exclusively, as paradigms for the manifestations of evil with which the author’s pious community is more directly confronted. In this respect, the cosmology of the *Epistle* comes much closer to that of the Wisdom of Solomon (2:1–5:23)<sup>18</sup> or even Ben Sira,<sup>19</sup> documents whose authors likewise focused primarily on the *human* manifestation of evil.

Third, and following on from our reference to Ben Sira, the writer of the *Epistle*, despite being so indebted to the *Book of Watchers*, seems to have an ambivalent view of dream visions as a means through which revelation is conveyed. See, for example, *1 Enoch* 99:8–9a, in which the sinners, who become wicked “through the foolishness of their heart” (Eth.; omitted in Greek by homoioteleuton), “will become blinded by the fear of their heart and through the vision of their dreams” through which “they will become wicked”. While the writer is critical of the opponents here, his reaction against them diminishes what he is willing to take over from the Enochic tradition that he otherwise reveres. Similarly, Ben Sira maintains that dreams “give wings to the foolish” (ἐνύπνια ἀναπτεροῦσιν ἄφρονας) they are like elusive shadows and wind, they are empty, they are a projection of one’s own proclivities, they lend themselves to fantasizing (φαντάζεται καρδία “the

<sup>18</sup> On the likelihood that the *Epistle* influenced the Wisdom of Solomon, in particular *1 En.* 102:4–104:8 on Wisd. chapters 2–5, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, esp. 516–17 and 519.

<sup>19</sup> For an important comparison and contrast between ideas in the *Epistle* and Ben Sira, see R.A. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of Themes of Revelation, Creation, and Judgment* (SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 8; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) and “Competing Wisdoms: *1 Enoch* and *Sirach*,” in *The Origins of Enochic Judaism: Proceedings of the First Enochic Seminar, University of Michigan, Sesto Fiorentino, Italy June 19–23, 2001* (ed. G. Boccaccini; Turin: Zamorani, 2002), 169–78.

heart fantasizes"), and "have deceived many" (πολλούς...ἐπλάνησεν; Sir. 34:1–8). If there is any polemic against the early Enochic in Ben Sira, it is possible that the *Epistle*, in drawing on a similar polemic aimed against "the sinners", studiously avoids recounting a "tour" or "vision of heaven", perhaps as this would have played into the hands of those critical of Enochic tradition for that reason.

In the end, the ideas of the *Epistle* are deeply indebted to and rooted in the earlier Enochic traditions that inspired it. However, in playing down the openly mythological dimensions of evil and heavenly journeys of the latter, the writer(s) of the *Epistle* not only shaped received traditions in service of vilifying "the sinners" but also made them more contemporary, that is, able to take into account criticisms of the revered tradition that were already being circulated during the early part of the 2nd century BCE.



## THE OTHERWORLD IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

John J. Collins

“Whether life is for ten years or a hundred or a thousand, there are no questions asked in Hades,” wrote Ben Sira in the early second century B.C.E.<sup>1</sup> Sheol, the Hebrew counterpart of Hades, was the dark and gloomy underworld to which small and great alike were consigned.<sup>2</sup> This was the traditional biblical view of life after death. By the time of Ben Sira, however, it was already in dispute. When Qoheleth, who should also be dated to the Hellenistic period, close to the time of Ben Sira,<sup>3</sup> asked “who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?” he was most probably challenging the emerging belief in a more meaningful life after death.<sup>4</sup> Such beliefs first emerge clearly in Judaism in the early apocalyptic literature, in the books of Enoch and Daniel. While they were not universally accepted in Judaism, they certainly became more widespread in the following centuries. Some such views are widely attested and even taken for granted in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

But if the dead no longer went to Sheol, or at least did not remain there indefinitely, where did they go? Later apocalypses would provide elaborate answers to that question, usually specifying a special heavenly location for the righteous. The wicked too were often thought to have their place of punishment in the heavens, although eventually they would be consigned to a hell in the netherworld.<sup>5</sup> But in the

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<sup>1</sup> Sir 41:4.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Job 3:11–19. See P.S. Johnson, *Shades of Sheol. Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 76.

<sup>3</sup> T. Krüger, *Qoheleth* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 19–21.

<sup>4</sup> Qoh 3:21. See the discussion by S.L. Adams, *Wisdom in Transition. Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions* (JSJSup 125; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 120–27; L.G. Perdue, “Wisdom and Apocalyptic: The Case of Qoheleth,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition* (ed. F. García Martínez; BETL 168; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 257.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. in 3 *Baruch*, the first two heavens are occupied by those who built the tower of strife against God, and those who gave counsel to build it. Hades appears as a monster that drinks from the sea in the third heaven. In 2 *Enoch* 8–10 both the paradise of the just and the punishment of the damned are located in the third heaven. See further

pre-Christian period, the topography of the afterlife was still unclear, and the Scrolls give surprisingly little information on the subject.

### 1. THE BEATIFIC AFTERLIFE IN THE APOCALYPSES

At the outset, it may be well to recall the ideas about the afterlife that the Scrolls inherited from the earliest apocalypses, those of Enoch and Daniel. George Nickelsburg has recently provided a very helpful review of the evidence.<sup>6</sup> The *Book of the Watchers*, in *1 Enoch* 22, famously speaks of four hollow places under a mountain where the dead are separated into various groups to await the final judgment.<sup>7</sup> But these are not their final abodes. Some of the unrighteous, who are godless and companions of the lawless, will not be raised from their subterranean abode, but the rest presumably will be raised.

We are not told explicitly where the final abode of the righteous will be.<sup>8</sup> A few chapters later, Enoch is shown a mountain whose peak is like the throne of God, where God will sit "when he descends to visit the earth in goodness" (25:3). This is apparently Jerusalem (cf. the house of God in vs. 5), although it is also reminiscent of Mt. Sinai. At the time of the judgment, the tree of life will be transplanted "to the holy place, by the house of God," and "its fruit will be food for the chosen" (25:5). "Its fragrances (will be) in their bones and they will live a long life on the earth such as your fathers lived also in their days" (25:6). Nickelsburg notes that the fates of both righteous and wicked are reminiscent of Isaiah 65–66, which speaks of a new creation in terms that are very this-worldly. He cautions, however, that it is

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M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell. An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983); R.J. Bauckham, "Early Jewish Visions of Hell," *The Fate of the Dead. Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 49–80; idem, "Visiting the Places of the Dead in the Extra-Canonical Apocalypses," *ibid.*, 81–96.

<sup>6</sup> G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "Where is the Place of Eschatological Blessing?" in *Things Revealed. Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone* (eds. E.G. Chazon, D. Satran and R.A. Clements; JSJSup 89; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 53–71.

<sup>7</sup> G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1. A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 300–9; M.-T. Wacker, *Weltordnung und Gericht: Studien zu 1 Henoch 22* (Forschungen zur Bibel 45; Würzburg: Echter, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> Nickelsburg, "Where is the Place," 55.

uncertain whether the “long life on earth” is promised to the righteous dead or only to those who are alive at the time of the judgment. Likewise in the *Animal Apocalypse* (1 Enoch 85–90) the judgment scene is played out in the land of Israel. A new “house” (new Jerusalem) is built, and all the “sheep” that were destroyed or scattered are collected in it (90:33). This is often taken as a reference to resurrection, but in any case the only place of salvation envisioned is around Jerusalem. The *Apocalypse of Weeks* speaks of transformation of this world and the building of a temple, but in the tenth week, when the final judgment is executed, the first heaven will pass away and a new heaven will appear. Again the text is not explicit as to what happens to the righteous dead, but it only speaks of salvation in this-worldly terms.

Neither the *Book of the Watchers* nor the *Apocalypse of Weeks* nor the *Animal Apocalypse* says anything about an angelic afterlife for the righteous. Its silence in this regard is all the more remarkable since it is said of Enoch that “his works were with the watchers and with the holy ones were his days” (12:2), and his ascent to heaven, in contrast to the descent of the Watchers, is taken as paradigmatic for the righteous in the later tradition. We do, however, find the afterlife of the righteous associated with the angels in the *Epistle of Enoch*. There the righteous are assured that “you will shine like the luminaries of heaven; you will shine and appear, and the portals of heaven will be opened for you...for you will have great joy like the angels of heaven...for you will be companions of the host of heaven” (104:2, 4, 6). Since the *Apocalypse of Weeks* is embedded in the *Epistle*, it is arguable that the hope for individual exaltation to the angelic realm complements the hope for a transformed earth.

This would also seem to be the case in the roughly contemporary Book of Daniel, where the wise teachers are said to shine like stars after the resurrection, and this should probably be interpreted in terms of assimilation to the angels, as in the *Epistle of Enoch*.<sup>9</sup> But the hope for an everlasting kingdom on earth is also maintained in Daniel: “the kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High. Their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them” (Dan 7:27). Neither Daniel nor the

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<sup>9</sup> J.J. Collins, *Daniel. A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 393–4.

*Epistle* is very explicit as to the precise location of the exalted righteous, but in view of the astral imagery it is clearly heavenly.

The idea of heavenly immortality is further developed in the *Similitudes of Enoch*: "I saw there another vision—the dwellings of the holy ones and the resting places of the righteous. There my eyes saw their dwellings with his righteous angels and their resting places with the holy ones. And they were petitioning and interceding and praying for the sons of men" (39:4–5). Other passages speak of the righteous dwelling on a transformed earth, even after the resurrection (51:1–5). At the end of the *Similitudes*, however, Enoch ascends to heaven, and is either identified with the heavenly Son of Man, whom he has seen in his visions, or identified as being like that heavenly Son of Man.<sup>10</sup> He is told that all who walk in his path will not be separated from him: "with you will be their dwelling and with you their lot," presumably in heaven (71:16).

The *Similitudes* are not attested at Qumran, but the authors of the Scrolls were certainly familiar with the idea of heavenly, angelic immortality, from Daniel and the *Epistle of Enoch*. They were also, of course, familiar with the idea that the resurrected would live on a transformed earth.

## 2. THE FATE OF THE WICKED

The fate of the wicked is described somewhat more consistently in the early apocalypses. According to *1 Enoch* 22, the wicked who have not been subjected to judgment in their lifetime will suffer "scourges and tortures of the cursed forever" (22:11). Later, in chapter 27, Enoch is shown a "cursed valley" that "is for those who are cursed forever." This is apparently "Gehenna", the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, which had been the scene of human sacrifice in earlier times.<sup>11</sup> "Here they (the wicked) will be gathered, and here will be their habitation in the presence of the righteous for all time" (*1 Enoch* 27:2–3). This brings to mind Isa 66:24, which already refers, implicitly, to Gehenna as a place of punishment of the wicked: "And they (the

<sup>10</sup> See J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 179–81.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Kgs 23:10; 2 Chron 28:3; 33:6; Jer 7:31; 19:4–9; 32:35. See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 319. On Gehenna, see further L. Bailey, "Gehenna. The Topography of Hell," *BA* 49 (1986): 187–91; D.F. Watson, "Gehenna," *ABD* 2: 926–8.

righteous) shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” The passage in Isaiah does not imply that the wicked will remain alive to experience the torture, but in the *Book of the Watchers*, Gehenna is their dwelling, and they are presumably immortal. The name Gehenna for the place of post-mortem punishment is only attested from the first century C.E. and later.<sup>12</sup>

1 *Enoch* 27 does not associate Gehenna with fire, but that association was already well established. The Topheth in the valley of Hinnom existed for the purpose of burning children as sacrifices to Molech.<sup>13</sup> Isaiah uses the Topheth as a metaphor for the coming punishment of Assyria: “The Topheth has long been ready for him; he too is destined for Molech—his firepit has been made both wide and deep, with plenty of fire and firewood, and with the breath of the Lord burning in it like a stream of sulfur.”<sup>14</sup> If the place of punishment of the damned was understood by analogy with the valley of Hinnom, it would inevitably be a fiery place.<sup>15</sup>

A significant step towards the development of Hell as it is known in later tradition is taken in the judgment scene in the *Animal Apocalypse* in 1 *Enoch* 90:20–27. There not only are the stars, or fallen angels, thrown into the fiery abyss, but also the seventy shepherds, or guardian angels of the nations, and, most significantly, all “blinded sheep” who were found to be sinners. These are sinners who belong to the Jewish people. The abyss is “to the south of that house” (90:26) and is evidently identified with Gehenna. The association with Gehenna accounts for its fiery character.

The *Book of the Watchers* has another tradition about a fiery place of punishment. In chapters 18–19, and in a parallel passage in chap-

<sup>12</sup> Matt 5:22; 10:28; Mark 9:43–48; Luke 12:4–5; 4 Ezra 7:36; 2 Bar 59:10; 2 *Enoch* 40:12; 42:1; *Sib Or* 1:1031 2:292; 4:186. See O. Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke’s Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (NovTSup 123; Leiden: Brill, 2007) 271–5. T. Moses 10:10 is often emended to read “Gehenna”, but the manuscript reads “earth” (J. Priest, “Testament of Moses,” in *OTP* 1.933, note g).

<sup>13</sup> J. Day, *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); G.C. Heider, *The Cult of Molech* (JSOTSup 43; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985).

<sup>14</sup> Isa 30:33. For the reading of Molech see J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 423.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 108: “The fiery associations of Gehinnom precede its development into hell.”

ter 21, Enoch sees a terrible place, with a narrow cleft to the abyss, full of great pillars of fire, and he is told that this is the prison of the fallen angels. It is located at "the edge of the great earth," where "the heavens come to an end" (18:10). Beyond this he sees another prison for the stars and the hosts of heaven, where the stars are rolling over in the fire (19:14–15; 21:1–5). It is not clear whether these are two distinct prisons, or rather two descriptions of the same place.<sup>16</sup> Nickelsburg notes that this prison bears remarkable similarity to the description of Tartarus in Hesiod's *Theogony*, 713–48. Tartarus too is a great deep gulf at the ends of the earth, near where Atlas upholds the heavens.<sup>17</sup> The Greek text identifies Uriel as the angel "who is in charge of the world and Tartarus" in 20:2, and the prison of the fallen angels is called Tartarus in 2 Peter 2:4, so the similarity to Tartarus was perceived already in antiquity. Tartarus, in Hesiod, is also a prison for fallen demi-gods, as in the *Book of the Watchers*, not for human beings.<sup>18</sup> Tartarus, however, is not fiery. Greek tradition knew of fiery punishment for some people in the afterlife in Pyriphlegethon, a fiery river in Hades.<sup>19</sup> According to Plato, parricides and matricides are carried by Pyriphlegethon from Tartarus to the Acherusian lake, but this is a temporary stage in their torment.<sup>20</sup> Lucian, in the second century CE also refers to Pyriphlegethon and fiery punishments, but even there fire is not an especially prominent form of punishment.<sup>21</sup> Enoch also refers to "the river of fire" in *1 Enoch* 17:5, but does not associate it with punishment.<sup>22</sup>

The final place of punishment of the Watchers is also described as "the fiery abyss" in *1 Enoch* 10:13. We are also told that "everyone who is condemned and destroyed henceforth will be bound together with them until the consummation of their generation." The abyss, in short, is Hell, where condemned human beings may also be sent. In the *Epistle of Enoch*, too, the wicked are destined for a fiery nether-

<sup>16</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 288.

<sup>17</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 286–7, followed by K. Coblenz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19. "No One Has Seen What I Have Seen"* (JSJSup 81; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 129–31.

<sup>18</sup> Bautch, *A Study of the Geography*, 134.

<sup>19</sup> S. Eitrem, "Phlegethon, Pyriphlegethon," *PWRE* 20.1 (1941): 258–60.

<sup>20</sup> *Phaedo*, 114.

<sup>21</sup> Lucian, *Menippus*, 10,14; *True Story*, 2.30–1; *Funerals*, 3.8. See Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 111.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the river of fire that issues from the throne of the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:10. J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy* (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 133–42.

world: "Know that down to Sheol they will lead your souls; and there they will be in great distress, and in darkness and in a snare and in a flaming fire" (103:7–8). It is not clear that the place of punishment in these cases is specifically Gehenna. A stronger case for identification with Gehenna can be made in *1 Enoch* 54:1–2, where Enoch sees "a deep valley with burning fire," which is the place of punishment for the Watchers and for the kings and the mighty.

Apart from the Jewish traditions about the valley of Hinnom, possible precedents for the fiery abyss can be found in the Egyptian *Book of Gates* and *Book of Am-Tuat*, which refer to fiery pits where the enemies of Osiris are cast.<sup>23</sup> In the Egyptian books the punishment is not everlasting, but leads to quick destruction.<sup>24</sup> The *Book of the Watchers* also seems to envision eventual annihilation, but the emphasis is on long-lasting punishment. The Egyptian books date from the second millennium, and it is not clear whether or how they might have influenced the Enochic writings. It may be that the idea of fiery punishment in the afterlife was extrapolated from the model of Gehenna, even when the fiery abyss was located at the end of the earth and associated with Tartarus. But in any case, the idea of fiery punishment under the earth is attested with remarkable consistency in the early Enoch literature.

The fate of the wicked is less explicit in the Book of Daniel. Some will rise "to shame and everlasting contempt." Here again, Isaiah 66:24 appears to be in view, and so the valley of Hinnom is again in the background. The shame and contempt arise from being on display in their humiliated condition. Daniel, however, does not discuss the location of the damned, and does not speak of a fiery abyss.

### 3. THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The books of Enoch (excepting the *Similitudes*) and the book of Daniel were preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls in multiple copies, and their views on the afterlife were presumably known to the authors of the sectarian scrolls. The most explicit and systematic expression

<sup>23</sup> J. Zandee, *Death*, 133–42. See E. Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1999), 26–53 (Amduat) and 55–76 (the Book of Gates).

<sup>24</sup> A.E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell. Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1993), 15–16.

of beliefs about the afterlife in the Scrolls is found in the *Instruction on the Two Spirits* in *Serek-ha-Yahad*. The *Instruction* is not found in all copies of the *Serek*, and is no doubt an independent composition. Some scholars regard it as an older, pre-sectarian, composition,<sup>25</sup> but it lends itself remarkably well to sectarian ideology.<sup>26</sup> Its account of the afterlife accords well with what we find in other sectarian scrolls.

The description of the ways associated with each spirit ends with an account of their "visitation" (פקודה). Émile Puech has argued that this term, in this context, refers to the divine visitation on "the day of the Lord," at the end of history.<sup>27</sup> The word clearly can be used in this way. For example, in 1QS 4:19 we are told that "God has determined an end to the existence of injustice, and at the appointed time of the visitation he will obliterate it forever."<sup>28</sup> But the word does not necessarily always have this nuance. In some cases it refers to the retribution that awaits an individual or group, regardless of the time of the visitation.<sup>29</sup> The visitation of the "sons of light" is partly in this life ("plentiful peace in a long life"). Nothing is said of an intermediate state, such as we find in 1 Enoch 22, or of resurrection for a final judgment. In the cases of both the sons of light and the sons of darkness, however, retribution ultimately extends into the afterlife.

#### 4. THE FATE OF THE DAMNED

The continuity with the Enochic literature is most readily evident in the fate of the wicked:

<sup>25</sup> So e.g. A. Lange, *Weisheit und Prädestination. Weisheitliche Urordnung und Prädestination in den Textfunden von Qumran* (STDJ 18; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 127–8.

<sup>26</sup> D. Dimant, "Qumran Sectarian Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (ed. M.E. Stone; CRINT 2/2; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 533, regards it as the most thorough elaboration of the general world view of the sect.

<sup>27</sup> É. Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future: Immortalité. Résurrection, Vie Éternelle?* (ÉtB; Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 434.

<sup>28</sup> Compare references to the time of visitation in 1QS 3:18; CD 8:21; 19:10, 11.

<sup>29</sup> J. Duhaime, "La doctrine des Esséniens de Qumrân sur l'après-mort," in *Essais sur la Mort. Travaux d'un Séminaire de Recherche sur la Mort* (G. Couturier, A. Charron & G. Durand; Héritage et Projet 29; Montreal: Fides, 1985), 106; J.J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 116–7. E.J. Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning for the Understanding Ones. Reading and Reconstructing the Fragmentary Early Jewish Sapiential Text 4QInstruction* (STDJ 44; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 205–6, cautions that the word is not always eschatological.

And the visitation of all those who walk in it will be for an abundance of afflictions at the hands of all the angels of destruction, for eternal damnation by the scorching wrath of the God of vengeance, for permanent terror and shame without end, with the humiliation of destruction by the fire of the dark regions. And all the ages of their generations (they shall spend) in bitter weeping and harsh evils in the abysses of darkness until their destruction, without there being a remnant or a survivor among them (1QS 4:11–13).

The expression “dark regions” (מחשכים) is used for Sheol several times in the Hebrew Bible: Pss 74:20; 88:7; 143:3; Lam 3:6). The idea of fire in the dark abyss we have seen develop in the Enoch literature, where it characterized the place of punishment of the Watchers, at the end of the earth, and also the accursed valley of Gehenna. Shame and humiliation were associated with the exposure of the bodies of the damned in Gehenna. The idea that the wicked will eventually perish without remnant or survivor is found also, less emphatically, in *1 Enoch* 10:14. The *Instruction* goes beyond the Enochic literature in emphasizing the role of the angels of destruction, as torturers of the damned. Essentially the same view of the fate of the damned is found in the *Damascus Document*, column 2: “strength and power and a great anger with flames of fire by the hand of all the angels of destruction against those turning aside from the path and abominating the precept, without there being for them either a remnant or survivor” (CD 2:5–7).<sup>30</sup> Also the curses of the covenant in 1QS 2:7–8 invoke the threat of “the gloom of everlasting fire.” Even if the *Instruction on the Two Spirits* is regarded as an older work, the prediction of fiery torments for the damned is clearly taken over in works that are explicitly related to the new covenant of the sectarians.

Other texts from Qumran consign the wicked to the Netherworld without mention of fire. According to 4QBerakot<sup>a</sup>, 4Q286 7 ii 4–5, the spirits of Belial are “the lo]t of darkness, and their visitation (will lead) to the everlasting pit.” The passage goes on to mention “angels of destruction,” and “destruction without remnant.” In 4Q280 1.3, Melki-resha is cursed: “May God [hand you over] to terror by the hand of those carrying out acts of vengeance...[be cursed] without a remnant, and be damned, without salvation.” His followers are likewise accursed. In these cases, the mention of angels of vengeance or

<sup>30</sup> For the parallels between this passage in CD and 1QS 4, see Lange, *Weisheit und Prädestination*, 242.

destruction suggests a scenario similar to what we find in the *Serek ha Yahad* and in the *Damascus Document*. Other fragmentary references to consuming fire can be found in 1QM 14:17–8 and 4Q491 8–10 17.

The *Hodayot* speak more simply of Sheol or Abaddon (1QH<sup>a</sup> 11:19), which at least once is characterized by mud (1QH<sup>a</sup> 11:32), as we might expect from traditional ideas of the underworld as a watery place.<sup>31</sup> In 1QH<sup>a</sup> 11: 19–36, the fiery torrents of Belial break into Sheol, but this imagery is rather different from the fiery abyss of the apocalypses. We should not expect consistency in the imagery of poetic texts. The wisdom text 4QInstruction, which may not be a sectarian composition but is in any case closely related, tells the foolish:

You were fashioned [by the power of G]od, but to the everlasting pit shall your return be. For it (the pit) shall awaken to condemn you[r] sin... And those who will endure forever, those who investigate the truth, shall rouse themselves to judge y[ou]. And then,] will all the foolish-minded be destroyed, and the children of iniquity shall not be found anymore (4Q418 69 ii).<sup>32</sup>

Puech has argued repeatedly that “those who investigate the truth” are resurrected human beings, and translates “destined for eternity” rather than “who endure forever.”<sup>33</sup> (The Hebrew is עולם נהיה). By analogy with other passages we have seen, however, the reference is more likely to be to the angels of destruction or vengeance, who afflict the wicked in the afterlife.<sup>34</sup> 4QInstruction does not refer to fiery punishment in the Netherworld, with a possible exception of a reference to Resheph in 4Q418 127 3, and even there fire is no more than one torment among many.<sup>35</sup>

The idea of fiery punishment in the Netherworld, then, is not uniform in the Scrolls, but it is found in a significant cluster of texts,

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, *Shades of Sheol*, 114–24; T.J.Lewis, “Dead, Abode of the,” *ABD* 2: 102–3.

<sup>32</sup> Trans. J. Strugnell and D.J. Harrington, *Qumran Cave 4. XXIV. Sapiential Texts. Part 2* (DJD 34; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 283.

<sup>33</sup> É. Puech, “Les fragments eschatologiques de 4QInstruction (4Q416 I et 4Q418 69 iis 81–81a, 127),” *RevQ* 22 (2005): 89–119, esp. 99, 101. So also T. Elgin, *An Analysis of 4QInstruction* (Diss. Hebrew University, 1997), 113–7.

<sup>34</sup> So Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34: 286. See J.J. Collins, “The Mysteries of God. Creation and Eschatology in 4QInstruction and the Wisdom of Solomon,” in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism* (ed. García Martínez), 294–5.

<sup>35</sup> Puech, “Les fragments eschatologiques,” 106; cf. Strugnell and Harrington, *DJD* 34: 359.

including *Serek ha Yahad* and the *Damascus Document*. A more traditional view of Sheol survives in the *Hodayot*, but the hymnist does not focus on the fate of the damned, and it may be hazardous to infer his cosmological beliefs from his poetic compositions.

## 5. THE REWARD OF THE BLESSED

The “visitation” of the children of light presents more problems: “healing and great peace in length of days, fruitfulness of seed with all everlasting blessings, everlasting joys in eternal life, and a crown of glory with majestic raiment in everlasting light” (1QS 4:6–8). “Healing” (מרפא) is used in parallelism with שלום in Jer 8:15; 14:19, and as part of the eschatological effect of “the sun of righteousness” in Mal 3:20. The *Book of the Watchers* speaks of the restoration of the earth after the desolation caused by the Watchers as “healing,” while the *Epistle of Enoch* speaks of the “healing” of those who have suffered (96:3) on a more personal, individual, level. *Jubilees* speaks of both “healing” and “peace” in the context of cosmic renewal (1:29), but also in the context of the eschatological transformation of human life on earth (23:29–31). It should be noted that in *Jubilees* 23 it is said of those who experience this eschatological “healing” that “their bodies shall rest in the earth, and their spirits shall have much joy.” “Healed” life on earth is not necessarily immortal, and it is not necessarily the final form of life experienced by the elect. The same might be said of “great peace in length of days,” which again is a this-worldly blessing, not necessarily the final state. Similar language is used in the *Hodayot* with reference to the present condition of the psalmist (1QH<sup>a</sup> 17:25).

The expression “fruitfulness of seed” (פרות זרע) has caused much controversy, because of the common assumption that the community described in the *Serek* was celibate. Fruitfulness is a common blessing in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 49:25; Exodus 23:36; Deut 7:13; 28:4; 30:9; Isa 49:20; 53:10), as we might expect in a culture where immortality was achieved through progeny. Similarly, in *1 Enoch* 10:17 we are told that “all the righteous will escape, and they will live until they beget thousands.”

Wernberg-Møeller regards the expression here as figurative, and comments that “the idea of plenty of progeny is so common in Jewish eschatological speculations...that it is reasonable to believe that

our community took over this idea, quite irrespective of whether they practiced marriage or not.”<sup>36</sup> Robert Leaney, in contrast, says that “the impression remains...that the reward of the righteous is in part this-worldly.”<sup>37</sup> That is at least the *prima facie* impression made by this passage, although the possibility of metaphorical usage cannot be excluded.

Some of the other features, however, suggest a transcendent life that surpasses earthly experience.

The children of light are promised everlasting joys in eternal life (שמחת עולמים בחיי נצח). Puech rightly sees a parallel here to Dan 12:2, where the phrase is חיי עולם.<sup>38</sup>

A crown of glory (usually עטרת rather than כליל) is a symbol of honour in the Hebrew Bible. In Psalm 8:5, humanity is crowned with glory and honour, as an indication of being only a little lower than אלהים. In 1QH<sup>a</sup> 17:25 the scoffing of an enemy is transformed into a crown (כליל) of glory.

It can also have an eschatological connotation. According to Wis 5:15–16, “the righteous live forever, and their reward is with the Lord...Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord.” In Rev 2:10, a crown of life is a reward for fidelity unto death.<sup>39</sup> Similarly in 1 Peter 5:4 it is a reward given when “the chief shepherd” appears in judgment.

Majestic raiment (מדת הדר) may be illustrated from the transformation of the righteous on the day of judgment in 1 Enoch 62:15–16: “And the righteous and the chosen will have arisen from the earth, and have ceased to cast down their faces, and put on the garment of glory. And this will be your garment, the garment of life from the Lord of Spirits; and your garments will not wear out, and your glory will not fade in the presence of the Lord of Spirits.”

In the later apocalypse of 2 Enoch, when Enoch ascends to heaven the Lord instructs the archangel Michael to “take Enoch, and extract (him) from the earthly clothing. And anoint him with the delightful oil,

<sup>36</sup> P. Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline. Translated and Annotated with an Introduction* (STDJ 1; Leiden: Brill, 1957), 79.

<sup>37</sup> A.R.C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and its Meaning* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 152. Duhaime, “La Doctrine des Esséniens,” 107, questions whether the passage refers to the afterlife at all.

<sup>38</sup> Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens*, 435. Cf. also 1QH<sup>a</sup> 5:23, “everlasting peace and length of days.”

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Rev.3:11.

and put (him) into the clothes of glory" (2 *Enoch* 22:8). The oil, we are told, is "greater than the greatest light" When Enoch is clad in his new garments, he tells us: "I gazed at all of myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference." In the words of Martha Himmelfarb, "donning such a garment can imply equality with the angels (or better!)."<sup>40</sup> In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13:14, Azazel is told that he cannot tempt Abraham, for "the garment which in heaven was formerly yours has been set aside for him, and the corruption which was on him has gone over to you." These admittedly later parallels strongly suggest that the garment of glory bespeaks a transformed existence like the angels in heaven. Compare also the desire of Paul to put off the "earthly tent" of the body, "because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor 5:4).<sup>41</sup>

"Eternal light" is associated especially with the divine presence. Compare for example 1QH<sup>a</sup> 12:22–23: "you reveal yourself in me... as perfect light." Likewise, 1QS 11:3: "from the source of his knowledge he has disclosed his light."

Wernberg-Møeller has astutely remarked that this whole passage in the *Instruction on the Two Spirits* is indebted to Psalm 21, where the blessings are those enjoyed by the king: "For you meet him with rich blessings; you set a crown of fine gold on his head. He asked you for life; you gave it to him—length of days forever and ever. His glory is great through your help; splendour and majesty you bestow on him. You bestow on him blessings forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence."<sup>42</sup>

It is disputed whether this psalm promises eternal life to the king.<sup>43</sup> If so, the king was considered an exception to the common human lot, but that is quite conceivable. Some of the blessings, the crown, splendour and majesty were commonly associated with royalty. They are

<sup>40</sup> Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford, 1993), 40 suggests that "the process by which Enoch becomes an angel is a heavenly version of priestly investiture."

<sup>41</sup> Cf. also the promise of white robes in Rev 3:5. See further Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens*, 436.

<sup>42</sup> Wernberg-Møeller, *The Manual of Discipline*, 80.

<sup>43</sup> The argument for the immortality of the king has been made by J. Healey, "The Immortality of the King: Ugarit and the Psalms," *Or* 53(1984): 245–54. It is disputed by J. Day, "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. J. Day; JSOTSup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 85–6.

democratized in the Qumran text, but they also take on otherworldly associations in the apocalyptic worldview of the Scrolls.

The final reward of the righteous is also expressed as “the glory of Adam,” in 1QS 4:22–3. The same motif is found in 1QH<sup>a</sup> 4:14–15 and in CD 3:20, which also says that the elect will live for a thousand generations.<sup>44</sup> 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> (4Q171) 3:1–2 says that those who return from the wilderness will live for a thousand generations and that they and their descendants forever will possess all the inheritance of Adam. Crispin Fletcher-Louis has pointed out that Adam was associated with the divine glory qua image of God.<sup>45</sup> A fragmentary passage in the Words of the Heavenly Luminaries, 4QDib Ham, 4Q504 8 4–6 is plausibly reconstructed to read: “Adam,] our [fat]her, you fashioned in the image of [your] glory... [the breath of life] you [b]lew into his nostril, and intelligence and knowledge... [in the gard]en of Eden, which you had planted.”<sup>46</sup> According to the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 Bar 4:16), Adam was stripped of the glory of God after the Fall. *Genesis Rabbah* 20:12 reports that Rabbi Meir read Gen 3:21 to say that God dressed Adam and Eve in “garments of light” rather than garments of skin. But the glory was lost when Adam was expelled from the garden. According to *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 11:3, Adam claimed to be greater than Moses because he was created as the image of God. Moses replied “I am far superior to you, for your glorious light was taken away, but as for me, the radiant countenance that God gave me still abides.”<sup>47</sup> The glory of Adam, then, may coincide with the majestic raiment of light promised in 1QS 4.

The investment with majestic raiment of light, and the glory of Adam, is an eschatological blessing in 1QS 4. Many texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, speak of fellowship with the angels as a present experience for members of the sect. So in 1QS 11:7–8 we read: “To those whom God has selected he has given them as an everlasting possession; and he has given them an inheritance in the lot of the holy

<sup>44</sup> The promise that those who walk in perfect holiness will live a thousand generations is also found in CD 7:5–6.

<sup>45</sup> C. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam. Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 91–5.

<sup>46</sup> Trans. F. García Martínez and E.J. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1009.

<sup>47</sup> See further G.A. Anderson, “Garments of Skin,” in *The Genesis of Perfection. Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (idem; Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 117–34.

ones. He unites their assembly to the sons of the heavens in order (to form) the council of the community and a foundation of the building of holiness to be an everlasting plantation throughout all future ages." Again, in 1QH<sup>a</sup> 11:19–21, the psalmist thanks the Lord "because you saved my life from the pit, and from the Sheol of Abaddon have lifted me up an everlasting height, so that I can walk on a boundless plain. And I know that there is hope for someone you fashioned out of dust for an everlasting community. The depraved spirit you have purified from great offence so that he can take a place with the host of the holy ones, and can enter in communion with the congregation of the sons of heaven." In these and other such passages the fellowship with the angels promised to the righteous after death in the *Epistle of Enoch* and Daniel is said to be enjoyed by the members of the community in the present.<sup>48</sup>

## 6. THE EVERLASTING ABODE

The texts are not very explicit as to where this fellowship takes place. The passage just cited from 1QH<sup>a</sup> is typical in this regard. It presupposes a contrast between Sheol and "an everlasting height." Presumably the psalmist has not actually been in Sheol, so the language is metaphorical. Life on the everlasting height is presumably life in the community. James Davila has argued that the language implies "the closeness of the Community to the heavenly temple and its angelic priesthood."<sup>49</sup>

The main evidence that the fellowship with the angels is focused on the heavenly temple is found in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacri-*

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<sup>48</sup> See H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966); G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1972), 146–56; J.J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 117–23; D. Dimant, "Men as Angels: The Self-Image of the Qumran Community," in *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Near East* (ed. A. Berlin; Bethesda, MD: University of Maryland, 1996), 93–103. The idea of "realized eschatology" in the Scrolls is disputed by Puech, *La Croissance des Esséniens*, 335–419. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 96–7, argues that the references to the glory of Adam also oscillate between present and future experience, but this is not so clear.

<sup>49</sup> J. Davila, "Heavenly Ascents in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years. A Comprehensive Assessment* (eds. P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; vol. 2; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 476.

*fice*.<sup>50</sup> These are compositions for each of thirteen Sabbaths, which call on the angels to give praise and provide descriptive statements about the angels and their praise-giving. They do not give the words of the angels or cite any angelic hymns of praise. We are told that God “has established for himself priests of the inner sanctum, the holiest of the holy ones” (4Q400 fragment 1). They are also called “ministers of the presence in his glorious *debir*.” The angelic priests are depicted as divided into “seven priesthoods,” “seven councils,” and as occupying “seven precincts” (גבולים) in the heavenly temple. The ninth to thirteenth songs appear to contain a systematic description of the heavenly temple that is based in part on Ezekiel 40–48. The final song enumerates the contents of the heavenly sanctuary: “His glorious thrones, and for [His foot]stool, [and for all] His majestic [chariots, and for His ho[ly] *debirim*,...and for the portals of the entrance of [the Kin]g, together with all the exits... [for the cor]ners of its str[uc]ture, and for all the dw[ellings,...] for His glorious temples, and for the firmaments...” (11Q17 23–25 6–9). The heavenly temple is evidently imagined by analogy with the earthly temple, except that no attention is paid to any outer courts. The holy place is an *ulam*, while the holy of holies is the *debir*, which contains the *merkavah* throne. Everything is sevenfold, so there are apparently seven temples.<sup>51</sup> It is not clear how they relate to each other. The text gives no indication of their spatial relationship, and there is no reason to correlate them with 7 heavens. The motif of 7 heavens only becomes common after the turn of the era.<sup>52</sup> While the heavenly temple is described in physical terms, there are also indications that it is a spiritual structure. The doors and entrances are animate, and offer praise as the angels go in and out. The *merkavah* is conceived as a hierarchy of angels, and the wheels, *ofannim*, are taken as an order of angels.<sup>53</sup> Even though the

<sup>50</sup> C.A. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); “4QShirot ‘Olat HaShabbat,” in *Qumran Cave 4. VI. Poetical and Liturgical Texts. Part 1* (ed. E. Eshel et al.; DJD 11; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 173–401; P. Alexander, *The Mystical Texts. Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts* (Library of Second Temple Studies 61; London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 13–61.

<sup>51</sup> R. Eilior, *The Three Temples. On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon: Littman, 2004), 34–44.

<sup>52</sup> A. Yarbro Collins, “The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses,” in eadem, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (JSJSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 21–54.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 54.

Songs provide an exceptionally detailed description of the heavenly temple, they lack the kind of cosmographic realism that we find in the Enoch literature and other apocalypses.

The Songs are recited by the *Maskil*, in the presence of the community members, who are referred to as “we” in the second song, and whose priesthood is compared to that of the angels. In the words of Philip Alexander, “we have here a public liturgy, in which a prayer-leader leads a congregation, who may join him in reciting in whole or in part the words of the hymns. That congregation exhorts the angels in heaven to perform their priestly duties in the celestial temple, and somehow through this liturgical act it feels drawn into union with the angels in worshipping God.”<sup>54</sup> This does not require that the community members are supposed to have ascended to heaven in a spatial sense. As Alexander has argued, “sophisticated Jews in the Second Temple period were perfectly capable of conceiving of heaven as ‘another dimension’ or a parallel universe’, and not literally as ‘up there’.”<sup>55</sup>

While the Scrolls preserved at Qumran include accounts of ascents to heaven by Enoch and Levi, these are found in older works preserved by the sectarians but not authored by them.<sup>56</sup> Only one previously unknown text, which is likely to be of sectarian origin, appears to presuppose an ascent to heaven by a human being who is not an ancient patriarch. This is the so-called “Self-Exaltation” text, which survives, with variations, in several manuscripts: 4Q427 fragment 7, 4Q491c, 4Q471b, and in smaller fragments in 4Q431, which is part of the same manuscript as 4Q471b, and 1QH<sup>a</sup> 25:35–26:10.<sup>57</sup> Two recensions may be distinguished, the shorter form in 4Q491c and the longer in 4Q427 7 and 4Q471b.<sup>58</sup> All copies are very fragmentary.

<sup>54</sup> Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 44. Alexander is following the interpretation proposed by Newsom. Fletcher-Louis has argued that the exhortations are addressed not to angels but to “angelomorphic” humans (*All the Glory of Adam*, 252–394). See the critique by Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 45–7.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 54.

<sup>56</sup> Davila, “Heavenly Ascents,” 461–85, Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 74–92. Davila discusses some other possible cases (Methuselah, Noah, Moses, Melchizedek).

<sup>57</sup> E. Eshel, “The Identification of the ‘Speaker’ of the Self-Glorification Hymn,” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. D.W. Parry and E. Ulrich; STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 619–35; M. O. Wise, “גִּי כְמוֹנִי בְּאֵלִים: A Study of 4Q491c, 4Q471b, 4Q427 7 and 1QH<sup>a</sup> 25:35–26:10,” *DSD* 7(2000): 173–219.

<sup>58</sup> F. García Martínez, “Old Texts and Modern Mirages: The ‘I’ of Two Qumran Hymns,” in *Qumranica Minora I. Qumran Origins and Apocalypticism* (STDJ 63;

The short recension evidently began with praise of God for his marvellous deeds and went on to speak of “a mighty throne in the congregation of the gods,” on which none of the kings of the East shall sit. The Speaker boasts “I am reckoned with the gods, and my dwelling is in the holy congregation,” and “there is no teaching comparable [to my teaching].” He also asks “who suffers evil like me” and boasts that his glory is with the sons of the king (i.e. God). Other striking phrases are found in the other fragments. The speaker is “beloved of the king, companion of the holy ones,” and even asks “who is like me among the gods?” (4Q471b). In 4Q491c this self-exaltation hymn is marked off from the following “canticle of the righteous” by a large lamed, which has been taken to indicate a separate composition. The marker is not found in other copies of the text. The canticle is most fully preserved in 4Q427: “Sing a hymn, beloved ones, to the king... Exalt together with the eternal host, ascribe greatness to our God and glory to our King.” The identification of this figure is controversial. The first editor, Baillet, thought it was an angel, and dubbed the piece “the canticle of Michael.”<sup>59</sup> The late Morton Smith remarked caustically that an angel would not need to boast of being reckoned with the gods. The speaker must be human.<sup>60</sup> The reference to teaching suggests that it is the Teacher of Righteousness,<sup>61</sup> but the tone of the hymn is very different from that of the so-called Teacher Hymns in the *Hodayot*. There is no reflection here on being a creature of clay. On the contrary, the

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Leiden: Brill, 2007), 105–25, esp. 114–8. See also his longer treatment, “Ángel, hombre, Mesías, Maestro de Justicia? El Problemático ‘Yo’ de un Poema Qumránico,” in *Plenitudo Temporis. Miscelánea Homenaje al Prof. Dr. Ramón Trevijano Etcheverría* (eds. J.J. Fernández Sangrador and S. Guijarro Oporto; Bibliotheca Salmanticensis, Estudios 249; Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 2002), 103–31.

<sup>59</sup> M. Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4.III (4Q482–4Q520)* (DJD 7; Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 26–29.

<sup>60</sup> M. Smith, “Ascent to the Heavens and Deification in 4QM<sup>a</sup>,” in *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* (ed. L.H. Schiffman; JSPSup 8/ASOR Monographs, Series 2; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 181–88. See, however, the defence of the identification with Michael by García Martínez, “Old Texts and Modern Mirages,” 122–4. If the 4Q491 form of the text is read in the context of the War Scroll, as García Martínez argues on material grounds, the case for identification with Michael is stronger.

<sup>61</sup> So M.G. Abegg, “Who Ascended to Heaven? 4Q491, 4Q427 and the Teacher of Righteousness,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. C.A. Evans and P.W. Flint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 61–73. This interpretation is also viewed sympathetically by Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 89. Wise, “מי כמוני באלים,” 418, argues that the singular voice is that of the Teacher, but that it is appropriated by the entire community.

speaker boasts that his desire is not like that of flesh. Several other interpretations are possible: the hymn could have been ascribed to the Teacher after his death,<sup>62</sup> or it could be the work of a later teacher,<sup>63</sup> or it might be put on the lips of an eschatological teacher or High Priest, the messiah of Aaron.<sup>64</sup> In support of the latter, we may consider the priestly blessing in the *Scroll of Blessings* (1QS<sup>b</sup> 4:25–26): “May y[ou] attend upon the service in the temple of the kingdom and decree destiny in company with the angels of the presence, in common council...[for] everlasting ages and for all the perpetual periods.”<sup>65</sup> Another interesting parallel is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of God qua High Priest, and is also declared superior to the angels (Heb 1:3–9).

In view of the speaker’s teaching function, Alexander argues that “his sojourn there (in heaven) was clearly temporary.”<sup>66</sup> But it is also possible that the text refers to the post-mortem exaltation of a teacher, or to an eschatological figure which was yet to come. Such an enigmatic text hardly allows us to conclude that there was “an active practice of ascent within the Qumran community.”<sup>67</sup> In any case, the speaker is regarded as exceptional. In the words of Alexander, “he is someone special. His experience of exaltation is not something that anyone can achieve, though he can still lead others into a state of closer communion with the heavenly host.”<sup>68</sup>

Alexander argues persuasively that the multiple attestation, with variations, of this hymn shows that it was in active use in the community. He suggests that “it would see each successive Maskil as

<sup>62</sup> Wise, “מי כמוני באלים,” 418, argues that the redactor who inserted this hymn into the Hodayot meant for the reader to think of the Teacher.

<sup>63</sup> I. Knohl, *The Messiah Before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2000), 52–5, suggests Menahem the Essene, who is mentioned by Josephus.

<sup>64</sup> J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 148; Eshel, “The Identification of the Speaker,” 635.

<sup>65</sup> The precise addressee of this blessing is disputed. See Eshel, “Who is the Speaker?” 633. The fact that this scroll also includes, in col. 5, a blessing for the “prince of the congregation,” that he may “establish the kingdom of his people forever” suggests that the referent here is the eschatological High Priest.

<sup>66</sup> Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 87.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 90. J.R. Davila, “The Hodayot Hymnist and the Four who Entered Paradise,” *RevQ* 17(1996): 457–78, reads the “hymn of the garden,” 1QH<sup>a</sup> 16:4–26, in light of the rabbinic story of the four who entered Paradise, but while the imagery of the hymn evokes Paradise, it does not use language of ascent.

<sup>68</sup> Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 88.

reaffirming the Teacher's experience, and as demonstrating in his own right his fitness to lead the community. And in doing so he would be anticipating the eschatological high priest who would finally and permanently achieve angelic priestly status in all its fullness at the end of days."<sup>69</sup> Michael Wise goes further, based on the juxtaposition of this hymn with the "canticle of the just" that follows it. While he agrees that the text was originally composed to refer to an individual, he suggests that "each member of the user group spoke of himself or herself. At least by the stage of the *Hodayot* redaction, they declaimed in unison and chanted, singing of their singular significance at the behest of a worship leader, the *Maskil*."<sup>70</sup> I would qualify this suggestion. The members of the community who join in praise are not necessarily identifying themselves without remainder with the figure in the hymn. There is an affinity between the congregation and the speaker. Both are called beloved and given a place in the council of the gods. The claims of the speaker in the *Self-Exaltation* hymn, however, are exceptional. He is not only reckoned with the gods, but asks who among the gods can be compared with him. Again, one may compare the exaltation of Christ in Hebrews 1, which is something with which believers can identify to a degree, but without challenging the uniqueness of their exalted model.<sup>71</sup>

Apart from the description of the heavenly temple in the *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*, however, the *Scrolls* are singularly lacking in cosmic geography, of the kind that is common in the ascent apocalypses, such as the *Book of the Watchers*. The authors of the *Hodayot* believed intensely in the participation of the community in the angelic realm, but they do not seem to have imagined human transformation in spatial terms. Rather, as Alexander has suggested, they speak of the angelic world as "another dimension." This peculiarity of otherworldly discourse in the *Scrolls* is most probably to be explained by the sense of immediate participation in the heavenly cult, and in the council of the holy ones. It is related to the preference for language of eternal

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>70</sup> Wise, "מי כמוני באלים," 216.

<sup>71</sup> See further J.J. Collins, "Amazing Grace: The Transformation of the Thanksgiving Hymn at Qumran," in *Psalms in Community. Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical and Artistic Traditions* (ed. H.W. Attridge and M.E. Fassler; SBL Symposium Series 25; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 75–85.

life rather than for that of resurrection,<sup>72</sup> even though the spiritual life also requires some kind of body, a luminous one in the case of the elect and one capable of feeling pain in the case of the damned.<sup>73</sup> There were some precedents for this qualitative understanding of life, or eternal life, in the Psalms and wisdom writings of the Bible, but the discourse of the Scrolls about the other world is quite distinctive in the context of Jewish apocalyptic writings in its lack of attention to heavenly geography.

## 7. EPILOGUE

It is interesting to compare our findings on the views of the other-world in the Scrolls with those that Josephus attributes to the Essenes, in JW 2.154–6. The belief that while bodies are corruptible, souls are immortal, accords reasonably well with what we find in the Scrolls, although Josephus goes on to give a distinctively Greek account of how souls come from fine ether and are imprisoned in bodies.<sup>74</sup> He continues, however:

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<sup>72</sup> For a summary of the debate about resurrection in the Scrolls see G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "Resurrection," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam; New York: Oxford, 2000), 764–67. The main proponent of the view that the sectarian scrolls affirm bodily resurrection is Puech, *La croyance*, supplemented by many essays. For the contrary view, see Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 111–28, and most recently idem, "Conceptions of Afterlife in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Lebendige Hoffnung—ewiger Tod! Jenseitsvorstellungen im Hellenismus. Judentum und Christentum* (ed. M. Labahn and B. J. Lietaart Peerbolte; Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 24; Leipzig: Evangelisches Verlagshaus, 2007), 103–25.

<sup>73</sup> G.J. Brooke, "The Structure of IQH<sup>a</sup> XII 5–XIII 4 and the Meaning of Resurrection," in *From 4QMMT to Resurrection. Mélanges qumraniens en hommage à Émile Puech* (ed. F. García Martínez, A. Steudel, and E. Tigchelaar; STDJ 61; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 15–33, who argues that the hymnists understood resurrection in terms of "beatific illumination, divine knowledge transfer, a standing beyond judgment, divine commissioning, and spiritual experience of physical transformation." Even in the Greek world, the soul was commonly assumed to involve some kind of physical form. See D.B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale, 1995), 104–36, especially 115.

<sup>74</sup> See J.J. Collins, "The Essenes and the Afterlife," in *From 4QMMT to Resurrection: Mélanges qumraniens en hommage à Émile Puech*, (ed. García Martínez, A. Steudel and E.J. Tigchelaar, STDJ 61; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 35–53. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 9.27 attributes a belief in resurrection to the Essenes, and his account is preferred by Puech, *La Croyance*, 703–87. But Hippolytus's account of Essene eschatology corresponds almost exactly to what he says about the Pharisees and about Jews in general. On Josephus's views on the afterlife see now C.D. Elledge, *Life after Death in Early Judaism. The Evidence of Josephus* (WUNT 2/208; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 81–130. *Pace*

Agreeing with the sons of the Greeks, they declare that an abode is reserved beyond the Ocean for the souls of the just, a place oppressed neither by rain nor snow nor torrid heat, but always refreshed by the gentle breeze blowing from the Ocean."

This, of course, does not correspond to what we find in the Scrolls at all. The place where the damned are punished is "a dark pit shaken by storms, full of unending chastisement" This lacks the element of fire, which we find in the Instruction on the Two Spirits and already in the Enoch literature, but the dark pit is quite characteristic of the Netherworld in the Scrolls. Admittedly, such a characterization of the Netherworld was not necessarily distinctive to any one group. Even the Greek Tartarus is characterized by "misty gloom, in a dank place."<sup>75</sup> The claim that the Essenes believed in immortality of the soul but not resurrection of the body is intriguing, in light of the reticence of the Scrolls on the subject of resurrection, and the description of the place of punishment is compatible with the Scrolls, although not distinctive. But the account of the abode of the blest does not correspond to what we find in the Scrolls at all. The discrepancy might be accounted for in various ways. Josephus may be speaking about a different sect.<sup>76</sup> Or he may have adapted his information about the Essenes to make it more accessible to Hellenized readers, or he may have used a source that had already adapted Essene belief to Hellenistic idiom.<sup>77</sup> The choice between these options requires a broader study of the relation between the Essenes and the Scrolls.<sup>78</sup> For the present it will suffice to conclude that the account of the Essenes corresponds only in part to ideas of the other world that we find in the Scrolls.

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Elledge, 91–93, it is unlikely that Hippolytus was independent of Josephus or that the two shared a common source.

<sup>75</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony*, 729–30.

<sup>76</sup> So, emphatically, S. Mason, "Essenes and Lurking Spartans in Josephus' Jewish War: From Story to History," in *Making History. Josephus and Historical Method* (ed. Z. Rodgers; Leiden: Brill, 2006) 219–61.

<sup>77</sup> For an attempt to reconstruct Josephus' sources see R. Bergmeier, *Die Essener-Berichte des Flavius Josephus* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993).

<sup>78</sup> See further J.J. Collins, "Josephus on the Essenes. The Sources of His Information," in Z. Rodgers, with M. Daly Denton and A. Fitzpatrick McKinley, ed., *A Wandering Galilean. Essays in Honour of Sean Freyne* (JSJSup 132; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 57–72.

## THE CHARACTER OF THE CITY AND THE TEMPLE OF THE ARAMAIC NEW JERUSALEM

Eibert Tigchelaar

The title “Aramaic *New Jerusalem*” (henceforth *NJ*) refers to a composition that has been fragmentarily preserved in seven manuscripts found in the Caves at Qumran (1Q32, 2Q24, 4Q554, 4Q554a, 4Q555, 5Q15, 11Q18). Overall, the contents of those manuscripts are known, and accessible in a series of editions and translations,<sup>1</sup> even though we are still waiting for the official publication of the manuscripts from Cave 4.<sup>2</sup> The preserved fragments show that *NJ* was written in accordance with the model of Ezek 40–48: a visionary gives an account of a guided tour through a city and its temple. *NJ* gives architectural details, including the measurements of walls, gates, houses, rooms and windows; the seer reports of the rituals he witnessed in the temple, and of the words the guide spoke to him. In view of the correspondences with Ezek 40–48 and other texts adhering to this model, the guide may be identified as an angel, and the city as some kind of new Jerusalem.

Many of the aspects of *NJ* have been critically discussed by Florentino García Martínez in a series of surveys.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Lorenzo

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<sup>1</sup> See the official editions in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (= DJD) 1:134–35 (1Q32 edited by J.T. Milik), DJD 3:84–89 (2Q24 edited by M. Baillet), DJD 3:183–93 (5Q15 edited by J.T. Milik), DJD 23:305–55 (11Q18 edited by F. García Martínez et al.); the Aramaic text of all manuscripts is most easily accessible, together with translation, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* 6 (ed. Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov; Brill: Leiden, 2005), 38–75.

<sup>2</sup> See now the official publication of 2009 in DJD 37:91–152 (4Q554, 4Q554a, 4Q555 edited by E. Puech), References to fragments and lines have been adapted to the DJD 37 edition, but no other attempts have been made to engage Puech’s DJD edition.

<sup>3</sup> F. García Martínez, “La ‘nueva Jerusalén’ y el Templo futuro en los MSS de Qumrán,” in *Salvación en la Palabra: Targum—Derash—Berith: en memoria del profesor Alejandro Díez Macho* (ed. D. Muñoz León; Madrid: Christiandad, 1986), 563–90, a critical survey of existing scholarship with new solutions for major problems; this survey was revised as “The «New Jerusalem» and the Future Temple of the Manuscripts from Qumran,” in *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (STDJ 9; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 180–213. His contributions to the two major comprehensive works of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship could also incorporate all the Cave 4 and Cave 11 *NJ* materials: “The Temple Scroll and the New

DiTommaso has focused on the Cave 4 *NJ* manuscripts and contested some of the hitherto commonly held interpretations.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I will discuss matters that pertain to the otherworldly character of the new Jerusalem, and respond to some of the issues raised by DiTommaso.

# 1. THE VISIONARY OF THE *NEW JERUSALEM*

The identity of the seer of *NJ* is not mentioned in the preserved fragments of the manuscript. Recently, I argued that the combined evidence of indications in *NJ*, other texts from Qumran, as well as other Second Temple literature, suggests that *NJ*, even though it offers a reinterpretation of Ezek 40–48,<sup>5</sup> might be related to speculations that Jacob saw Jerusalem and the temple during his second stay at Bethel, and that Jacob is the imagined seer of *NJ*.<sup>6</sup> (1) 4Q554 13,<sup>7</sup> a section which will be discussed below, preserves a direct address to the seer, “and they will do evil to your seed,” suggesting that the seer is one of the ancestors of Israel or one of its tribes; (2) virtually all Aramaic texts from Qumran have either an Eastern Diaspora setting (such as, e.g., Tobit, Proto-Esther, Daniel), or a pre-Mosaic protagonist (running from Enoch, Noah, up to Levi, Qahat, and Amram). Therefore, it is unlikely that Ezekiel would be the imagined seer;<sup>8</sup> (3) 4Q537 12

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Jerusalem,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (ed. P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 2:431–60 at 445–60; and “New Jerusalem,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam; New York: Oxford University Press: 2000), 2:606–10. See also the helpful overview by J. Frey, “The New Jerusalem Text in Its Historical and Traditio-Historical Context,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after their Discovery* (ed. L.H. Schiffman et al.; Jerusalem: IES, 2000), 800–16.

<sup>4</sup> L. DiTommaso, *The Dead Sea New Jerusalem Text: Contents and Contexts* (TSAJ 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. F. García Martínez, “The Interpretation of the Torah of Ezekiel in the Texts from Qumran,” in his *Qumranica Minora II: Thematic Studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 64; Brill: Leiden, 2007), 1–12.

<sup>6</sup> E. Tigchelaar, “The Imaginal Context and the Visionary of the Aramaic New Jerusalem,” in *Flores Florentino; Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (ed. A. Hilhorst et al.; JSJSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 257–70.

<sup>7</sup> This fragment was numbered 4Q554 3 in the *Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* 6 and 4Q554 2 in DiTommaso’s book.

<sup>8</sup> For a different classification of the Qumran Aramaic texts, cf. D. Dimant, “The Qumran Aramaic texts and the Qumran Community,” in *Flores Florentino* (Hilhorst et al.), 196–205.

suggests that one of the patriarchs had a vision of the temple and its rituals. On the basis of 4Q537 1+2+3 Milik argued that the manuscript contained visions of Jacob;<sup>9</sup> (4) *Jubilees* 32:20–26 seems to combine two different traditions, namely Jacob reading Israel's future history on the seven tablets, as well as a vision of the temple followed by a prohibition to build the sanctuary;<sup>10</sup> (5) The *Temple Scroll* mentions the eschatological creation of a new temple, "according to the covenant which I made with Jacob at Bethel" (11QT<sup>a</sup> XXIX 8–10); (6) Wisdom 10:10 states that Wisdom "showed him [sc. Jacob] the kingdom of God, and gave him knowledge of holy things."

Also Eric Burrows came to the conclusion that Jacob saw the heavenly temple, but on the basis of Wis 10:10. In a short article, published posthumously in 1939, Burrows (1882–1938) discussed the description of Jacob in Wisdom, and pointed out that "the biblical account of Jacob does not provide a satisfactory explanation of this allusion."<sup>11</sup> He refers to *T. Levi* 9:3 and submits: "I would conjecture that τῶν ἁγίων denotes the heavenly sanctuary (this is exactly the sense of τὰ ἅγια in Heb. IX 12), and that Jacob saw a vision of the heavenly Temple and of the heavenly Jerusalem."<sup>12</sup>

It is not clear how these different texts that allude to Jacob's vision(s) of a temple at Bethel relate to one another. The *Temple Scroll* does not ascribe to Jacob a vision of the temple, *Jubilees* does not mention the temple explicitly, a vision may be implied in 4Q537, and only Wis 10:10 has the two motifs of vision and sanctuary. Does the conclusion in *Jub.* 32:26 "and he (sc. Jacob) wrote down all the matters which he

<sup>9</sup> J.T. Milik, "Écrits préesséniens de Qumrân: d'Hénoch à Amram," in *Qumrân: Sa piété, sa théologie et son milieu* (ed. M. Delcor; BETL 46; Leuven: University Press, 1978), 91–106. The manuscript has been published by É. Puech in DJD 31:171–90 as *4QTestament of Jacob? ar. Frag. 12* has the following text (with Puech's reconstructions): '1[... and how [its] construction should be [... and how] their [priests] would be dressed and [their hands] purified <sup>2</sup>[and how they were] to offer sacrifices on the altar and ho[w each da]y [in] the [ent]ire [la]nd they would eat some of their sacrifices, <sup>3</sup>[and how they would drink(?) the water] that would exit the city and from underneath its walls, and where [much water] would be [shed] <sup>4</sup>[...] Blank <sup>5</sup>[...] before me a land of two quarters(?) and a [and].

<sup>10</sup> In *Jub.* 32:21 Jacob reads the tablets and knows what would happen to him and his sons in all ages; in *Jub.* 32:22 the angel shows him what was written in the tablets, and tells him (32:23) not to build the eternal sanctuary.

<sup>11</sup> E. Burrows, S.J., "Wisdom X 10," *Biblica* 20 (1939): 405–7. Burrows was epigraphist and Sumerologist at Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations of Ur. His interest in Wis 10:10 may have been aroused by his study of the Oracles of Jacob. Cf. his *The Oracles of Jacob and Balaam* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1938).

<sup>12</sup> Burrows, "Wisdom X 10," 406.

had read and seen” refer to an already existing book of the *Visions of Jacob*, such as, e.g., 4Q537?<sup>13</sup> Was Jacob’s vision about Levi, that he would be a priest to God (*T. Levi* 9:3) part of a vision of the eschatological temple, or should one distinguish two visions? If the latter would be the case, would 4Q537 12 be a vision about the priests or about the temple, since most of the fragment deals with the priests? How does the covenant with Jacob at Bethel, referred to in the *Temple Scroll*, relate to the Bethel accounts of Genesis and *Jubilees*? For my interpretation of *NJ*, the following aspects are important. First, *Jubilees* and the *Temple Scroll* connect to Jacob at Bethel the eschatological temple that will be created by God on the day of the new creation.<sup>14</sup> In the *Temple Scroll* this is explicitly stated; in *Jubilees* we may come to this conclusion by reading *Jub.* 32:22 together with *Jub.* 1:27–29, both of which concern the eternal sanctuary, in contrast to the temporary one that had been forsaken by the people in *Jub.* 1:10. Second, 4Q537 not only describes the temple but also its rituals. Third, all those texts focus on the new temple, and do not deal with a new Jerusalem. Fourth, in *Jub.* 32 there is also reference to reading future history in the tablets. By hypothesizing that Jacob could have been the imagined visionary of *NJ*, I decide to read *NJ* against the background of those other texts. Of course, this implies some degree of circular reasoning. Note, however, that I do not intend to argue that Jacob was the visionary of *NJ*, but to propose a coherent and convincing reading of *NJ* based on that hypothesis.

## 2. ON ORDER AND CHRONOLOGY

Because of the fragmentary nature of the manuscripts, and because of the gradual process of publication, the exact order of the fragments and the structure of the composition have not been entirely clear.

<sup>13</sup> Thus M. Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology, Theology* (JSJSup 117; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 314 n. 107: “it is reasonable to assume that *Jub.* 32 is directly dependent on the “Testament of Jacob” in attributing the task of a “book of destiny” to the Heavenly Tablets in the story of Jacob at Bethel.” James Kugel, email communication August 7, 2007, suggests influence the other way round.

<sup>14</sup> Note in both texts the use of the verb “create” instead of, for example, “build”: in the *Temple Scroll* the Hebrew verb *bara*’; in *Jub.* 1:29 Ethiopic *faṭara*. On “creation” in the scrolls, cf. F. García Martínez, “Creation in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth. Re-interpretations of Genesis I in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* (ed. G.H. van Kooten; TBN 8; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 49–70.

Overall, two issues are of importance: the direction of the tour and the chronology of its eschatology.

In many respects the tour through the city and the temple resembles that of Ezekiel's tour in Ezek 40–48, which certainly has served as a model for *NJ*. A main difference is the direction of the tour, which in Ezekiel proceeds from the temple towards the outside, but in *NJ* from the outside of the city into the city.<sup>15</sup> When the seer of *NJ* is in the city he is first shown the overall layout, such as blocks and streets, and then the smaller structures within the city, suggesting that the general direction of the tour is from the exterior towards the interior. Fragments of 2Q24, 4Q555, and especially 11Q18, describe the temple and some of the rituals that are performed in the temple, and most scholars agree that this general direction from the outward to the inward also applies to the temple, as part of the city. At some time, the reporter must have finished his description of the city, and have entered the temple. Up to the present, it has not been possible to determine the exact sequence of the fragments of 11Q18, but it does appear that there is a general movement from the outside, the walls of the inner court, towards the *'ulam*, the *hekhal* and perhaps also the *devir*, “holy of holies,” that is, if the reference to the *kurse*, “seat,” or “throne,”<sup>16</sup> indeed is to the *devir*. This description of the temple complex is badly preserved, and the most substantial section is provided by the overlap of fragments of 2Q24 4 and 11Q18 20, that describe the shewbreads. It is clear, however, that the tour not only gives the measurements of architectonic features of the temple and the objects found in it, but also describes the rituals taking place in the temple, such as the bringing in and taking out of the shewbreads, the distribution of the shewbread among the priests, and the slaughtering of animals.

The construction of one large fragment seems to militate against the hypothesis of a neat tour proceeding from the outside of the city towards the inner part of the temple, and also provides problems of chronology. 4Q554 2 i–ii and is corresponding to 4Q554 3 i–iii<sup>17</sup> in the

<sup>15</sup> This conclusion can be drawn from the contents of the text, but also from the physical characteristics of some of the scrolls. Large fragments such as 4Q554 1 generally come from the outside of a scroll, and the fragments of 11Q18 stem from the inside of a scroll.

<sup>16</sup> See 11Q18 31 ii and 32, which most likely are two consecutive layers of the scroll, and derive from the same column.

<sup>17</sup> Corresponding to 4Q 554 3i–iii in the *Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* 6 and 4Q 554 i–iii in Di Tomasso's book.

*Dead Sea Scroll Reader* 6 and 4Q554 2 i–iii in DiTommaso’s book consists of the remnants of three consecutive columns. The first column contains only a few words, the second column seems to describe width and height of a wall, in view of its measurements almost certainly the outer wall, as well as a large number of its towers. The number, one thousand x hundred and thirty-two, has not been entirely preserved, but Starcky has restored it, correctly, to one thousand *four* hundred and thirty-two towers.<sup>18</sup> Although it is not explicitly stated in the preserved text, it is assumed that the wall of the city contained four hundred and eighty openings, including the twelve main gates, and each opening having three towers. Apart from the technical architectural aspects concerning the structure of the wall and its towers, one must note the problem that this description of the wall is not connected to the other description of the wall and the names of the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem, as seen many columns earlier in 4Q554 1 i–iii. Apparently, the description of the reporter is not as systematic from outside to inside as one might expect.

More problematic is the disputed join with 4Q554 13 as a third column, since it does not describe any part of the city. Instead frag. 13 seems to give a historical or eschatological description of events including references to the Kittim, to Edom, Moab and the Ammonites, to the land of Babel, and to nations. The problems of 4Q554 13 are textual (how to read and restore the preserved text), literary (what kind of description do we have here), compositional (how does this section fit within the composition as a whole), and chronological (how do the activities described in this column relate to the context).

Here, I will not discuss the textual readings in detail. DiTommaso’s attempt to add a fragment to 4Q554 13 is incorrect, since the fragment he adds is actually 4Q112 (Dan<sup>a</sup>) frag. 6.<sup>19</sup> The restoration and meaning of the last broken line is problematic (Collins<sup>20</sup> and DiTommaso<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> J. Starcky, “Jérusalem et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte,” *Le Monde de la Bible* 1 (1977): 38–40 at 39; DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 60–61 questions this figure because of his misunderstanding of the distribution of the towers.

<sup>19</sup> Published by E. Ulrich in DJD 16:247.

<sup>20</sup> J.J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 59: “the peoples shall ser[ve] them...” (Or: “do with them”; the Aramaic verb *bd* normally means to do, but in Hebrew it means to serve, and it may be used in its Hebrew sense here.)”

<sup>21</sup> DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 62.

restore “and nations will serve them,” but Puech<sup>22</sup> as “and nations will wage [war] against them”), and should therefore not be used to determine the sequence of events. What remains is little more than a description of a sequence of kingdoms, of which the last is that of the Kittim, a list of other nations who are with them, and the reference to “they shall do evil to your seed.” Scholars have read this as some kind of description of an eschatological war, the list of nations reminiscent of 1QM I.<sup>23</sup> But how does this description fit in the composition? Before the full extent of the 11Q18 scroll was known, Collins could still suggest that the passage “most probably refers to the eschatological conflict between Israel and the nations, and must be located at the end of the New Jerusalem text.”<sup>24</sup> Puech poses the problem as follows: should one envisage a sequence description of the new Jerusalem, followed by the eschatological battle and then the restoration of the cult or is the eschatological battle referred to without a specific reference to chronology. The clue is again the second person address in the phrase “they shall do evil to your seed,” which shows that at least this clause, but probably this entire description of nations, is part of a speech to the seer. In view of the genre of the text, the speaker would most likely be the angel who guided the seer. We can imagine that this angel, possibly in response to a question posed by the seer, gave a description

<sup>22</sup> É. Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: Immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle? II: Les données qumraniennes et classiques* (ÉtB 22; Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 593–95, wy'b[down] bhwn 'mmyn[ qrb, but 'bd qrb is elsewhere collocated with the prepositions mn or l.

<sup>23</sup> 1QM I 1–2 referring to “the troupes of Edom, Moab, the sons of Ammon, the [...], Philistia, and the troupes of the Kittim of Assyria.” DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 170–76, objects against this interpretation and sees the few lines as consisting of two (actually three) sections, a four-kingdom historiographic schema, followed by the theme of the humbling of the nations. One must agree with DiTommaso that the list of successive kingdoms (suggested by b'trh, “after it”, that is attested twice in two lines) gives the impression of a scheme or a rapid survey, to be followed by something else, but there are also many problems with his thesis. First, the use of b'trh before what DiTommaso thinks is the first kingdom is problematic. To what does the suffix refer? Then, his interpretation of bswp as a term meant to separate past events from eschatological expectations, is incompatible with his much better translation “one after another.” Semantically, it cannot be at the same time a normal prepositional indicating time “at the end of,” that is “after,” and a key eschatological word. Third, his argument that the oppression by the nations (“and they shall do evil to your seed”) is followed by a new section introduced by “And I saw that,” fails because of the incorrect join with 4QDan<sup>a</sup> 6. Finally, his main thesis, that the section ends with the humbling of the nations is based on the uncertain and problematic interpretation of wy'b[down] bhwn 'mmyn[ , as “and nations will serve them” (the fact that Aramaic has the noun 'bd “servant” does of course not suggest that it has a verb 'bd “to serve”).

<sup>24</sup> Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 60.

of future events.<sup>25</sup> In other words, we are not dealing with the seer's report of an eschatological battle, but with his report of the angelic reference to this battle, somewhere during his tour. Hence, there is no need to assume that we have city and temple envisaged at the time of the battle. It is more likely that the description concerns the new Jerusalem and new temple after the battle.

The references to traditions of Jacob's vision of the temple do not refer to an eschatological battle. This may of course be included in the general statement of *Jub.* 32:21, that Jacob read all that would happen to him and his sons throughout all the ages, but if the author had wished to call attention to an eschatological battle, he could have done that more explicitly. I may, in passing, refer to the fact that in *NJ* the angel reads from a book (*ktb*; 11Q18 19 5–6), though apparently not from a heavenly tablet. The few preserved contents of the eschatological battle give little reason to associate it directly with Jacob. The mention of Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites, calls to mind the same nations mentioned in Isa 11:14, Dan 11:41, and 1QM I 1–2.<sup>26</sup> In a somewhat different order, those nations are also listed in *Jub.* 37–38 (esp. 37:10), which, perhaps influenced by the Maccabean wars,<sup>27</sup> describes the wars of Jacob and his sons against Esau and his sons. Interesting is the distribution of the twelve sons of Jacob (Enoch, Reuben's son, replaces Joseph in the list), over the four sides of the tower, on each side three, which at least calls to mind the distribution of the gates of the new Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> In 1QM it is only the Levites, Judahites, and Benjaminites, who will fight those nations, whereas *NJ* mentions that those nations

<sup>25</sup> The typical conversation or other interaction between angelic guide and seer is also partially preserved in 11Q18 15 4 "and he said to me"; 11Q18 18 5 "and he said to me: You are seeing that"; 11Q18 19 5 "he began to read to me from a writing".

<sup>26</sup> García Martínez, "New Jerusalem," 610, points out that both in *NJ*, and in 1QM I–II the eschatological battle is succeeded by a description of the temple cult (cf. 1QM II 1–6). This may be a simplification of the relation between 1QM I and II, but one may note other correspondences between *NJ* and the *War Scroll*. If 11Q18 15 indeed refers to twenty six *mishmarot* (or perhaps *ma'amadot*), then we have another parallel with 1QM which refers to (1QM II 2) twenty-six heads of the courses. Also, both *NJ* (2Q24 4 and 11Q18 20) and the *War Scroll* (1QM II 1) mention the deputy of the high priest.

<sup>27</sup> J.C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (HSM 14; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 230–38.

<sup>28</sup> On the names and distribution of the gates in different descriptions of the New Jerusalem, cf. É. Puech, "The Names of the Gates of the New Jerusalem (4Q554)," in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. S.M. Paul et al.; VTSup 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 379–92.

(?) will harm your Jacob's descendants. It is tenuous to directly connect those three texts, but they do attest to the shared tradition of a (in *NJ* and *1QM* eschatological) conflict between Jacob's sons or descendants and a series of nations including the three mentioned ones.

### 3. THE NATURE OF THE CITY

In his article on the town plan of the new Jerusalem, Jacob Licht observed that there was an inconsistency with regard to the measurements: the streets are incredibly broad, whereas the houses have a normal or even modest size.<sup>29</sup> Also, the text only mentions houses along the perimeter of the insula or block that is described. He therefore concluded that those insulae apparently had vast inner courts, devoid of buildings. He carefully points out that the fragmentary state of the texts makes an informed guess impossible, but nevertheless raises the question whether all the open spaces have been set aside for pilgrims, and ends with the following conclusion:

The Jerusalem of the future must have been thought of as a centre for pilgrimages, absorbing multitudes of peoples, especially on Sukkoth (Zech 14:16). The author of the *DNJ* might have had in mind the need for open spaces on which to erect the booths in which the pilgrims would live for the eight days of the festival.<sup>30</sup>

Other scholars have adopted his suggestion. For example, García Martínez argues that the available text does not refer to houses within the blocks (except perhaps for a small isolated fragment) and that the block most likely "is conceived as a large courtyard in the middle, surrounded by the aligned houses, looking like an oriental caravanserai,"<sup>31</sup> and in a later study speaks about "a preoccupation in organizing the city so as to house large groups of pilgrims."<sup>32</sup> In similar terms, Puech refers to the caravanserai structure meant for groups of pilgrims.<sup>33</sup> Chyutin,

<sup>29</sup> J. Licht, "An Ideal Town Plan from Qumran: The Description of the New Jerusalem," *IEJ* 29 (1979): 45–59.

<sup>30</sup> Licht, "Ideal Town Plan," 59.

<sup>31</sup> García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 199.

<sup>32</sup> García Martínez, "The Temple Scroll and the New Jerusalem," 453.

<sup>33</sup> É. Puech, "À propos de la Jérusalem Nouvelle d'après les manuscrits de la mer Morte," *Semitica* 43–44 (1995): 87–102 at 102.

however, fills the courtyards in his figures with rows of houses.<sup>34</sup> Most recently DiTommaso opposed the idea that new Jerusalem might have been conceived as an eschatological centre for pilgrims, and proposed instead that the city was meant to be a monumental residential one, or perhaps a city consisting of barracks to house the thousands of troops of an enormous army.<sup>35</sup>

Here different questions are involved. Are we correct in concluding that the blocks do indeed have a courtyard structure? What are the arguments for concluding that the text displays a pre-occupation with pilgrimage? Is the pilgrimage perspective solely dependent on the argument of the courtyards? To what extent do other elements of the preserved text support or contradict this view? What are the textual or contextual arguments in favor of DiTommaso's suggestions?

First, although the preserved fragments indeed only describe the houses along the perimeter of the blocks, we cannot with certainty draw the conclusion that the blocks have a large courtyard. The description of the blocks breaks off at the end of 4Q554a and 5Q15 1 ii, which had just discussed the windows in the houses along the perimeter. However, the small fragment 5Q15 2, which according to Milik should be placed below 5Q15 1 ii, or at the beginning of the next column, also mentions "windows," and then continues with the broken phrase "all the houses which are in the midst of." These may be houses in the midst of the blocks. In view of the author's tendency to move from the outside towards the inside, it is possible that he still had to describe the inside of the blocks. Licht's suggestion is possible and interesting, but not compelling.

Second, what other indications do we have for a pre-occupation in organizing the city for pilgrims? Licht's mentioned the broad streets and the discrepancy between general space and the size of the houses. DiTommaso points at the city's uniform blocks of houses and raises the question whether they could have been barracks for troops assembling for the eschatological final battle.<sup>36</sup> One of the aspects in the description that has—to my knowledge—not really been discussed

<sup>34</sup> M. Chyutin, *The New Jerusalem Scroll from Qumran. A Comprehensive Reconstruction* (JSPSup 25; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997), 93–94 (Fig. 14–15). Chyutin does mention Licht in his bibliography, but does not engage his interpretation. Chyutin's book can only be used with the utmost caution.

<sup>35</sup> DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 177–78.

<sup>36</sup> DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 178. However, he does not pursue this point, since he prefers the interpretation of a monumental residential city.

are the twenty-two beds or couches per house. According to Milik's description these would be couches in the dining rooms. However, Milik's word for dining (*mkl'* 5Q15 1 ii 10) consists of little more than some dots and traces.<sup>37</sup> The implicit suggestion of the text is that this one house described by the seer is a model for all the other houses. The least one can say is that this large number of twenty-two beds/couches in one large room of 19 by 12 cubits, i.e. of 9.5 by 6 meters, is somewhat excessive, and not compatible with the layout of a normal house and family. I would argue that this form of housing, was intended to accommodate a large number of persons, and could be compatible with a pilgrimage model.

Third, it is difficult to draw specific conclusions from the few preserved parts from the description of the temple rituals with regard to the issue of pilgrimage. One must note, though, that some of the fragments from the inner part of 11Q18 are related to Passover. This is explicit in the reference to "passover offerings,"<sup>38</sup> and possible in broken references like "once a year," and in the many references to sacrifices, eating and drinking. On the other hand, in those contexts it is also possible that we have listings of kind of offerings, including the passover offerings.<sup>39</sup>

Fourth, DiTommaso's objections against the pilgrimage explanation are not based upon the text, but on some shortcomings of his approach. He does not understand that Licht and others refer to open courtyards *within* each city block, but thinks that the issue is open spaces *between* the city blocks.<sup>40</sup> Also, his generally helpful view that type of city, form and function are related, leads him to dismiss the pilgrimage motif, because it is attested in a different type (Zech 14) which does not have

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<sup>37</sup> M. Broshi, "Visionary Architecture and Town Planning in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness. Papers on the Qumran Scrolls* (ed. D. Dimant and L.H. Schiffman; STDJ 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 9–22 at 14 contests Milik's dining hall and interprets it as a "dormitory." "Dormitories" might also have been intended for the *mishmarot* of priests, or perhaps also the *ma'amadot* of laymen, who needed accommodation for the period they served in the temple. However, the number of blocks, insulae, houses, and beds per house seem much too large for only priests. Licht, "An Ideal Town Plan," reconstructs 12 blocks of 12 insulae of 60 houses, which would result, if each house had 22 beds, in 190,080 beds. García Martínez, "The «New Jerusalem» and the Future Temple," argues that there were not 12 but 16 blocks.

<sup>38</sup> 11Q18 16 ii + 17 i 2 and 27 3.

<sup>39</sup> 11Q18 16 ii + 17 i 1 mentions thank-offerings; 27 5 peace-offerings.

<sup>40</sup> DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 178.

the same design forms.<sup>41</sup> Most importantly, however, his focus on the Cave 4 manuscripts, the eschatological column, and the *topos* of the monumental new Jerusalem, has resulted in a virtual disregard of the second part of the composition: the temple and its ritual. The repeated claim that “the New Jerusalem is a city which is meant to be lived in,” and his statement that the broad avenues and streets are meant for commerce (sic!), are suppositions without substantiation.<sup>42</sup>

Fifth, against the idea that the temple city would be a residential city, one may refer to the *Temple Scroll*, which expands the holiness of the temple to the city itself. As a consequence, as Sidnie White Crawford argued, the city in which the ideal temple is located is not “an ordinary residential city, but . . . a city of particular special status, for which special rules of purity apply.”<sup>43</sup> The city “is a pilgrimage or sacred city that exists only to support the Temple and its rites.”<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion: there are not enough explicit indications in the preserved text to prove that the text envisages the city of the temple as a pilgrimage city. However, any interpretation needs to take into account the overall structure of the composition, which describes a tour that moves into the city, and from the city into the temple, and results in detailed descriptions of the temple and especially its rituals, as well as the movement of the text from the city into the temple. Also, the *Temple Scroll* attests to the ideal of the city of the temple as a special, non-residential pilgrimage city. In this respect, the other texts concerning Jacob’s vision only corroborate that the vision is centered on the temple. Jacob does not see a vision of the city, and reference to the city is only found in 4Q537 12.

#### 4. VISUAL BLUEPRINT, HEAVENLY MODEL, OTHERWORLD AND THIS WORLD

Revelation 21 tells that the new Jerusalem descended from heaven, and 2 Bar. 4 describes an eternal temple that already existed before para-

<sup>41</sup> DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 177 n. 23.

<sup>42</sup> DiTommaso, *New Jerusalem Text*, 178.

<sup>43</sup> S. White Crawford, “The Meaning of the Phrase עיר המקדש in the Temple Scroll,” *DSD* 8 (2001): 242–54, at 253. Her argumentation is based primarily upon the purity rules pertaining to the city, secondarily on the quarantine areas outside the city.

<sup>44</sup> White Crawford, “The Meaning,” 249.

dise was created (cf. also Wis 9:8). On the other hand, *Jub.* 1:29 and 11QT<sup>a</sup> XXIX 10 refer to the creation of the new sanctuary. What then did the visionary of *NJ* see? García Martínez carefully speaks about a visual blueprint, without speculating on any “real” heavenly or pre-existing city and temple. One may refer to Ezek 43:11, which indicates a model, but we can also imagine the vision as some kind of virtual reality. It is clear that there is a correspondence between the envisioned and described city and temple, and the city and temple that will be in the *eschaton*. Jacob sees how the eschatological city and temple will be when they are created, just as other visionaries see the future.

However, perhaps we should complicate the matter. García Martínez has called attention to the odd contrast that the description of the city only refers to architectonic structures and that the visionary does not report he saw any people, whereas, on the other hand, the tour through the temple describes architecture, priests and ritual. One may explain this in different ways: the author’s concern with ritual demands the vision of those involved in the ritual. Or, as García Martínez suggests, the people are not depicted in the city in order to let the angel do his measuring.<sup>45</sup> Both may be true, but I suggest yet another explanation, based on the sequence of the fragments. The visionary sees the city without people, and receives an exposition about the nations in relation to Israel. After that, he enters the temple where the rituals are performed. We could speculate that the visionary was indeed guided through an empty city, and that the explication was an answer to the question when this should be, or, for whom this should be. From the perspective of the visionary, this answer must have implied an overview of history, leading up to a point beyond the time of the author. In other words: the visionary sees the city prepared for the final time of the *eschaton*, that is, ready for the influx of pilgrims.

But what then about the rituals that in the vision already take place in the temple? Again, we may consider different possibilities. The first is that the visionary and guide have moved forward in time, and that the text now depicts the ritual that take place in the *eschaton* in the new temple. This is of course possible, but the explanation is not very elegant. An alternative is that Jacob witnesses here the already existing ideal eternal temple, which already includes the temple ritual. In the 2Q24 and 11Q18 fragments the continuity of the rituals is emphasized,

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<sup>45</sup> García Martínez, “The Temple Scroll and the New Jerusalem,” 451.

by referring to sacrifices that occur every day, or every seventh day and all the first days of the month, and once “for all ages” (11Q18 19 4). This then raises the rationalistic question where that temple and city are located before the *eschaton*. Animal sacrifices in a temple in heaven cannot be excluded, but do not belong to the stock descriptions of the heavenly service. But, if we again look at the other Jacob traditions, then the two references to the creation of the new temple in *Jub.* 1:29 and 11QT<sup>a</sup> XXIX 10 would possibly invalidate the idea of an already existing temple. Also, one should note that none of the texts referred to above suggests a heavenly vision of Jacob, and in *Jub.* 32 the angel descends to Jacob, not the other way around. In other words, whereas the vision clearly attests the future existence of city and temple, it is not clear in what dimension the seer saw the vision.

Apart from being a text describing the ideal future temple and city, the description of the rituals in the new temple also may actually reflect a discourse on correct ritual *halakha*. The texts are generally too fragmentary, but Menahem Kister has referred to several cases where the description touches upon *halakhic* disputes, to wit the tying of the four legs of an animal before it is slaughtered and the hide removed, and the pouring of the wine libation into a special receptacle.<sup>46</sup> Such considerations lead us back to the relation between present temple and new temple. John Collins stated in general that “speculation about the ideal temple... is implicitly critical of the actual Second Temple structure.”<sup>47</sup> The question, however, is to what extent such visions or speculations implied general views or criticisms on the contemporary structure, as shortcoming with respect to an ideal situation, or, more specifically, criticized contemporary situations. My understanding would be that both elements may be found in texts like *NJ*. For example, the ideal, enormous measurements of the future city can hardly be taken as a criticism of the much more limited size of the existing Jerusalem. Likewise, the implied ideal orthogonal structure is not very feasible in the hilly surroundings of Jerusalem (unless one would continue the work described in Josephus, *Ant.* 13.217). On the other hand, the description of the new city as a pilgrimage city, with the implications of purity, could quite well be a criticism of

<sup>46</sup> M. Kister, “Notes on Some New Texts from Qumran,” *JJS* 44 (1993): 280–90 at 284–5.

<sup>47</sup> Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 60.

contemporary residential expansion of Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> The apparent lack of discussion of any special administrative or palatial buildings again may emphasize the holy character of the city, and denounce those of contemporary Jerusalem.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Even though the composition has been labeled *New Jerusalem*, the real focus on the text is on the new temple, which should be identified with the new temple of the new creation referred to in *Jub.* 1:27–29 and 11QT<sup>a</sup> XXIX 8–10. I have hypothesized that this *New Temple* text may be related to traditions that Jacob was shown the new temple during his second stay at Bethel. The city that contains the new temple can best be explained as a holy city, most likely a pilgrimage city. The textual data of *NJ*, as well as the example of the *Temple Scroll* exclude the possibility that the city was planned as a residential city. Whilst describing the new temple and city, the text also touches upon disputed *halakhic* issues and criticizes the contemporary residential and palatial function of the Jerusalem.

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<sup>48</sup> I use the word “contemporary” here loosely, since we do not know for sure when *NJ* was composed. The list of the nations in 4Q554 13 suggests some kind of contemporaneity with 1QM I, and I do not see any reason to date the text in pre-Maccabean times.



# THE HEAVENLY WORLD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THIS WORLD ACCORDING TO RABBINIC LITERATURE: SOME MAIN OUTLINES

Beate Ego

Amongst the vast amount of traditions contained in rabbinic literature, we are also able to find a number of passages that deal with the heavenly world and its structures. As well known, the most famous of these texts is *b. Hag* 12b, a Sugya to *m. Hag* 2:1 explaining *ma'ase bereshit*, the work of creation.<sup>1</sup> Since this Mishna states that it is prohibited to “expound upon...the works of creation...before two [persons]...unless he was a sage and understands of his own knowledge”,<sup>2</sup> it becomes clear that these cosmological traditions can be characterised as an arcane discipline.<sup>3</sup> In the case of *ma'ase bereshit*, this is probably due to the danger that statements about creation may appear blasphemous and could thus offend God's honour when anthropomorphisms are being used.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, *m. Hag* 2:1 also deals with the laws of prohibited relationships (cf. Lev 18) and with the Chariot (cf. Ezek 1).

<sup>2</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner (Ed.), *The Babylonian Talmud. A Translation and Commentary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006). The abbreviations of the Biblical Books have been standardised according to the SBL Handbook of Style.

<sup>3</sup> Concerning arcane discipline in general, cf. J. Dan, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Tel Aviv: MOD books, 1993), 25–30; H.F. Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen Judentums* (TU 97; Berlin: Akademie, 1966), 83. In respect of the exegesis of Ezek 1, a certain reticence towards the exposition is probably plead because ecstatic phenomena could occur in this context; cf. *t. Hag* 2:1 (Mandelkern, 234); *y. Hag* 2:1 (77a) and *b. Hag* 14b; cf. A. Goldberg, “Rabban Yohanans Traum. Der Sinai in der frühen Merkabamystik,” *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 3 (1975): 1–28, here: 4ff; D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot. Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (TSAJ 16; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 13ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Weiss, *Kosmologie*, 83; see also my article “‘Es gibt sieben Himmel’ (*bHag* 12b)—eine Überlieferung vom Aufbau der Welt im Kontext der rabbinischen Literatur” in *Theologie und Kosmologie. Geschichte und Erwartungen für das gegenwärtige Gespräch* (ed. Jürgen Hübner et al.; Religion und Aufklärung 11; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 81–98, here: 86–88, with references to further literature.

According to *b. Hag* 12b, the cosmos consists of seven heavenly spheres that arch above each other, layer upon layer; in the seventh heaven, at the very top, God's throne is surrounded by the holy angels who serve him. The basic cosmological conception underlying this text is based on the biblical image of the structure of the universe: the welkins spread above the flat earth, which floats in the waters of the primeval ocean.<sup>5</sup> The concept of several heavens cannot be found in biblical literature; however, it is attested to in Ancient Babylonian texts, as well as in early Jewish apocalyptic traditions and in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, apart from *b. Hag* 12b, the *locus classicus* of rabbinic cosmology, further texts from Talmudic and Midrashic literature hint at the rabbi's perception of the heavenly world. These texts tell us, for instance, about the heavenly model of the temple and its vessels, as well as its exact location, and about the angels surrounding God's throne and their chants.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Concerning the biblical image of the cosmos, cf. L.I.J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (Analecta Biblica 39; Rom: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 1–4; O. Keel, *Die altorientalische Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament. Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (3rd ed.; Darmstadt: WBG, 1984), 47; idem, "Das sogenannte altorientalische Weltbild," *Bibel und Kirche* 40 (1985): 157–61. Other traditions of rabbinic literature reflect this thought, too. In this manner, we refer to one sentence by Rabbi Simon in a tradition from Midrash Bereshit Rabba (*BerR* 1 [End]): "The world is like a pan and its lid." In Midrash *Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el* (*Mek wayassa*) 1 explaining Ex 15:22 [Horowitz/Rabin 154]) it is read in a tradition ascribed to R. Eliezer: "'And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water' (Ex 15:22)... R. Eliezer says: But was there not water underneath the feet of the Israelites, since the earth is floating upon the water. As it is said: 'To him that spread forth the earth above the waters' (Ps 136:6)"; quoted according to the translation of J.Z. Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976, 3 Vol.), 89. Related to this concept, cf. also the tradition in the tract *Avoda Zara* of the Jerusalem Talmud (*y. AZ* 3,1 [42c, 53–57]: "Said R. Jonah, 'When Alexander of Macedon wanted, he could wing upward, and he would go up. He travelled upward until he saw the world as a sphere, and the sea as a dish'; (quoted according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel. An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third and Fourth Divisions*, Vol. XXVI. *Yerushalmi Tractate Abodah Zarah* [South Florida Academic Commentary Series 136; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1998], 91). Concerning the whole issue of Talmudic geography, cf. G. Zarfatti, "Ha-qosmografia ha-talmudit" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 35 (1965/66): 137–48, here: 140.

<sup>6</sup> However, the various sources differ with regard to the number of heavens: for example, 2 Cor 12:1–4 and the Greek *T. Levi* 2:7–13 speak of three heavenly spheres, whereas the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* refers to five heavens. Finally, the *Slavonic Book of Enoch* attests to seven or ten (according to the J version) heavenly spheres. Concerning the numbers of heavens, cf. J.E. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 142–84. A good survey of this material is provided in Str-B III, 531–3.

<sup>7</sup> A comprehensive overview of most traditions is given in my dissertation *Im Himmels wie auf Erden. Studien zum Verhältnis von himmlischer und irdischer Welt*

This article now explores explicit and implicit statements made about the relationship between the heavenly and earthly world. In this manner, it becomes evident that these pre-scientific cosmological ideas have their own logic.<sup>8</sup>

In an article published in 2005, Peter Schäfer called attention to the anti-apocalyptic impact of the world conception in *b. Hag* 12b. The rabbis emphasize the great distance between heaven and God's throne and his angels, and underline that everyone who tries to overcome this distance by ascending to heaven must be regarded as wicked, such as Nebuchadnezzar and his hubris. In this manner, the rabbis dissociate themselves from the idea that ascension is the proper way to approach God. God's love towards Israel on earth and the importance of obedience to the Torah are emphasised to a greater degree.<sup>9</sup>

Further aspects of the relationship between the heavenly and the earthly world become evident when other rabbinic texts in addition to *b. Hag* 12b are included in this study. Thus it becomes clear that the rabbinic cosmological passages contain pre-scientific elements, as well as temple cultic, liturgical, ethical, eschatological dimensions. The rabbinic world view can therefore be regarded as a construct which, on the one hand, functions in order to explain natural phenomena in a pre-scientific way; on the other hand, it serves to stabilise and

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im rabbinischen Judentum (WUNT II/34; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989). See also B. Ego, "Gottes Thron in Talmud und Midrasch. Kosmologische und eschatologische Aspekte eines aggadischen Motivs," in *Le Trône de Dieu* (ed. M. Philonenko; WUNT 69; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 318–33; eadem, "Himmliches und irdisches Heiligtum. Von der biblischen Tempeltheologie zur rabbinischen Kosmologie," *Mitteilungen und Beiträge* 12/13 (1997): 36–52.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. C. Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture", in *The Interpretation of cultures. Selected Essays* (ed. C. Geertz; New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–30; E. Leach, *Culture and Communication. The Logic by which Symbols are connected. An Introduction to the Use of Structuralist Analysis in Social Anthropology* (Themes in Social Sciences; Cambridge: University Press, 1981); G. Dux, *Die Logik der Weltbilder. Sinnstrukturen im Wandel der Geschichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982); O. Keel, *Weltbild*, 157–61; H. Gese, "Die Frage des Weltbildes", in his *Zur biblischen Theologie. Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (3rd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 202–22; I. Cornelius, "The Visual Representation of the World in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible," *JNWSL* 20 (1994): 193–218; F. Stolz, *Weltbilder der Religionen. Kultur und Natur. Diesseits und Jenseits, Kontrollierbares und Unkontrollierbares* (Theophil, Zürich: Pano, 2001); B. Janowski, "Das biblische Weltbild. Eine methodologische Skizze", in: *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte* (eds. B. Janowski and B. Ego; FAT 32; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 3–27.

<sup>9</sup> P. Schäfer, "From Cosmology to Theology. The Rabbinic Appropriation of Apocalyptic Cosmology", in *Creation and Re-creation in Jewish Thought. Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 39–58.

authorize religious values, such as the holiness of Jerusalem or God's love towards Israel.

# 1. PRE-SCIENTIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE RABBINICAL CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD AND ITS IMPACT ON CREATION THEOLOGY

According to *b. Hag 12b*, the first and the second heaven are dedicated to natural phenomena, since it is stated:

'Curtain (velon):' is good for nothing, except that it enters in the morning and leaves in the evening and every day renews the work of creation: 'That stretches out the heavens as a curtain and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in' (Isa 40:22).<sup>10</sup>

Behind it—thus the tradition in reception of the creation account in Genesis—lies the second heavenly sphere to which the individual heavenly bodies are attached.

'firmament (raki'a):' in which the sun and moon, stars and constellations are set, 'And God set them in the firmament of heaven' (Gen 1:17).<sup>11</sup>

Considering the seven-layered construction in its entirety, apparently heaven and earth form one unity. Certain elements of the heavenly world bear a direct relation to earthly natural phenomena, and can be seen and experienced on earth. The clear day sky is compared to a thin curtain which is stretched out in the morning and drawn back in the evening; it therefore hides or covers the luminaries that are firmly installed in the second heaven, called *rakia*. Apart from these short remarks about the sky and the stars, *b. Hag 12b* also tells of the existence of pantries that store precipitations of snow, rain and dew, as well as heavy gales. The following is written about the sixth heaven:

'Residence (makhon):' is where there are stores of snow and hail, the loft of destructive dew and raindrops, the chamber of the whirlwind and the storm, the cave of vapor with doors of fire: 'The Lord will open unto you

<sup>10</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>11</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

his good treasure' (Deut 28:12).<sup>12</sup>... And how do we know that is called heaven? "Then hear you in heaven, your residence" (1 Kgs 8:39).<sup>13</sup>

As Peter Schäfer pointed out in his article dedicated to *b. Hag 12b*, "makhon" is depicted "as a heaven, which contains only unpleasant things: snow and hail, harmful dews and raindrops, whirlwind and storm, and the cave that emits smoke or vapor."<sup>14</sup> However, according to the author's proof-text, Deut 28:12, the heavenly treasure in the sixth heaven also contains positive elements, since there is mention of a "good treasure", which comes from heaven to earth. Although it is difficult to explain why the author of *b. Hag 12b* chooses this verse as proof-text, it becomes clear that, by using this verse, he gives us an indication of the relationship between the contents of the sixth heaven and the earthly realm. The sixth heaven functions as storage for precipitations, and the whole model serves as an explanation for earthly meteorological phenomena.

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<sup>12</sup> Here the text contains a later insertion: "But are these found in the firmament? Aren't they found on earth, in line with the verse, 'Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind, fulfilling his word' (Ps 148:7–8). Said R. Judah said Rab, David sought mercy for them and brought them down to earth. He said before him, Lord of the world, "You are not a god who has pleasure in wickedness, let not what is evil sojourn with you" (Ps 5:5). On this, P. Schäfer, *Cosmology*, 46: "The Talmud, obviously not concerned about the proper proof text, explores an entirely different question: How can it be, it asks (anonymously), that such destructive forces are found in heaven? Aren't they part of the earthly realm? What at first glance (finally) looks like an appropriate 'cosmological' question in the mouth of the rabbis, turns out, in the answer provided by Rav Yehuda (presumably Rav Yehuda b. Yehezqel, a Babylonian Amora of the second generation and student of Rav), to be a theological rather than a cosmological problem in the more narrowly defined sense of the word. Rav Yehuda is not really interested in what the sixth heaven contains; as a matter of fact, he is not interested at all in the inventory of the *heavens*: his only concern is to make sure that nothing 'evil' can be associated with *God*! Because evil must not abide with God, he argues, it cannot even be stored in heaven (to be sure, the sixth heaven, which is closest to God) but must be as remote from him as possible. Quite ironically, for this purpose he appeals to David, a human being, who took care that all these evil things (which indeed were originally in heaven!) were removed from God's presence and brought down to earth where they actually belong. It is ultimately a human being, not God himself, who is concerned about God's glory and removes the 'evil' natural forces from the sixth heaven. The logical (cosmological) consequence that the sixth heaven must have been empty after David's intervention does not bother Rav Yehuda at all—another indication primarily in cosmology."

<sup>13</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>14</sup> Schäfer, *Cosmology*, 46.

To conclude this paragraph: it therefore becomes obvious that these elements described in the first, second and sixth heaven in this cosmological model serve to explain several phenomena of nature, such as the change of day and night or the existence of rain, snow and dew. *B. Hag* 12b therefore has an aetiological impact. These observations can be easily classified as a naïve and primitive progenitor of scientific thinking, as they remain far behind the level of scientific perception demonstrated by Greek natural philosophy several centuries earlier. However, works on ancient concepts of the world, which were published in the fields of Cultural Anthropology, Comparative Religious Studies, Old Testament Studies as well as Oriental Studies and Egyptology, have shown that concepts of the world of pre-modern times have their own logic.<sup>15</sup> What is conspicuous about these remarks concerning natural phenomena is their consistent theological-personal focus. Corroborating this thesis, we consider the author's explanations concerning the seventh heaven:

'Heavy cloud ('aravot)': that is where there are right, judgment and righteousness, the treasures of life and the treasures of peace and the treasures of blessing, the souls of the righteous and the spirits and souls that are to be born, and the dew with which the Holy One, blessed be he, in the world to come will revive the dead.... There too are located the Ofanim and the Seraphim, the Holy Living Creatures, the Ministering Angels, the Throne of God; the King, the Living God, high and exalted, dwells over them all in heavy cloud: 'Extol him who rides upon heavy cloud, whose name is the Lord' (Ps 68:5). And how do we know that 'heavy cloud' is called heaven? It is because of the verbal analogy established by the use of the word 'ride' in the two passages as follows: 'Extol him who rides upon heavy cloud, whose name is the Lord', (Ps 68:5), and 'Who rides upon heaven as your help' (Deut 33:26).<sup>16</sup>

With this scenario, which recalls Isa 6:2 and Ezek 1:5 as well as descriptions of the heavenly realm, as found in early apocalyptic texts such as Dan 7 or *1 En.* 16, passage *b. Hag* 12b reaches its climax.<sup>17</sup> Although *b. Hag* 12b conceals the appearance of the godly figure behind heavy clouds, it shows very plainly that God is introduced as the high and exalted king and the sovereign of the world who thrones above and

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the literature given above.

<sup>16</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>17</sup> Concerning the traditions of this passage, cf. Schäfer, *Cosmology*, 55.

rules over everything—even the negative forces belonging to the sixth heaven!

## 2. THE TEMPLE-CULTIC DIMENSION OF THE WORLD CONCEPTION AND THE HOLINESS OF JERUSALEM

Concerning the depiction of the fourth heaven in *b. Hag 12b*, the integration of cultic elements in the description of the cosmos is remarkable: heavenly Jerusalem, with its sanctuary and altar, is located in the fourth heaven. Here Israel's Guardian and Advocate Angel Michael offers sacrifices as a heavenly arch-priest, since it is stated:

'lofty abode:' is where the heavenly Jerusalem, the Temple, and the altar are built, and Michael, principal prince, stands and offers an offering on it: 'I have surely built a house of lofty above, a place for you to dwell in for ever (1 Kgs 8:13). And how do we know that is called heaven? 'Look down from heaven and see, even from your holy and glorious habitation' (Isa 63:15).<sup>18</sup>

At first sight, this statement may cause astonishment because the heavenly temple is not located on the same level as the heavenly throne but is in fact situated several layers beneath it. In all probability, this structure reflects the biblical world conception, since it is particularly found as a reaction to the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C.E.: the Temple in Jerusalem is less considered as the seat of the deity but rather as a house of prayer; God's throne, on the contrary, is—in a clear distance to the temple building and marked-off from this—located in the celestial world.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the position of the heavenly sanctuary is somehow reminiscent of the position of the earthly one. Namely, rabbinical literature can describe the Temple in Jerusalem's centre as the centre of the world. Hence, according to the Midrash Tanḥuma, Q'doshim § 10 (222b), the sanctuary and the Holy of Holies is situated

<sup>18</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>19</sup> Regarding these contexts, cf. B. Ego, "Der Herr blickt herab von der Höhe seines Heiligtums"—Gottes himmlisches Wohnen in alttestamentlichen Texten aus exilisch-nachexilischer Zeit," *ZAW* 110 (1998): 556–69, with references to further literature.

in the centre of the world. Further rabbinic traditions also make clear that Michael's offering is a spiritual offering without any bloodshed.<sup>20</sup>

However, *b. Hag 12b* does not explicitly reveal the relation between the heavenly and the earthly cult; although this is done by several other traditions in rabbinical literature. First of all, we come across the idea that the heavenly sanctuary serves as an image for the earthly temple. This conception, which is attested to multitudinously in the Midrash, is generally ascribed to Ex 25:9 or Ex 25:40. The Tannaitic texts explicate this in respect of single cult objects like the Menora, the Shewbread Table and the chandelier. *Pesiq. Rab Kah. 1* (4b/5a), an Amoraic text, in turn solely speaks explicitly of a celestial model for the four cult colours *tekhelet*, *argaman*, *shesh* and *tola'at shani*. Later texts, on the other hand, such as *Pesiq. Rab. 20* (98 a/b) and *Midrash ha-Gadol Ex 572* relate this topos to the temple at large. The Midrashim of the view of the celestial temple, its greatness and its colours can be defined as cult aetiologies. Whereas aetiological thinking names the origin of certain phenomena in general and is thus defined as a pre-scientific empowerment of the world, cult aetiologies in particular are to be conceived with regard to the background of the structure of the Holy, which can be defined as the constituent of the cultic sphere. Hence, the Holy is always essential, not accidental. For this reason, it cannot be justified by a human decision but is in need of a heavenly revelation. The divine origin justifies the everlasting validity of such institutions.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the rabbinic passages that deal with the heavenly temple and heavenly Jerusalem are to be regarded as reactions to the destruction of the Temple and the loss of the cult and its place in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This, for example, becomes clear when referring to *b. Menah. 110a*, which regards Michael's celestial worship as a substitute for the temple offerings in Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Cf. B. Ego, "Der Diener im Palast des himmlischen Königs. Zur Interpretation einer priesterlichen Tradition im rabbinischen Judentum," in *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt* (ed. M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer; WUNT 55; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 361–84.

<sup>21</sup> Concerning hierophanies in general, cf. M. Eliade, *Die Religionen und das Heilige. Elemente der Religionsgeschichte* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1976), 19–37; see also Ego, *Himmel*, 59f.

<sup>22</sup> Ego, *Himmel*, 16.

'This is an ordinance forever to Israel' (2 Chr 2:3). Said R. Giddal said Rab, This refers to the altar that has been built, where Michael the leading angelic prince, is standing and presented thereon an offering.<sup>23</sup>

However, the following statements by R. Yohanan and R. Simeon b. Laqish point out that the concept of the substitution of the temple cult by the study of the Torah has become more influential in rabbinic tradition.

For this reason, the idea that the heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly temple are afflicted through the historical event of the sanctuary's destruction is even more prominent. A tradition in *b. Taan* 5a tells us that God will not visit his heavenly abode until he is able to re-enter the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup>

And said R. Nahman to R. Isaac, What is the meaning of the verse of Scripture 'The Holy one is in your midst, and I will not come into the city' (Hos 11:9). [Can it possibly mean,] because the Holy is in your midst, I shall not come into the city?! He said to him, this is what R. Yohanan said, Said the Holy One, blessed be he, I shall not come into the heavenly Jerusalem until I enter the earthly Jerusalem. And is there really a heavenly Jerusalem? Indeed there is, for it is written, 'Jerusalem that is built up like a city that is well-joined all together [above and below]' (Ps 122:3).

Since after the destruction of the temple God's place, the Holy, is in the midst of his people, God neither wants to enter the material city, from which his people were banished, nor does he want to linger in the celestial city unimpaired by earthly events. The alienation of the people corresponds to God's alienation: just as the people live in exile, God lives in exile. Midrash *S. Eli. Zut.* depicts this state as an almost blasphemous appearing anthropomorphism: according to *S. Eli. Zut.* 21 (p. 36), the Holy One, blessed be he, has to stay in dew and rain after the destruction of the earthly temple; the heavenly city and heavenly throne remain unoccupied until Israel's exile is ended and God's people return to its city again; at this very moment, the Holy One, blessed be he, will also return to his heavenly abode. Finally, in *Midr. Ps 137* § 3 (262a) a very dramatic scenario is depicted, as it is stated

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<sup>23</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>24</sup> Ego, *Himmel*, 143.

that after the destruction of the sanctuary in Jerusalem, God wanted to destroy the heavenly sanctuary due to his deep grief.<sup>25</sup>

In these texts, the rabbis express a theological idea of great significance in a narrative way, namely the concept of the so-called *sympatheia theou*. While in Greek philosophy, notably Plato, Aristotle and the Stoa, formulate the ideal of an unaffected god who rises above all affliction and does not know any fervours, the rabbinic texts—to use an expression by Abraham Heschel—tell of God's pathos, of his involvement in history and of God commiserating. According to this concept, the earthly events, specifically his people's history, instantaneously concern God; he is sentient and violable. Abraham Heschel described this image of God as follows:

The stage of the stoic is apathy, the ideal stage of the prophet is sympathy. The Greeks attributed to the gods the state of happiness and serenity; the prophets thought of God's relation to the world as one of concern and compassion...

In the light of such affirmation, with no stigma attached to pathos, there was no reason to shun the idea of pathos in the understanding of God. Pathos implied no inner bondage, no enslavement to impulse, no subjugation by passion, but a willed, transitive feeling which existed only in relation to man. An apathetic and ascetic God would have struck biblical man with a sense, not of dignity and grandeur, but rather of poverty and emptiness. Only through arbitrary allegorising was later religious philosophy able to find an apathetic God in the Bible. Although the thought that God is too sublime to be affected by events on this insignificant planet is impressive, it stems from a line of reasoning concerning a First Cause, who, dwelling in the lonely splendour of eternity, will never be open to human prayer; and to be affected by anything which it has itself caused to come into being would be beneath the dignity of an abstract God. This is a dogmatic sort of dignity, insisting upon pride rather than love, upon decorum rather than mercy.

In contrast to the *primum movens immobile*, the God of the prophets cares for his creatures, and His thoughts are about the world. He is involved in human history and is affected by human acts. It is a paradox beyond compare that the Eternal God is concerned with what is happening in time...

The grandeur of God implies the capacity to experience emotion. In the Biblical outlook, movements of feeling are no less spiritual than acts of thought.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cited according to the translation of Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>26</sup> A. Heschel, *The Prophets, Vol. II* (New York et al.: Harper & Row, 1975), 38f. Heschel uttered thoughts of this kind as early as in his dissertation *Die Prophetie*,

God's compassion for earthly events is not understood as a form of weakness but rather as a sign of his relatedness with his people, which forms the basis of the assurance of coming ransom. This ransom of Israel also means God's ransom, that Israel's exile is coming to an end and the New Jerusalem will be erected. By the same means, Israel's ransom stands for the ransom of creation: As the sun, moon, stars and constellations, heaven and earth, as the mountains and hills have wept for Jerusalem, they will also rejoice with Jerusalem (*Midr. Lam* 1:23 end [Buber 30b]).

These rabbinic traditions connected to *b. Hag 12b* clearly show that the rabbinical literature does not only broach the issue of the relation between heavenly and earthly realm but, vice versa, also acts on the assumption that the events on earth influence those in the heavenly world.

Palestinian tradition in particular emphasizes the localisation of the heavenly temple. It is obvious in this context that the exegesis of Ex 15:17 is important. Hence we read in *Mek Shirata* X (149f.), explaining Ex 15:17:

'The place for thee to dwell in (makhon leshibhtekha).' Corresponding thy dwelling place (*mekhuwan leshibhtekha*). This is one of the statements to the effect that the Throne below corresponds to and is the counterpart of the Throne in heaven. And it also says: 'I have surely built Thee a house of habitation, a place for Thee to dwell in forever' (1Kgs 8:13). Quoted according to the translation by Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Vol. II, 78.

This Al-Tiqre-Midrash reads "mekhuwwan—corresponding, in line opposite of" instead of "makhon—place to dwell, location." In the bible, in Ex 15:17, we find a synonymous *parallelismus membrorum*:

"On the mountain of your inheritance  
the place for dwelling you made, O Lord,  
the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established."

However, based on an Al-Tiqre-Midrash, the *Mekhilta* to Ex 15:17 reads:

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published in Cracow in 1936. The first edition of the English release was published in 1962. Concerning the concept of the godly pathos in rabbinic literature, cf. the important work by P. Kuhn, *Gottes Trauer und Klage in der rabbinischen Literatur (Talmud und Midrasch)* (AGAJU 13; Leiden: Brill, 1978).

On the mountain of your inheritance  
in line opposite of your dwelling you made, O Lord,  
the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established.

Thus the synonymous *parallelismus membrorum* is changed into an *antithetic parallelismus membrorum*. Therewith it expresses that the heavenly throne is on a vertical axis with the earthly one. *y. Ber.* 4:5 (8c) explicitly mentions the celestial sanctum being situated opposite to the earthly one. Therefore, these two axes mark the directions in which one should face when praying. At first glance, this very concrete image may sound like visionariness; however, it has an important function with regard to the rabbinic concept of the holiness of Jerusalem and the temple place. For in this vein, the heavenly temple reserves a permanent place for its counterpart on earth. This codifies the location of the earthly sanctuary cosmologically, so to speak. If the heavenly temple is located explicitly in the heavenly world, the importance of the cult, especially of the cult site, is specified objectively. It seems plausible that this statement was of eminent importance after the destruction of the sanctuary and after the Bar-Kochba Revolt, since it was prohibited for Jews to enter the Holy City during this epoch.<sup>27</sup> By means of the structure of the heavenly world and the location of the heavenly temple, rabbinic tradition preserves the remembrance of the temple in earthly Jerusalem and the holiness of Mount Zion.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. THE LITURGICAL DIMENSION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE WORLD AND GOD'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL

What is also important for the relation between the heavenly and the earthly realm is the statement in *b. Hag 12b* that hosts of ministering angels reside in the fifth heaven, singing hymns of praise at night and remaining silent by day in Israel's honour:

'dwelling:' is where there are platoons of ministering angels, singing by night and silent by day for the sake of Israel's glory: 'By day the Lord

<sup>27</sup> Concerning the prohibition of entering Jerusalem after the Bar Kochba Revolt, cf. e.g. Sh. Safrai, "The Era of Mishnah and Talmud (70–640)," in *A History of Jewish People* (ed. H.H. Ben-Sassoon; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 334.

<sup>28</sup> For an anthology of numerous texts including interpretations, cf. Ego, *Himmel*, 73–110.

commands his loving kindness and in the night his song is with me' (Ps 42:9)... And how do we know that it is called heaven? 'Look down from heaven and see, even from your holy and glorious habitation' (Isa. 63:15).<sup>29</sup>

In this context, the relationship between the events in heaven and those on earth are depicted in chronological order. As Peter Schäfer and Karl E. Grözinger have pointed out, this assertion is the centre of the rabbinical angelology for which the conception of the rivalry between angels and men is the determinant topic par excellence. Traditional concepts, whereby the heavenly world obtains priority and the earthly events are likewise a reflection of the heavenly events, undergo a decided re-interpretation: it is no longer the angels who sing God's praise in the beginning and the earthly congregation that joins in, instead, Israel becomes entitled to praise God first; only then do the Heavenly Hosts respond. This chronological course signifies that the angels are also subordinated to men. Thus, the tradition emphasises the distinguished relationship between God and Israel and God's love towards his people in a narrative way.<sup>30</sup>

This message is met with acknowledgement in other rabbinic traditions. Due to Israel's sorrow and grief concerning the destruction of the temple, the Holy One, blessed be He, does not tolerate any further doxology and hymns in the heavens; the angels have to relapse into silence (*Midr. Lam Petihta* 24, Buber 12b). According to *b. Hag* 13b, the wings of the heavenly beings were diminished as a reaction to the destruction of the temple. In this way, the Midrash tries to harmonise between Isa 6:2 and Ezek 1:5. Whereas in the first text, six wings of the celestial beings are mentioned, the latter refers to four wings.<sup>31</sup>

Like the above traditions concerning God's refusal to enter the celestial sanctuary, these traditions also have to be understood on the basis of the theologumenon of the *sympatheia theou*. The heavenly world does not serve as a model for the earthly world. On the contrary, it reflects the events occurring on earth.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen. Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung* (SJ 8; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975); cf. also K.E. Grözinger, *Musik und Gesang in der Theologie der frühen jüdischen Literatur* (TSAJ 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1982), 83–97.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ego, *Himmel*, 152ff.

<sup>32</sup> Concerning the idea of God's pathos, see above.

#### 4. ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE RABBINICAL CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD

Certain elements of the rabbinical conception of the world in *b. Hag 12b* also reflect a certain value system: righteousness, justice and mercy, as well as life and peace, have their stable place in the highest of the total of seven heavens and hence head the hierarchy conceived here. A brief glimpse at the context of our passage shows that righteousness, judgment and mercy belong to the ten things by which the world was created.

Said R. Zutra bar Tubiah said Rab: With ten things was the world created: wisdom and understanding, reason and strength, rebuke and might, by righteousness and judgment, loving kindness and compassion.<sup>33</sup>

Another tradition, also delivered in *b. Hag 12a*, shows that righteousness even has to be regarded as the foundation of the cosmos.

As to the earth, on what does it stand? On pillars: 'Who shakes the earth out of her place and the pillars thereof tremble' (Job 9:6).

As to the pillars, they stand on water: 'To him who spread forth the earth above the mountains' (Ps 104:6).

As to the waters, they are on mountains: 'The waters stood above the mountains' (Ps 104:6).

The mountains are on the wind: 'For lo, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind' (Amos 4:13).

The wind is on the storm: 'The wind, the storm makes its substance' (Ps 148:8).

And the storm is suspended from the arm of the Holy One, blessed be he: 'And underneath are the everlasting arms' (Deut 33:27).

But they say: The world rests on twelve pillars: 'He set the borders to the peoples according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel' (Deut 32:8).

And others say: Seven pillars: 'She has hewn out her seven pillars' (Prov 9:1).

R. Eleazar b. Shammua says, One pillar, called righteousness: 'But righteousness is the foundation of the world' (Prov 10:25).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>34</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

At the beginning of the passage, the reader first gets the impression that he is dealing with a text of a pure cosmological nature. However, with its biblical quotations and its dictum that the storm is suspended from God's arm, it becomes clear that cosmology in this context has a clear theological impact. Finally, a further aspect is introduced to the scenario. By stating that the world rests upon twelve pillars, meaning Israel, or only on one pillar, namely the righteous, cosmology is personalised and linked to ethics. It therefore becomes apparent that, as in the seven-layered world model in *b. Hag 12b*, natural, theological and ethical dimensions are intertwined in this cosmological concept. The idea of the world as a flat earth leaning on pillars becomes personal as well as ethical and thus clarifies man's responsibility for the world's continuance.<sup>35</sup> The actual world fundament, the basis of existence, is composed of the deeds of the righteous—according to rabbinic thinking, a man who lives according to the Torah. Against this background, we are able to understand the idea that man's sin can even bring about the ruin of creation: According to a tradition of Mishna Avot (*m. Avot* 5:1), it is the sinners who destroy the world.

With regard to the cosmological concept of *b. Hag 12b*, it becomes clear that the heavenly world serves as a place where the principles of the world's existence are deposited. By placing these values in the seventh heaven, in close proximity to God and his angels, a special emphasis is given to the relevance of these values.

## 5. ESCHATOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE RABBINICAL CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD

Furthermore, *b. Hag 12b* also contains an eschatological impact. The idea that the world is administered by the principle of justice, which rewards everyone according to his deeds, is also exemplified with regard to the after-life fate of the individual. This is evident if we consider the statement that the third heaven contains the reward for the righteous in the form of manna:

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<sup>35</sup> Regarding this text, see also Schäfer, *Cosmology*, 3, left.

‘clouds (shekhakim):’ is where the millstones stand and grind manna for the righteous: ‘And he commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven and caused manna to rain upon them for food’ (Ps 78:23–24).<sup>36</sup>

Although this statement seems slightly strange, a closer look at the Aggadic tradition shows that for rabbis the term manna was used as a symbol for the reward of the righteous in the world to come. Hence, it is stated in *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* that the manna will be distributed to the pious in the world to come. In *Mek. wa-yassa* 4, explaining Ex 16:11, we read:

Come and see how the manna used to come down for Israel. The north wind would come and sweep the desert; then rain would come down and level the ground; then the dew would come up and the wind would blow upon it. The ground thus became a sort of a golden table on which the manna would come down and from which the Israelites would take it and eat. If God thus provided for those who provoked Him, how much the more will He in the future pay a good reward to the righteous!<sup>37</sup>

This tradition seems to be based in turn on *syrBar* 29:8, whereby at the end of the days in the messianic time not only nature will be in fertile bounteousness but there will also be treasures of manna coming down to those who have been spared from the Last Judgement.

In this context of eschatological reward, we can also understand our text’s statement in *b. Hag* 12b whereby the souls of the righteous find their place in the seventh heaven directly close to God’s throne. This motif expresses the appreciation of the righteous who are elected to have their dominion in close proximity to God himself and his holy angels. Also the image of the dew with which God will once make the dead alive again—also located in the seventh heaven—belongs to this context, as the resurrection of the dead will lead to the Last Judgement which repays everyone according to their actions. Some concrete elements that are integral part of the cosmos therefore refer to God’s justice, which will establish itself for every single individual after death and in the world to come, respectively. At the same time, those images entail the motivation of living the life of a “righteous” person in order to participate in this reward.

<sup>36</sup> Cited according to the translation of Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, ad. loc.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted from a translation by Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Vol. II, 110.

To sum up: the rabbinic texts from the Talmud and Midrash, which contain cosmological statements, attest that the relationship between heavenly and earthly worlds can be described in very different ways. Apart from the anti-apocalyptic implications of *b. Hag 12b*, this passage refers to natural phenomena and has an aetiological impact. Furthermore, *b. Hag 12b* and other rabbinic traditions contain temple cultic, liturgical, ethical and eschatological dimensions which show a significant relationship to the earthly realm. The rabbinic image of the otherworldly realm may therefore be characterised as a multi-functional approach to reality, which serves to stabilise and authorise religious values, such as the holiness of Jerusalem or God's love towards Israel. With regard to this aspect, it seems crucial and specific for rabbinic thinking that historical events on earth have a strong impact on the celestial sphere. If Israel and its holy temple are troubled, the heavenly realms are also afflicted.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I would like to thank Ms. Judith Spangenberg, Osnabrück, for translating the text.



# BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH: LIMINAL VISIONS IN 4EZRA<sup>1</sup>

Hindy Najman

Be it life or death, we crave only reality.  
*Walden*, Henry David Thoreau

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the opening chapters of 4Ezra, we find Ezra unable, even in sleep, to escape memories of destruction. Jerusalem was the place for the divine presence, priestly ritual and communal prayer. But after the destruction of the Second Temple, there is no longer even a place to mourn. Even the Diaspora is transformed when the community can no longer identify with the locale of Judea as a center. Consider the opening lines of 4Ezra:

3:1

In the thirtieth year of the destruction of our country, I, Shealtiel, who is Ezra, was in Babylon. And I lay on my bed. I was upset and thoughts welled up in my heart because I saw the destruction of Zion...

4Ezra opens amidst confusion and chaos. Ezra is surrounded by destruction, uprooted community and discarded relics of the past.

Shealtiel *is* Ezra who is associated with the Second Temple. Ezra in 4Ezra writes as though the Second Temple had not yet been built. This circumvention of the Second Temple is not new to 4Ezra, but has been noted as part of the self-presentation and historical narrative of many of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as other later rabbinic traditions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The text of 4Ezra cited in this article is a new translation of the Syriac version of 4Ezra, prepared together with Robin Darling Young for a forthcoming commentary on 4Ezra in the Walter de Gruyter series Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature.

<sup>2</sup> There is an ambivalence about the new Temple even in the Ezra-Nehemiah tradition, where the reaction to the rebuilding is a mixture of joy and weeping (Ezra 3:12–13). See M.A. Knibb, "Exile in the Damascus Document," *JSTOT* 25 (1983): 99–117 and "The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period," *Heythrop*

Perhaps, we could see this as a kind of consolation: what has not yet been built cannot have been destroyed. What distinguishes such consolation from delusion is the long-standing sense that the Second Temple never was the restoration of the First Temple. But it is also notable that when we do finally find expressions of hope in 4Ezra, it is expressed not as new temple or rebuilt Jerusalem, but as the hope for a heavenly realm,<sup>3</sup> another world which is home to the righteous and which is imagined as the treasure houses of the soul. Perhaps there is no home to be found in the world anymore, but in the otherworld of the paths of the righteous:

7.93

The second path: that they see the overturning in which the evil souls are overturned and beaten in it and the torture that is reserved for them.

7.94

The third path: that they see the testimony that their creator testifies about them

because in their lives they kept the law which was entrusted to them.

7.95

The fourth path: that they see and they come to understand the rest that now they are gathered in their treasuries they rest in a great rest and by angels they are protected and the glory which is kept for them in the last time.

Ezra's challenge is twofold: 1) to accept the destruction of the Temple as a divine act—the First Temple according to the text, but the Second Temple for its readers—and 2) to assume a position of leadership within the community so that he can receive revelation again at Sinai.

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*Journal* 17 (1976): 253–72. See also L.H. Schiffman, "Community Without Temple: the Qumran community's withdrawal from the Jerusalem temple," *Gemeinde ohne Tempel. Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum* (eds. B. Ego, A. Lange and P. Pilhofer; WUNT 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 267–84, and "Jerusalem in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Centrality of Jerusalem: Historical Perspectives* (ed. M. Poorthuis; Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1996). See also my recent discussion in "Towards a Study of the Uses of the Concept of Wilderness in Ancient Judaism," *DSD* 13 (2006): 99–113.

<sup>3</sup> On the idea in other texts of restoration beyond physical return and rebuilding, see e.g. B. Halpern-Amaru, "Exile and Return in Jubilees," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (ed. J.M. Scott; JSJSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 127–44 and L.H. Schiffman, "The Concept of Restoration in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (ed. J.M. Scott; JSJSup 72; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 203–21.

## 2. OTHERWORLD IN 4EZRA

The world that Ezra knows is falling apart before his very eyes (4Ezra 4.26–27):

4.26

And he answered and said to me: "if you will continue to be, you will see,  
if you live long you will be astounded because the world is rushing to pass away,

4.27

because it cannot continue to contain [endure to hold] what was promised to the righteous [after the flood] because this world is full of sighing and many sicknesses.

Although there is a remnant of the earthly, a sort of "here and now," it is rushing to pass away. No new earthly place is depicted in 4Ezra, only the heavenly treasure houses destined for the righteous and the torturous *Sheol* ordained for the corrupt, lawless and evil ones.<sup>4</sup> As a response to the destruction of his reality, Ezra will come to focus on these otherworldly realms.

Ezra tries, in vain as it seems at first, to understand what has happened to the previous inhabitants of his world. He repeatedly asks for understanding of what has happened and of what exactly the Most High has in mind. Since his own world is destroyed, he seeks clarity, confirmation and reassurance about the paths to *Sheol* and the paths to the heavens. He is full of anxiety and psychological torment over the question of good and evil: were the righteous rewarded and did the evil receive their due punishment?

We get a glimpse of the tortures of *Sheol* and the delights of Paradise. The righteous ones eventually see the Most High and the light of paradise. The highest way of the righteous is the gift of seeing the "face of the one to whom they submitted in their lives and of him by whom they are getting ready to be glorified" (4Ezra 7.98):

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<sup>4</sup> On these otherworlds and the figures who tour them, see the work of M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), and *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

7.98

The seventh path: which is greater than all these that were described before that they rejoice in paresia, and that they are encouraged and not ashamed and they rush to see the face of the one to whom they submitted in their lives and of him by whom they are getting ready to be glorified and from him about to receive their payoff.

### 3. ATTRIBUTION TO EZRA

How does the text provide us with insight into the otherworld? Through attribution to a figure of the past<sup>5</sup>—here, Ezra—who is said to have heavenly status and who eventually achieves the wisdom and insight described in the seven ways of the righteous above. This attribution creates a context in which there can be access to an *another* world that is inaccessible to those of “Ezra’s” present.

However, there is a seemingly unsurpassable gulf between the Ezra of the first three visions and the later Ezra who “is taken up with ones like him” (14.48), after achieving a wisdom and insight that supersedes Moses, insofar as he receives the Torah again, along with an additional 70 esoteric traditions. At first, Ezra’s recovery from despair is unimaginable, in much the same way as, initially, the overcoming of destruction is unimaginable in Lamentations, or song is impossible in Psalm 137: “How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?”

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<sup>5</sup> On the practice of pseudepigraphy in general see H. Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (JSJSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 2003). I have discussed this practice in the context of 4Ezra in particular in my article “How Should We Contextualize Pseudepigrapha? Imitation and Emulation in 4Ezra,” in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (eds A. Hilhorst, E. Puech, and E.J.C. Tigchelaar; JSJSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2007) and my forthcoming work on the subject, “Discourse Attributed to a Heavenly Founder: Emulation and Imitation,” in *Prophetic Ends: Concepts of the Revelatory in Late Ancient Judaism*. See also M.J. Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls: Categories and Functions,” in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds E.G. Chazon and M.E. Stone; STDJ 31; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1–26; J.J. Collins, “Pseudepigraphy and Group Formation in Second Temple Judaism,” *ibid.*, 43–58; D. Dimant, “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha at Qumran,” *DSD* 1 (1994): 151–59; R.A. Kraft, “The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity,” in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J.C. Reeves; SBLEJL 6; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 55–86; J.A. Sanders, “Introduction: Why the Pseudepigrapha?” in *Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (eds J.H. Charlesworth and C.A. Evans; JSPSup 14, SSEJC 2; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 13–19; M.E. Stone, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Pseudepigrapha,” *DSD* 3 (1996): 270–95.

Ezra is, it seems, paralyzed by the destruction of the temple and by his despair and confusion. Much will have to happen before we can imagine him receiving new revelation at Sinai. Yet, the attribution to Ezra also accomplishes an association with hope and rebuilding.<sup>6</sup> For Ezra was the bridge from destruction to hope, functioning as the new Moses for the Second Temple community. See Neh. 8:1–8:

When the seventh month arrived—the Israelites being [settled] in their towns—the entire people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses with which the LORD had charged Israel. (2) On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation, men and women and all who could listen with understanding. (3) He read from it, facing the square before the Water Gate, from the first light until midday, to the men and the women and those who could understand; the ears of all the people were given to the scroll of the Teaching. (4) Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden tower made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Ananiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah at his right, and at his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadanah, Zechariah, Meshullam. (5) Ezra opened the scroll in the sight of the people, for he was above all the people; as he opened it, all the people stood up. (6) Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen,’ with hands upraised. Then they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD with their faces to the ground. (7) Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites explained the Teaching to the people, while the people stood in their places. (8) They read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading.

Already in the Ezra-Nehemiah traditions, Ezra is linked to Moses. Moreover, he is celebrated as an exemplary scribe. Indeed, Ezra is considered another Moses in many traditions, e.g., *Tosephta Sanhedrin* 4:5:

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<sup>6</sup> For the diverse, but overlapping ways in which this figure is imagined across textual traditions, see R.A. Kraft, “‘Ezra’ Materials in Judaism and Christianity,” *ANRW* II.19.1 (1979): 119–36, available online at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rs/rak/publics/judaism/Ezra.htm>; and M.E. Stone, “An introduction to the Esdras writings,” in *Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Dead Sea Scrolls*. Vol. 1 of *Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Armenian Studies; Collected Papers* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 144; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 305–20, and Stone’s commentary, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

Rabbi Yossi said: Ezra was sufficiently worthy that the Torah could have been given through him if Moses had not preceded him.

Thinking about Ezra and Moses as parallel lawgivers is illuminating, but still there is an unresolved question: how do we go from an “Ezra” who is displaced due to the first exile thirty years after the destruction of the First Temple, to an “Ezra” who is in the heavenly realm and who comes to understand the underworld of *Sheol* as well as the paradise-like realm, the place of the treasures of the soul in the heavens, a place of eternal bliss and light? Who is this Ezra who has come to understand the otherworld?

#### 4. EZRA’S EDUCATION

In 4Ezra, Ezra comes to construct a new context for his revelation at Sinai as he ascends into a heavenly realm and joins those who are like him. This transformation does not only involve his own visions as “Ezra”; rather, through each vision “Ezra” is linked with other remote figures of the past.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as it records Ezra’s interrogation and transformation in the form of seven visions, the text becomes a “how-to” manual.<sup>8</sup>

“Ezra” participates in his *exilic past*, i.e., the first exile, by identifying with exempla of the past, but is nevertheless transformed by his struggles with his own present and his exchanges with the angels. He is identified with previous exemplars: Job, Abraham, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Moses. It is very important that this identification does not happen in the context of Ezekiel’s Babylon or Jeremiah’s Jerusalem, but in the midst of the rubble and refuse of destruction. The present world is erased and Ezra identifies with remote figures of the past who, presumably, have also been taken up, and it is these figures he will ultimately join in the heavens at the end of his seventh vision.<sup>9</sup> I do

<sup>7</sup> See my essay “How Should We Contextualize Pseudepigrapha?” for the way such other ideal figures function in this pseudonymously attributed work.

<sup>8</sup> On this theme of the transformed visionary in other contexts see M. Himmelfarb, “Revelation and Rapture: The Transformation of the Visionary in the Ascent Apocalypses,” in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium* (eds J.J. Collins and J.H. Charlesworth; JSPSup 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 79–90.

<sup>9</sup> For another tradition about such figures who are taken up to dwell in the otherworld, see e.g. *Apoc. Zeph.* 9:4–5, where the visionary finds Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David in heaven, as “friends” of the angels.

not want to suggest that the text is unjustifiably optimistic. There is no new temple and no new inhabited space is constructed in Jerusalem. Instead, new hope and new revelation happen in a liminal space, i.e. a place that is not a rebuilt temple or Jerusalem but is inflected through a destruction that was never overcome.

Ezra comes to exemplify the new community of Jerusalem,<sup>10</sup> since he is not merely the Ezra of the past, nor is merely he a new Ezra, constructed in the face of 70 C.E. Rather, Ezra absorbs the struggles and experiences of past exemplars into a new configuration.

Is it really possible for a figure who is credited with the founding of the Second Temple to have found a way out of the paralysis of destruction that does not lead obviously and only to a redeemed, physically rebuilt temple? The narrative of the seven visions provides us with an answer. While the answer is affirmative, it is also painful and tragic, leaving readers with the harsh reality of a temple that is not rebuilt, but instead with a textual tradition that is at once both old and regiven. It is revealed *again* to Ezra in a place of exile, which is at the same time also Sinai. In a recent essay, I wrote the following about exile and wilderness:

Although wilderness can be understood to signify suffering and destruction, it can also be used as the locus for healing and moral transformation, where it becomes the locus for spiritual purification. This essay seeks to understand how it is that the barren terrain, which was conceived of as punishment for transgression, can also be used as a place of purification—how the suffering of wilderness can be overcome in the very place of that suffering.<sup>11</sup>

In 4Ezra we can see a similar transformation as Ezra himself becomes an example for us of how to overcome destruction and enter a heavenly realm.

But 4Ezra also issues a warning to those who abandon the law and refuse the path of wisdom. Ezra begins with an uncomprehending Jobian stance in his challenge to God (4Ezra 3.30–33):

3.30

... You destroyed your people, but you guarded the ones that you hate.

3.31

But you didn't let anyone one know how your way could be perceived.  
Has Babylon done better than Zion?

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<sup>10</sup> Suggested by Robin Darling Young (personal communication), February 2006.

<sup>11</sup> H. Najman, "The Concept of Wilderness in Ancient Judaism," 100.

3.32

Or, did you know another people more than Israel? Or what tribe believed in your very own covenant as Jacob has?

3.33

Those whose wages were not seen and their work did not produce fruit; for indeed I have passed around to nations and I saw that they are flourishing and they did not observe your commandments.

He cannot make sense of his world, and he continues to probe his angelic visitor Uriel and the Most High for answers to his questions about the world, and the destruction. Ultimately in the third vision Ezra receives wisdom about the group of righteous in paradise and of the corrupt in *Sheol's* torture chamber. Although the dwellers of the earth are mentioned many times, there is no psychological or physical space of security or permanence. Then, in the fourth vision he is granted a vision of Zion, first as a mourning woman, and then as Zion herself.<sup>12</sup> But this vision is possible only after Ezra learns how to mourn, as a Jeremiah chanting Lamentations.<sup>13</sup>

According to 4Ezra, what is permanent and immutable is not the temple and not Zion, but rather the textual tradition. Ezra will have to acknowledge this, which he does only after the first three visions. After this acknowledgement, he is ushered into a wholly different kind of revelation. But in order to fully internalize and process this situation, Ezra will have to accept the destruction and at the same time the task that he has been given, which is to serve as a source of strength and hope for the remnant. It is only when he both mourns *and* overcomes

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<sup>12</sup> On this vision of the woman Zion see e.g. E.M. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas* (JSPSup 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), and H. Lichtenberger, "Zion and the destruction of the Temple in 4 Ezra 9–10," *Gemeinde ohne Tempel: zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum* (eds. B. Ego, A. Lange and P. Pilhofer; WUNT 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 239–49.

<sup>13</sup> Lament and mourning, in the tradition of Lamentations and Jeremiah, is a strong presence in ancient Jewish traditions, especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls. See e.g. A. Berlin, "Qumran Laments and the Study of Lament Literature," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. E. Chazon; STDJ 48; Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003), 1–17; J. Carmignac, "La théologie de souffrance dans les hymnes de Qumran," *RdQ* 11 (1961), 365–86; M.P. Horgan, "A Lament Over Jerusalem (4Q179)," *JSS* 18 (1973), 222–34; H. Pabst, "Eine Sammlung von Klagen in den Qumranfunden (4Q179)," in *Qumrân: sa piété, sa théologie et son milieu* (ed. M. Delcor; Paris: Ducolot; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1978), 137–49.

his own personal loss that he can receive revelation, the new and the old. To do this, he must fast, remove himself from inhabited space, and undergo a kind of death, only to be resurrected by his instructor, Uriel.

With his mourning, Ezra comes to identify with the destruction of Zion. In that moment of his lament, a new Ezra emerges: full of compassion, insight and acceptance of the divine punishment of destruction. In fact, after he sees Zion, he collapses, only to be revived by Uriel. Ezra is then presented with a detailed interpretation of the symbolic vision he received of the mourning woman. He will then be ushered into two apocalyptic, Daniel-like visions. Finally, in vision seven, Ezra receives a revelation on a mountain and ultimately becomes a heavenly being as he joins other mythical figures in a liminal space, which is the only reality for those who have achieved righteousness. Ezra's revelation is inflected through his experience of destruction. He can only receive revelation and assume his prophetic and heavenly calling after fully accepting and internalizing the destruction.

## 5. THE LIMINAL STATE AND SPACE OF REVELATION

In 4Ezra revelation is received only in a space that is not inhabited and explicitly apart from the remaining community. This place which is between heaven and earth is repeatedly depicted as death-like. Already in the third vision, Ezra fasts and nearly dies:

5.13

These signs were commanded to me to tell you  
but if you beseech as of now and fast for seven days  
even greater things than these.

5.14

And I awoke and my body trembled a lot, and my soul was weary as if  
it had departed.

He is then revived by the angel and placed upon his feet.

5.15

And that angel who was speaking with me grabbed me and gave me  
strength and stood me up on my feet.

5.16

And it was in that night, and it was the second  
Paslatiel came unto me, the head of the people.  
And he said to me: where are you and for what is your face downcast?

5.17

Or do you not know that faith was placed  
upon you with respect to Israel  
in the place of their imprisonment?

Then he is given just enough sustenance to ensure his own survival,  
but not enough to compromise his liminal state:

5.18

Stand then and eat a little bread that you not leave them as a shepherd  
his flock in the hand of the ferocious wolves.

5.19

And I said to him, Go from me and don't come around me for seven  
days, and then come to, and I will make you listen to me. When I spoke  
to him, he took himself away from me. The prayer of Ezra.

5.20

I fasted seven days as I had rested just as Rameel, the angel, commanded  
me.

5.21

It was after seven days, and behold again the considerations of my heart  
were increasing greatly.

5.22

My soul received the spirit of understanding. And again I began to speak  
before the Most High, these words of supplication and prayer.

Finally, we see that through the prolonged fasting he is finally able to  
receive the *ruah hokhmah*, the spirit of wisdom, and he approaches  
the Most High in prayer.

As the fourth vision is introduced, again Ezra is instructed to restrict  
his eating. This time, however, he is told not to fast wholly, but to eat  
only flowers:

9.23

You then, if you be apart for seven additional days, but you should not  
fast again in them,

9.24

and go to a field of flowers where a house had not been built, and eat  
from the flowers of a field only, and meat do not taste and wine do not  
drink, but flowers only,

9.25

and to the Most High earnestly I am coming to you and speaking with  
you.

9.26

And I went as he commanded me to a field that is called Arpad  
and I sat there near the flowers of the land and I ate from the herbs of  
the pastureland, and their eating was to me satisfaction.

This vision, again, happens in a liminal space and to an Ezra who is in a liminal state.

9.31

Look! I am planting in all of you my law in you and it will make in you fruits of righteousness and you shall be glorious in it forever.

9.36

but we who have received the law and sin, perish with our heart that accepted it.

9.37

Your law, then, does not perish but remains in its glories.

9.38

And while I was saying these things in my heart I lifted up my eyes and saw a woman on the right side.

She was in pain and weeping in a loud voice.

And while she moaned in her soul,

she was very sad and her clothes were torn and dust was cast upon her head

The woman is ultimately shown to be the destroyed Zion, but in a different kind of vision:

- 1) it comes only after Ezra pronounces the immutability of the law, whereas earlier he said that the law was also destroyed;
- 2) but the interpretation of this vision will only come after he pronounces a lament over Zion, at which point there is an earthquake and he sees destroyed Zion and he becomes a corpse (again!).

Uriel lifts him out of his death-like state and he is then able to receive three revelations without the assistance of an angel. Has Ezra now become an angel?<sup>14</sup> At the end of the fourth vision, Ezra is told explicitly why he was to remain in the field for his vision. It was impossible

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<sup>14</sup> We might draw comparisons between Ezra's angel-like transformation and traditions of priestly ascent or communion with angels present in Qumran texts. See E. Chazon, "Human and Angelic Prayer in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. E. Chazon; STDJ 48; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 35–47, and her "Liturgical Communion with the Angels at Qumran," *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran* (eds. D.K. Falk, F.G. Martínez and E.M. Schuller; STDJ 35; Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2000), 95–105; see also E.R. Wolfson, "Seven Mysteries of Knowledge: Qumran Esotericism Recovered," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (eds. H. Najman and J. Newman; JSJSup 83; Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2004), 177–213.

to receive the vision of a heavenly city amidst the creations of human beings.<sup>15</sup>

10.51

For this reason I said to you, remain in the field where no house is built,

10.52

for I knew that the Most High was preparing to show you all of these things.

10.53

For this reason I said to you, come to a place where there is no foundation of a building.

10.54

For it was not possible for a work of human beings to remain in a place where the city of the Most High was ready to be revealed.

10.55

But you then, do not fear and do not be shaken in your heart, but go and see the light of her glory and the height of her building as much as the sight of your eyes is permitting you to see.

10.56

And after these things you will hear as far as the hearing of your ears allows you to hear,

10.57

for you are blessed more than many and you name is placed before the Most High as few names are placed.

10.58

But the next night you will remain here,

10.59

and the Most High will show you a vision of these manifestations that the Most High will show to the dwellers of the earth in the final days

And then again he is told to stay in that unbuilt place so that he can see what the "Most High wills to the dwellers of the earth in the final days."

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<sup>15</sup> On this theme see M.E. Stone, "The city in 4 Ezra," *JBL* 126 (2007): 402–7. For a negative view of cities and inhabited places in Jewish literature from other contexts, see e.g. S. Fraade's illuminating discussion in his *Enoch and His Generation: Pre-Israelite Hero and History in Postbiblical Interpretation* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984), 207 and 219; for Philonic thought see V. Nikiprowetzky, "Le thème du désert chez Philon d'Alexandrie," *Études philoniennes* (1996): 293–308, and D.T. Runia, "The Idea and the Reality of the City in the Thought of Philo of Alexandria," *JHI* 38 (2000): 361–79.

12.51

I then sat in the field for seven days as he commanded me, and was eating only of the flowers of the field and my food was from the herbs in those days,

13.1

and it came to pass after seven days that I saw a vision in the night.

Finally, there is the seventh vision. In that vision Ezra receives the revelation that restores the old and makes possible the new. It is also here that he comes to be with the ones who are “like him” when he is taken up:

14.36

Unto me, then, no man will come near, (neither will he) beseech me for forty days.

14.37

And I then took these five men as he ordered me and I went to the field and I waited there as he told me,

14.38

and it was the next day and look! A voice called to me and said, Ezra, Ezra! Open your mouth and drink some of the drink I am giving you to drink.

14.39

And I opened my mouth and I saw...

I have a full cup, but it was full as water. And the image of water was for fire.

14.40

And I took and drank, and it was that as I was drinking it, behold! My heart poured forth understanding, and my breast gushed forth wisdom, and my spirit was guarding the memory,

14.41

and my mouth was open and not shut.

14.42

The Most High gave wisdom to them (i.e., the five men), and they were writing these things that were spoken in translation/transmission/order in letters of signs that they did not know, and I sat there forty days.

They wrote in the daytime,

14.43

but in the nighttime they ate only bread.

I then was speaking, but at night I wasn't silent.

14.44

Ninety-four books were written by them in forty days.

14.45

And it was that when the forty days were completed the Most High spoke to me and said to me, these twenty-four books that were written before me place in public, and they will read in them, those who are worthy and those who are unworthy of the people;

14.46

But these seventy you are going to keep, and you will complete them for the wise of your people.

14.47

For in them there are canals of wisdom and springs of wisdom and a light of knowledge.

14.48

And I did thus. In the seventh year of the sixth week, from five thousand years and three months and twenty two days after creation, and in them was Ezra taken away and taken up to the place of those who resemble him.

After he wrote all of these things, then he was called scribe of the knowledge of the most high unto eternity.

Finished is the first discourse of Ezra

I want to emphasize that the place for vision is spatially and psychologically liminal: neither heavenly nor earthly. The experience of the destruction of the second temple is turned on its head: instead of it paralyzing Ezra, exile becomes the place where God is again accessible. Ezra must deny his physical and psychological state and submit wholly to the realm of otherness, the not-of-this-world, which will ultimately usher him into a permanently liminal space where he is taken up with those who are likened to him. We might suggest that perhaps Moses, Enoch and Abraham are similarly exemplars mentioned throughout the seven visions who achieved knowledge and insight and who, perhaps, like Ezra, enjoyed the seventh path of the righteous in the treasure houses of the heavens.

## 6. EZRA'S TRANSFORMATION INTO AN OTHERWORLDLY BEING IN PARADISE

After receiving the answer to his persistent and even tenacious requests, Ezra is transformed as he seeks a new heart and Solomonic wisdom with which he can understand the world around him. He recognizes and—so it seems, accepts—divine judgment and the eternal nature of the law.

Ezra's transformation throughout the seven visions is truly remarkable. He is transformed from one who refuses to accept divine judgment and to overcome his own mourning, to one who overcomes his personal tragedy and who then mourns on behalf of the people and Zion, finally receiving new laws, esoteric and exoteric. He emerges as

one who becomes another, even as he is taken up with others who are “like him.”

This is a gradual and deliberate process in 4Ezra. We hear of some radical and positive developments in chapter 8 as he is preparing to receive the fourth and most transforming revelation. So in 8.6 Ezra prays for a new heart—after learning of the seven ways of the righteous and the seven ways of the evil. Shortly after this, in 8.19, we get an interpolation in the Syriac version where Ezra’s prayer to the Most High is introduced as: “the beginning of the words of Ezra’s prayer who prayed before he was taken up.” After the fourth vision we see Ezra achieving higher levels, until he finally receives the esoteric and exoteric visions in the seventh vision, where we are told in 14.9: “but you will be taken away from among men and you will be with my son and with those that resemble you until the times are completed.”<sup>16</sup> Ezra, the figure throughout 4Ezra, is transformed as he becomes the exemplary remnant after the destruction. He is both the “old” Ezra, the leader and, we are told, the only remaining prophet (12.42); but we are also taught how he overcomes the paralysis of destruction. He begins in the impossible place, where song and prayer in revelation is unthinkable and even traumatic and troubling, and completes his journey with the wisdom of light.

Ezra of 4Ezra, however, achieves this light by redefining his own context of destruction and transforming it into a new context for divine revelation. He does not rebuild an earthly temple, but instead enters a heavenly treasure house where he can delight in the glory of the Lord with those like him:

14.48

In the seventh year of the sixth week from five thousand years and three months and twenty two days after creation, and in them was Ezra taken away and taken up to the place of those who resemble him.

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<sup>16</sup> See T.A. Bergren, “Christian influence on the transmission history of 4, 5, and 6 Ezra,” in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (CRINT 3/4; ed. J.C. VanderKam and W. Adler; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), 102–27.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Understanding and then entering the otherworld becomes Ezra's way out of destruction. The only part of his past that survives is the immutable law, which despite the people's inability to live by it, survives and lives through and beyond the destruction. However, for the inhabitants of the earth, the law must be revealed again, for their copy, it seems, was destroyed. The law itself seems to be a way of life, but it may also include the narrative of 4Ezra which preserves within it the wisdom and insight of Ezra's own revelation.

We are given a model for transformation which is inscribed in the new figure of Ezra himself. We watch the transformation of the uncomprehending Ezra into the prophetic Ezra, who can achieve not only the wisdom of Mosaic revelation, but also the new esoteric mysteries never revealed before.

Ezra is able to achieve wisdom and receive revelation. He is ultimately permitted to enter the otherworld only after he identifies with Zion's suffering and destruction. After his lament, Ezra's own revelations are inflected through that destruction. Through his understanding he is granted the light and wisdom that he had requested (as he receives and transmits the revealed 24 exoteric books and 70 esoteric books) and he lives on in heavenly life with those like him in paradise. This is the only place for the righteous ones of light after the destruction.

I conclude with a line from Thoreau's *Walden*: "Be it life or death, we crave only reality." The reality for 4Ezra is no longer of this world. It is above this world or below in *Sheol*. The present world is destroyed and for the time being, there is no possibility of redeeming the *here and now*. All we can hope for in this world is to earn a place in the heavenly treasures in paradise and not suffer in *Sheol*. The worlds and realities of Ezra are the otherworld. After the destruction of the second temple there is no choice but to remove oneself from this world through descent or ascent.

In a way this harsh reality of destruction was anticipated long before the destruction of the second temple. For the first destruction was never fully overcome. There was much ambivalence around the second temple and second temple leadership. The disappointments in the later second temple as reflected in many of the Qumran traditions as well as the final blow to the Jerusalem community and its environs in the years leading up to 70 C.E. and the final destruction—all confirmed the

darkness and despair reflected in the texts produced by exilic hands after the first destruction. Ezra of 4Ezra confronted the first destruction again through the pseudonymous attribution to Ezra and claims about the context of the text's production. This alleged context of the sixth century B.C.E. claims that the author bears witness to 700 years of destruction and hopelessness. The impossibility of overcoming that destruction makes it all the more comprehensible that the only way out is into a new reality of paradise or of Sheol. The place of light and paradise is a place where the righteous inhabitants have gone, where God is perceivable, and where wisdom and light are omnipresent. It is the only reality for Ezra and it becomes the place of his new life.



OMNIA MUTANTUR, NIHIL INTERIT?  
VIRGIL'S KATABASIS AND THE IDEAS OF THE  
HEREAFTER IN OVID'S METAMORPHOSES

Meinolf Vielberg

In Book VI of the *Aeneid*, Virgil describes the descent of Aeneas to the underworld. The *katabasis* begins with the episode of the Golden Bough (cf. *Aen.* 6:136–48), through the possession of which the underworld becomes accessible. Aeneas takes hold of the bough in a grove near Lake Avernus (cf. *Aen.* 6:187–8; 201), where it grows like a mistletoe on an oak (cf. *Aen.* 6:205–9). With it, the hero soothes the anger of Charon (cf. *Aen.* 6:405–7), before he “plants it at the front of the threshold of the palace of Persephone (630ff.), for whom it is meant as a present.”<sup>1</sup> The Golden Bough also enables the son of Venus to eventually return from Hades. Seen from the end of his journey, the descent of Aeneas to the underworld is a detour. The epic hero is not nearing his final destination. Already Macrobius therefore tried to motivate the *katabasis* by supposing that it implies a *gemina doctrina*;<sup>2</sup> later interpreters, too, have pointed out the amalgamation of a literary and a philosophical track of explanation involved in it.<sup>3</sup> Taking Homer’s Nekyia for example, Virgil, on the one hand, gave the underworld in the outskirts of Hades on both banks of the Acheron, in Tartarus and Elysium, and in the grove of Lethe a rich topography, which authors as late as Dante used as a literary model.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, he explained the fate of the deceased in the different places of the underworld as a cyclical journey of the souls, consisting of their purification in Hades, their later rebirth and return to the underworld and their possibly permanent abidance in Elysium. To motivate the doctrine of *metempsychosis*,

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<sup>1</sup> E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI* (4th ed.; Darmstadt: WBG, 1957), 164.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Macr. *Somn.* 1:9:8: “[...] hoc et Vergilius non ignorat, qui, licet argumento suo serviens heroas in inferos relegaverit, non tamen eos abducit a caelo, sed aethera his deputat largiorem, et nosse eos solem suum ac sua sidera profitetur, ut geminae doctrinae observatione praestiterit et poeticae figmentum et philosophiae veritatem.”

<sup>3</sup> Norden, *Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI*, 4, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Norden, *Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI*, 13–4.

Virgil drew on Orphean and Pythagorean ideas which had been part of the archaic and classic Greek literature ever since they were given literary form by Pindar, Empedocles, and Plato.<sup>5</sup> He might have come by these ideas through representatives of the second period of Stoicism such as Poseidonius. The *katabasis* includes a comprehensive, yet far from uniform, explanation of the world that culminates in a historical prophecy. In a magnificent *vaticinium ex eventu*, Anchises announces to his son Aeneas the fate of the Aeneads until Augustus.<sup>6</sup> This "vision of heroes"<sup>7</sup> is modelled on Homer's *Teichoscopy* and facilitates, just as Jupiter's prophecy in Book I and the description of the shield in Book VIII, a historical perspective crucial to the understanding of both the mytho-historical epic as a whole and the Augustan principate as the specific goal of Roman history.

If the notion is correct that all epic-writing after Virgil is first and foremost writing in Virgil's manner,<sup>8</sup> then one would expect to find in Ovid's main work, the *Metamorphoses*, the development of an eschatology that corresponds with Virgil's. It seems, however, that nothing in it resembles the *katabasis* in any way. Neither is there an eschatological panorama of similar ambition nor a single episode of central importance whose power of explanation stands comparison. The speech of Pythagoras, although comparable to a certain extent, only maintains with regard to the world process as a whole that *everything* is (merely) changing and *nothing* ever comes to an end (*Met.* 15.165: *omnia mutantur, nihil interit*).<sup>9</sup> Dying and individual death

<sup>5</sup> W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1977), 440–7.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. H.J. Tschiedel, "Anchises und Aeneas. Die Vater-Sohn-Beziehung im Epos des Vergil," in *Exempla Classica* (ed. P. Neukam; Dialog Schule & Wissenschaft. Klassische Sprachen und Literaturen 21; Munich: Bayerischer Schulbuchverlag, 1987), 141–67.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. S. Grebe, *Die vergilische Heldenschau. Tradition und Fortwirken* (Studien zur klassischen Philologie 47; Frankfurt: Lang, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> The claim that Ovid's use of the mantuan's works is more comprehensive, versatile and original than that of any other Roman author, speaks for itself and corroborates our thesis. It is, however, difficult to verify (for further literature, see V. Buchheit, "Numa-Pythagoras in der Deutung Ovids," in *Hermes* 121 (1993): 77–99, here 89; for the reception of Virgil in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see S. Döpp, "Vergilrezeption in der ovidischen ‚Aeneis‘," *RhM* 134 (1991): 327–46, here: 329, n. 6.

<sup>9</sup> The much-cited word of Pythagoras has elicited many different interpretations. It is quoted from *P. Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoses* (ed. W.S. Anderson; 5th ed.; Stuttgart & Leipzig: Teubner, 1991). The English translations are from *Ovid, Metamorphoses Books I–VIII*. With an English translation by F.J. Miller, revised by G.P. Goold. (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1986) and *Ovid, Metamorphoses Books IX–XV*. With an English translation by F.J. Miller, revised by G.P. Goold

are repeatedly denied (e.g. *Met.* 15.254–55) and explained by the idea of a division of body and soul, which the doctrine of *metempsychosis* is based on. As a matter of fact, this universal principle seems to recur in a number of tales of metamorphosis. Indeed, there are so many of these tales that Hermann Fränkel was led to far-reaching conclusions. Asked, why Ovid chose the metamorphosis as the subject of his great epic, he pointed to a passage in which a metamorphosis is predicted with the words: “You will be separated from yourself and yet be alive” (*Met.* 10:566).

Separation from the self means normally death, but not in a metamorphosis. This leads to another point. We had the occasion to note... that Ovid’s mild disposition shied from a crushing finale, and the device of transformation offered a compromise for the dilemma between life and death. This is clearly indicated in the Myrrha story. Myrrha could not live after a hideous sin she had committed:

‘She knew not what to desire,  
and between fear of death and loathing of life  
she clung to this prayer: ‘O ye gods, if there are deities  
who listen to a confessed sinner: I deserve and accept  
harsh punishment. But lest, surviving, I offend the living,  
or, dead offend the shadows, ban me from both realms,  
change my shape, and deny me both death and life.’ (10,481ff.)

The anxious question of the contrite woman is answered by the poet in person:

Yes, there is some deity who listens to a confessed sinner:  
Her last wish found its gods.

Again, Ovid is not ashamed to intercede in his own narrative and to betray how much it moves him; he feels relieved that Myrrha does not have to die. And when he has reported how she was transformed into the myrrh tree, and how her tears were to be known in all ages to come as precious grains of incense, he even styles the metamorphosis an ‘honor’ rather an punishment (501). On the confines of life and death the repentant sinner is allowed to rise to a new dignity.”<sup>10</sup>

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(Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1999). Virgil is quoted from *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* (ed. R.A.B. Mynors; Oxford: Clarendon, 1969). The English translations are from *Virgil, Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid I–VI*. With an English translation by H.R. Fairclough, revised by G.P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass. & London: HUP, 1999), and from *Virgil, Aeneid VII–XII. The Minor Poems*. With an English translation by H.R. Fairclough (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> H. Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1945), 108.

According to Fränkel's interpretation, Myrrha does *not* need to die. Her wish is being heard and the transformation effected by the Gods leads to a kind of intermediate situation. The result of the metamorphosis almost looks like a *tertium quid* between this world and the world to come. Arguing along this line, one might ask whether Daphne, having been metamorphosed into a laurel tree, really does continue her existence in the form of a plant, if she is capable of putting her prudishness aside and answering Apollo's word of flattery: *finierat Paeon: factis modo laurea ramis / adnuat utque caput visa est agitasse cacumen* (*Met.* 1:566–7: 'Paeon was done. The laurel waved her new-made branches, and seemed to move her head-like top in full consent'). Similarly, one might ask whether the fact that Athena addresses her defeated opponent is meant to intimate to the reader that Arachne after her transformation into a spider is not only going to atone for her sacrilege in the form of her descendants, that is to say as a generic being, but is still an individual with a consciousness of her own, so that punishment has an immediate effect on her (cf. *Met.* 6:136–38). Presumably the only characters who continue to exist merely as generic beings are the Lycian peasants, who were lacking even before their transformation not only communication and sociability but also the consciousness of individual selves (cf. *Met.* 6:361–65). And even though we may neglect, with reference to the relevant literature,<sup>11</sup> the specific problem that arise with regard to the *katasterismos*, namely whether it really was Ovid's intention to suggest that Caesar continues to exist as a celestial star, we have to clarify the significance of the complex narrative such as that of Daedalus and Icarus (cf. *Met.* 8:183–235). If it were not for the collaboration of the Gods, the death of the son, understood as a punishment for the father's guilt as an artist, would remain an incomplete metamorphosis. For it is only when he attempts to murder Perdix, his gifted nephew, that the transformation is effected. When Daedalus pushed him from the top of the Acropolis, Perdix, according to Ovid, is transformed into a partridge that now possesses the individual consciousness of Perdix.<sup>12</sup> *It* rejoiced, Ovid intimated, over the suffer-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. Lieberg, "Apotheose und Unsterblichkeit in Ovids Metamorphosen," in: *Silvae. FS E Zinn* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970), 125–35.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Met.* 250–59, particularly 256–58: *non tamen haec alte volucris sua corpora tollit / nec facit in ramis altoque cacumine nidos; / propter humum volidat [...]*. "Still the bird does not lift her body high in flight nor build her nest on trees or on high points of rock; but she flutters along near the ground [...]."

ing which Daedalus experienced at the death of his son: *Hunc miseritumulo ponentem corpora nato / garrulo limoso prospexit ab elice perdix / et plausit pennis testataque gaudia cantu est* (*Met.* 8:236–8: “As he was consigning the body of his ill-fated son to the tomb, a chattering partridge looked out from a muddy ditch and clapped her wings uttering a joyful note.”). Yet, despite Ovid’s chronologically inconsistent and paradoxical insertion (*Met.* 8:239–40: *unica tunc voleris nec visa prioribus annis / factaque nuper avis*), the partridge that was gratified to hear of the sorrow Daedalus felt when he was burying Icarus on the island named after him off the Western coast of Asia Minor, cannot be the same as the flightless bird *Perdix* was transformed into in Athens. Just as *Arachne* in Greek is at the same time the designation for the spider, so one could say with regard to the case of *Perdix*, who proper name, too, primarily designates the genus, that the narrative logic of the Daedalus episode shows a tendency to abolish the distinction between individual and genus. Thus, while we can speak of an individual death in the case of Icarus, in the case of *Perdix* it hardly makes sense to speak of an individual existence.

Although the principle formulated by Pythagoras obviously applies to many cases, it is restricted in its universal validity already by Fränkel and called into question by a number of opposing authorities. Enamored of his own reflection, *Narcissus* dies of his unhappy love and arrives in the underworld. There, too, the handsome youth contemplates his own image in the waters of the Styx: *Ille caput viridifessum submisit in herba; / lumina mors clausit domini mirantia formam. / Tum quoque se, postquam est inferna sede receptus, / in Stygia spectabat aqua.* (*Met.* 3:502–5: “He dropped his weary head on the green grass and death sealed the eyes that marveled at their master’s beauty. And even when he had been received into the infernal abodes, he kept on gazing on his image in the Stygian pool.”). Some of the naiads mourning for him want to lay him onto a bier. Instead of the body which they are looking for they find a narcissus: *nusquam corpus erat, croceum pro corpore florem / inveniunt foliis medium cingentibus albis* (*Met.* 3:509–10: “but his body was nowhere to be found. In place of his body they find a flower, its yellow centre with white petals.”) *Echo*’s body is petrified, and her soul turned into a natural phenomenon, and while we do not hear of her disappearance but only of her lament for the dying *Narcissus* (cf. *Met.* 3:494–501), we encounter *Narcissus* after his death in Hades, where his shadow is sitting on the banks of the Styx. At the place where his lifeless body was lying is now

growing a white narcissus. Evidence, that ideas of death and the hereafter have not in principle been abolished or superseded by the idea of a *metamorphosis* can also be found in the narrative of Hippolytus,<sup>13</sup> who, heretofore resident in Hades, has turned into Virbius, and in the stories of Tityus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, Ixion and the Danaïds, the infamous penitents in the underworld (cf. *Met.* 4:457–63). Now, if the Pythagorean principle, which is frequently regarded as the key to Ovid's poetical work (cf. *Met.* 15.165), has no universal validity, the question arises whether we have to assume a partial or complete irregularity. Was Ovid's creativity so powerful that it even enabled him to abolish the laws of logic and particularly the principle of contradiction in the fictitious realm of his mythological epic? Did the poet have the right to transgress the prevailing boundaries of thinking and feeling without risking to affront his readers? Did the Augustan public not have a right to expect a consistent artistic design behind the interplay of the poetic phenomena? Are modern readers—provided they may expect that this be the case—capable of recognizing these transgressions as a structuring element of the poet's imagination? The unifying principle, one would think, is either of abstract philosophical nature or it emerges from a poetic process that corresponds with the inherent laws of the epic genre.

As a rule, the classic epic begins with an invocation of the Muses.<sup>14</sup> The epic singer asks the Muses to help him master the difficulties of the poetic task. The privileged place of such an invocation is the poem. Occasionally, it can also be found prior to enumerations such as Homer's catalogue of ships, which demands of the epic singer an exceptional power of memory. The preface of the *Metamorphoses* is unusually short.<sup>15</sup> The Gods, mentioned only as those responsible

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Met.* 15:530–32: *num potes aut audes cladi componere nostrae, / nympha, tuam? Vidi quoque luce carentia regna / et lacerum fovi Phlegethontide corpus in unda, [...]*. ("Now, can you, dare you, nymph, compare your loss with my disaster? Further, I saw the rayless world of death and bathed my torn body in the waves of Phlegethon.")

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Hom. *Il.* 1:1; *Od.* 1:1; Apoll.Rhod. *Arg.* 1:22; *Aen.* 1:8; *Stat. Theb.* 1:41; *Sil.* 1:3. Ph. Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4 calls into mind that Ovid defers the invocation of the Muses almost to the end of his epic narrative (*Met.* 15:622–23): *Pandite nunc, Musae, praesentia numina vatam, / (scitis enim, nec vos fallit spatiosa vetustas).*

<sup>15</sup> Cf. F. Grewing, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Proömium der 'Metamorphosen' Ovids," in *Hermes* 121 (1993): 246–52; C. Harrauer, "Zitat und Originalität in Ovids Metamorphosen-Prooemium," *Wiener Studien* 114 (2001): 303–21.

for the transformations, are asked for their assistance. The customary invocation of the Muses is missing. But there are substitutes for it in different parts of the *Metamorphoses*. It is therefore necessary to take a quick look at the set-up of the epic. "While the big context between the Muses and the Pierids constitutes the finale of Book V and is then taken up again as a motif in Book VI, the song of the mourning bard Orpheus spans large parts of Book X, to which the content of Book XI with its account of the raging bacchantes' murder of the bard is linked."<sup>16</sup> If we add Book XV with the speech of Pythagoras, we can say that Ovid makes the end of each pentad stand out by the insertion of an extensive singer's part. The conspicuousness of this structural feature has led Rieks to the assumption "that Ovid divided the *Metamorphoses* into three pentads" and that this division has a parallel in the fact "that the three parts which the *Metamorphoses* fall into are consecutively devoted to the primeval age of the Gods, the age of the heroes, and to historical time."<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the Muses, Orpheus and Pythagoras are the key characters of the three successive parts. They are interrelated in different ways and even though their authority is not identical, and particularly that of Pythagoras not beyond criticism, there is no doubt that the episodes linked with, and vouched for by, these authorities, viz. "The Rape of Proserpine" (I), "Orpheus in the Underworld" (II), and "The Speech of Pythagoras" (III), are thematically connected with one another, since they all convey ideas of death and the hereafter. And despite the fact that this common characteristic makes for certain overlaps, there are, as a result of the different eschatological perspectives that are emphasized, also conspicuous differences between the three parts. We will thus have to ask whether, and, if yes, in what way these perspectives are related to each other; do they exist side by side with, or do they mutually exclude each other; are they compatible with, or do they maybe even complement each other? And what about the opinions of the epic narrator, who is far from identical with the poet's person? Can they be inferred from the respective relationship of these perspectives, seeing that the narrator

<sup>16</sup> L. Spahlinger, *Ars latet arte sua. Die Poetologie der Metamorphosen Ovids* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1996), 131.

<sup>17</sup> R. Rieks, "Zum Aufbau von Ovids *Metamorphosen*," *WüJbb NF 6b* (1960) 85–103, here 100. For the close interconnection of the three "bards", each of whom appears as their own representative, and their respective revelations of the world and its three ages, dominated by the Gods, the heroes, and by historical time, consecutively, and sung by the Muses, Orpheus and Pythagoras, respectively, see *ibid.*, 95–101.

systematically shirks his responsibility by playing with different narrative authorities? What statements about death and the hereafter are being made in these narratives? Do their contradictions define the limits of what in those days was imaginable or plausible to educated readers? Roman citizens who grew up during the civil wars and who experienced the end of the republic will hardly have believed in the myths of the underworld.<sup>18</sup> Those who, with regard to the chaos of the prevailing political and social circumstances, did not come to the conclusion that Epicurus was right in negating the ideas of providence and of a repayment in the hereafter, were abandoning themselves to philosophical speculation. Traces of a vivid metaphysical speculation presumably operating with stoic arguments from Poseidonios,<sup>19</sup> can be found, at any rate, in Book I of Cicero's *Tusculanae* and in Book I of Varro's *Antiquities*.<sup>20</sup> There were Neo-Pythagorean philosophers such as Sotion who lived as a teacher in Rome for many years and exerted a considerable influence on Seneca the Younger.<sup>21</sup> An intellectual could not evade these discussions, and Ovid is sure to have been acquainted with them. What, then, speaks against the assumption that he participated in them? Why should we rule out that by deliberately juxtaposing these three episodes he wanted to determine the horizon of contemporary discussions in his own way and implicitly contribute, within the confines determined by the literary genre, to the explanation of the world in the manner he was capable of in a mythological epic. In order to understand the procedure Ovid employed, we shall take a closer look at the three narratives, their narrators and main characters, and analyze the relationship of their different explanations of the world on the foil of the contemporary debates.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Cic. *nat. deor.* 2:5; *Tusc.* 1:10–12; *Hor. carm.* 1:4, 16. For an oneiric vision of the hereafter characterized by philosophical ideas, see also Cic. *rep.* 6–29. For the intellectual environment in which Ovid grew up, see E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London: Duckworth, 1985).

<sup>19</sup> Virgil probably used the doctrine of Poseidonios, which is interspersed with Pythagorean elements, as a source for the *katabasis*.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. B. Cardauns, *M. Terentius Varro, Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum, Teil I: Die Fragmente* (Mainz: Akademie der Wiss., 1976).

<sup>21</sup> The substantial correspondences between Ovid and Seneca (cf., for instance, Sen. *epist.* 108:20: *non credis, nihil perire in hoc mundo, sed mutare regionem?* and *Met.* 15:165) cannot be explained simply as reminiscences of Ovid; the hypothesis is more likely that Ovid was influenced by Sotion (cf. Fränkel, *Ovid*, 117).

## 1. THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE

The story of the Rape of Proserpine was already famous in the Rome of Cicero's days.<sup>22</sup> Ovid recounts it also in the *Fasti* (cf. *Fast.* 4:417–12).<sup>23</sup> In the *Metamorphoses* he does so through the mouth of Calliope. The Muse opposes the sacrilegious song of the Pierids, who are deriding the Gods, with a hymn to the fertility powers of Ceres: Pluto, the lord of the underworld, makes a journey of inspection around Sicily, when he is wounded by Cupid's arrow (cf. *Met.* 5.359–84). The God abducts the unsuspecting 'girl' in his chariot. Upon their entry into Hades, Cyane, a nymph of the spring, who is blocking their path, is destroyed (cf. *Met.* 5.409–37). She supports the despairing Ceres on the search for her daughter. Jupiter allows Proserpine to return on condition that she has not yet consumed anything (*Met.* 5.509–50). But Proserpine has already eaten some pomegranate seeds. When Kore eventually returns, it is only for a short period (*Met.* 5.564–67):

*At medius fratrisque sui maestaeque sororis  
Iuppiter ex aequo volentem dividit annum:  
nunc dea, regnorum numen commune duorum,  
cum matre est totidem, totidem cum coniuge menses.*

But now Jove, holding the balance between his brother his grieving sister, divides the revolving year into two equal parts. Now the goddess, the common divinity of two realms, spends half the months with her mother and with her husband, half. (trans. Miller)

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Cic. *Verr.* 4:106–112.

<sup>23</sup> *Ov. fast.* 4:417–12, according to M. Haupt, R. Ehwald & O. Korn, P. *Ovidius Metamorphosen*, vol. 1 (11th ed.; Zürich: Weidmann, 1969), 278–9. Authoritative: P. *Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen. Kommentar von Franz Bömer*, 7 vols. (Heidelberg: Winter, 1969–86). For the Persephone story, see R. Heinze, *Ovids elegische Erzählung* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1919); idem, *Vom Geiste des Römertums* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), 308–403, here 308–16; K. Barwick, "Ovids Erzählung vom Raub der Proserpina und Nikanders Heteroioumena," in *Philologus* 80 (1925): 454–66; H. Herter, "Ovids Persephone-Erzählungen und ihre hellenistischen Quellen," *RhM* 90 (1941): 236–68; Fränkel, *Ovid*, 116–9; E.A. Schmidt, "Ovids poetische Menschenwelt. Die Metamorphosen als Metapher und als Symphonie," in *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akad. d. Wiss.* (1991): 2.25–26, 86, 116; St. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the self-conscious Muse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); A. Bartenbach, *Motiv- und Erzählstruktur in Ovids Metamorphosen: Das Verhältnis von Rahmen- und Binnenerzählungen im 5., 10. und 15. Buch von Ovids Metamorphosen* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1990), 38–77 (reviewed by R.J. Tarrant, *JRS* 82 [1992]: 256–7); Spahlinger, *Ars latet*, 103–30, and *Le mythe d'Orphée dans les « Metamorphoses » d'Ovide* (ed. F. Létoublon, Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

Proserpine is the Latin equivalent of Persephone. Her name is reminiscent of *proserpere*, the springing up of plants and herbs.<sup>24</sup> Demeter, on the other hand, is not the goddess of vegetation in general, but the “corn mother”, and Persephone the “corn girl”.<sup>25</sup> The idea conveyed by the myth therefore remains transparent: Persephone, the daughter of feeding Demeter, is abducted to Pluto’s dark kingdom, but granted the right to spend part of the year with her mother; she is the seed that is sown into the earth and then sprouts up again.<sup>26</sup> The “two goddesses” were worshipped in the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries. These mysteries could only be celebrated at the very place of the goddesses’ re-encounter and were regarded by the Athenians as the epitome of mysteries.<sup>27</sup> Their world-wide renown was secured by the literary prestige of Athens. At Demeter’s behest, her gift was spread, together with agriculture, by Triptolemus.<sup>28</sup> Both goddesses therefore enjoyed cultural worship also in the West, especially in Sicily, the scene of Persephones’ rape and of her abduction to Hades, and in southern Italy.<sup>29</sup> Presumably, it is not least for this reason that, when recounting the rape of Proserpine, Ovid refers to the avernal nymphs (*Met.* 5.540: *inter Avernales haud ignotissima nymphas*) and thus establishes a connection to Italy and the place where Virgil’s Aeneas had entered the

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Cic. *nat. deor.* 2:66 *quam frugum semen esse volunt*; differently: Varr. *ling.* 5:68. For evidence, see Haupt/Ehwald/Korn, *Metamorphosen*, ad loc.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (2nd ed.; Munich: Beck, 1955), 472–7; Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 248.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Haupt/Ehwald/Korn, *Metamorphosen*, 391.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. W. Burkert, *Antike Mysterien. Funktionen und Gehalt* (Munich: Beck, 1991), 12.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Met.* 5:646–7; *Aen.* 6:408–9: *venerabile donum fatalis virgae*.

<sup>29</sup> *Golden foils* that were found in Italic tombs (in Petelia and Thurioi, during the 4th and 3rd centuries BC) and that functioned as gifts for the dead are the most important evidence we have of the Orphean eschatology. Cf. K. Ziegler, “Orphische Dichtung,” in *Der Kleine Pauly* 4 (1979): 356–62; Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 440 (with a reference to the Hipponion’s golden foil and the papyrus found in Derveni with a ‘Presocratic’ commentary to the ‘Orphean’ theogony). For correspondences between Eleusinian and Orphean/Pythagorean ideas of the hereafter, see F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1974), 79–150 (on poetry devoted to the hereafter), particularly p. 91: “Thus, details that belong to the Eleusinian hope of the hereafter correspond with those of the Orphean-Pythagorean sphere. Sunshine in the hereafter, meadows of flowers and festivities are enjoyed by both the initiates in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* and the dead in Pindar’s songs; while the meadows of flowers are referred to Eleusis by Plutarch, and to Orpheus by Diodorus and Proclus, the golden foils refer to southern Italy. It seems that Eleusinian and Orphean/Pythagorean elements are identical with each other [...]”

underworld (*Aen.* 6:201: *ad fauces grave olentis Averni*).<sup>30</sup> Virgil does not so much present the myth of the rape of Proserpine but rather assumes its results as known. In the *katabasis*, Proserpine has already been married to Pluto (cf. *Aen.* 6:397) and as the ruler of Hades she has the right to decide who enters the underworld. For Aeneas, the *descensus ad inferos* and the re-ascent are stipulated on his finding the Golden Bough and delivering it to Proserpine in her capacity as ruler of the underworld.<sup>31</sup> Only traces of the "Rape of Proserpine", however, can be found in the abductions later attempted by Theseus and Pirithous (cf. *Aen.* 6:392–6).

Among the features the two narratives have in common is their geographical location in the West, but also a characteristic of mysteries and of the life of the initiates, namely that certain rules are being dictated and corresponding conditions have to be fulfilled. In the *Aeneid*, for instance, it is a precondition of the *katabasis* and the re-ascent that Aeneas finds the Golden Bough, which in the Eleusinian Mysteries was presented as *munus* to the goddess and which as a twig of myrtle symbolized the initiates' hopes for the future.<sup>32</sup> In the *Metamorphoses*, Jupiter makes it a prerequisite of Proserpine's return that she has not yet consumed any food. So when it becomes known through Ascalaphus that she has already eaten seven pomegranate seeds, she is not granted to return permanently, but, in keeping with her nature as goddess of vegetation, only for one half of the year (cf. *Met.* 5.534–42).

## 2. ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD

Hades, located in the darkness inside of the earth, is the only place known to the eschatology of both Homer and of the archaic Greek.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Avernales nymphas* here does not stand for "the nymphs at Lake Avernus", but for "underworld nymphs" (cf. Bömer, *Metamorphosen* 1976, 364 on *Met.* 5:540).

<sup>31</sup> *Aen.* 6:140–1: *sed non ante datur telluris operta subire / auricomos quam quis decerpserit arbore fetus*.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 426–32.

<sup>33</sup> This has to be pointed out further to Ziegler, "Orphische Dichtung," 361 and Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 301–3. For commentaries on the Orpheus narrative, see H. Gugel, "Orpheus' Gang in die Unterwelt in den *Metamorphosen* Ovids (*Met.* X, 1–71)," in *Antiquité vivante* 22 (1972): 39–59.; A. Primmer, "Das Lied des Orpheus in Ovids *Metamorphosen*," *Sprachkunst* 10 (1979): 123–37; Chr. Neumeister, "Orpheus und Eurydike, Eine Vergil-Parodie Ovids (*Ov. met.* X 1–XI 166 und Verg. Georg. IV 457–527)," in *WJbb* 12 (1986), 169–81; B.R. Nagle, "Two Miniature

It is the cheerless abode of the ψυχαί that had to leave their bodies. There is but little evidence of the idea that deeds of good conduct or of injustice committed in this world would be rewarded and punished in the hereafter. Only with the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E. does the number of pieces increase that bear testimony to the belief in a judgement of the dead and in the doctrine of *metempsychosis*. From the oldest references in Pindar and Empedocles it can be inferred that these ideas first occurred in the West of Greece.<sup>34</sup> Magna Graecia with its Pythagorean centers was an early and long-preferred foster home of Orphism. It cannot be said with certainty, however, in what Orphean poems precisely the doctrines of the soul and of the hereafter found expression. The cosmogony, which would have been the suitable place, has only come down to us in fragments. Nevertheless, the epic Ὀρφέως εἰς Ἴδου κατάβασις must have been an important source. In it, Orpheus recounts “what I saw and perceived when I went down the long way down to Hades, trusting my Kithara, for the love of my wife.”<sup>35</sup>

Apart from the Orphean epic traditions extant in Imperial Rome, Ovid could, for his Orpheus story, also fall back on Virgil’s *katabasis*. According to an old tradition, Orpheus was dwelling in the ‘seats of the blessed.’<sup>36</sup> As the first identifiable person of myth whom Aeneas meets after he has fastened the Golden Bough at Persephone’s palace and presented it as a gift to the goddess of the underworld, the “priestly poet” precedes Teucer, Ilus, Assaracus and Dardanus (cf. *Aen.* 6:648–50), who as the Trojan ancestors of Augustus have a special dynastic significance (*Aen.* 6:637–47):

*His demum exactis, perfecto munere divae,  
devenere locos laetos et amoena virecta  
fortunatorum nemorum sedesque beatas.  
largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit  
purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.*

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Carmina perpetua in the Metamorphoses: Calliope and Orpheus,” in *Grazer Beiträge* 15 (1988): 99–125; Ch.P. Segal, *Orpheus. The Myth of the Poet* (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989); Bartenbach, *Motiv- und Erzählstruktur*, 151–4; Schmidt, “Ovids poetische Menschenwelt,” 126–8; J. Döring, *Ovids Orpheus* (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1992); Spahlinger, *Ars latet*, 130–51; M.v. Albrecht, *Das Buch der Verwandlungen. Ovid-Interpretationen* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2000), 96–110; F. Harzer, *Ovid* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 93–4.

<sup>34</sup> Pi. O. 2 (to Theon of Akragas); *Emp.* B 112–47 (Diels/Kranz).

<sup>35</sup> Orph. Arg. 40ff. (O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* [Berlin: Weidmann, 1922]).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Plat. *Apol.* 41a; *Rep.* 10:620a.

*pars in gramineis exercent membra palaestris,  
 contendunt ludo et fulva luctantur harena;  
 pars pedibus plaudunt choreas et carmina dicunt.  
 nec non Threicius longa cum veste sacerdos  
 obloquitur numeris septem discrimina vocum,  
 iamque eadem digitis, iam pectine pulsat eburno.*

This at length performed and the task of the goddess fulfilled, they came to a land of joy, the pleasant lawns and happy seats of the Blissful Groves. Here an ampler ether clothes the meads with roseate light, and they know their own sun, and stars of their own. Some disport their limbs on the grassy wrestling ground, vie in sports, and grapple on the yellow sand; some tread the rhythm of a dance and chant songs. There, too, the long-robed Thracian priest matches their measures with the seven clear notes, striking the lyre now with his fingers, now with his ivory quill. (trans. Fairclough)

The Orpheus we first encounter in Ovid, however, is the person, who in the chronology of myth, has just been married to Eurydice. He descends into the underworld, in order to overcome the death of his late wife, with whom he will be united later on (cf. *Met.* 11:61–6). Ovid does not describe the *descensus* itself, but only the laborious ascent (cf. *Met.* 10:54). Darkness prevails in Tartarus (cf. *Met.* 10:20 ~ *Aen.* 6:268–72). The dead are being described as silent shadows (cf. *Met.* 10:14 ~ *Aen.* 6:264). Like Virgil's Dido (*Aen.* 6:450: *recens a volnere Dido*), Eurydice only died recently; she belongs to the shadows that have just arrived in Hades (cf. *Met.* 10:49). Like Dido, Eurydice can be identified as an individual, since, from the snake's pernicious bite, she is dragging one foot (cf. *Met.* 10:50). The bard enchants Pluto and Proserpine, whose universal rights over humanity he recognizes (cf. *Met.* 10:46–7). Moved by Orpheus' song, also the other shadows start crying, and so do the underworld penitents whom we know from Virgil such as Tantalus (cf. *Met.* 10:41), Ixion (cf. *Met.* 10:42 ~ *Aen.* 6:601), the Belides (cf. *Met.* 10:44), Sisyphus (cf. *Met.* 10:44), nay, even the Eumenides (cf. *Met.* 10:46 ~ *Aen.* 6:605). Eventually, Orpheus gets the dead Eurydice back on condition that he does not look at her during the ascent (cf. *Met.* 10:51). When he nevertheless turns his head to look at her, his beloved wife instantly changes into a shadow and sinks back into Hades (cf. *Met.* 10:57).

Even though in modern controversies the question prevails whether Orpheus *really* meets Eurydice or, if this were not the case, Ovid is merely presenting us with an example of a necessary process of grieving, and even though we fail to observe similarities with the Italic 'books of the dead' that Virgil might be alluding to when he uses the

word *brattea* in the episode of the Golden Bough (*Aen.* 6:209: *sic leni crepitabat brattea vento*), there can be no doubt that Ovid's *Threicius vates* is a recollection of the *Threicius...sacerdos*, the "priestly poet" of Virgil's *katabasis*,<sup>37</sup> and that Ovid's reader would associate the otherwise successful "songs" of the bard, although they only found little appreciation with the Thracian Maenads,<sup>38</sup> with the Orphean writings and teachings known to him.

### 3. THE SPEECH OF PYTHAGORAS

The last books of the *Metamorphoses* are devoted to Greek and Roman history. Using the mythical history of Troy as a starting point, Ovid presents the prehistory of the Roman people. At the beginning of Book XV, he has come as far as Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome. The successor of Romulus, he writes, has gone to Kroton in order to listen to Pythagoras. Thus bringing religion and common decency to the uncouth people that has descended from Mars, he becomes the second founder of Rome. The teachings of Pythagoras are presented clearly in three parts, according to the pattern A–B–A.<sup>39</sup> The Greek

<sup>37</sup> *Met.* 11:2 *Threicius vates* ~ *Met.* 6:645 *Threicius...sacerdos*. For *Met.* 10:1, cf. Bömer, *Metamorphosen*, 1980: 240, who points out variants such as *Thrascius Orpheus* (*Met.* 11:2) and advises to be careful about equating Ovid's *vates* with Virgil's *sacerdos*.

<sup>38</sup> *Met.* 11:38–43: *ad vatis fata recurrunt / tendentemque manus atque illo tempore primum / inrita dicentem nec quicquam voce moventem / sacrilegae perimunt, perque os, pro Iuppiter, illud / auditum saxis intellectum ferarum / sensibus in ventos anima exhalata recessit*. ("[...] they rushed back to slay the bard; and, as he stretched out his suppliant hands, uttering words then, but never before, unheeded, and moving them not a whit by his voice, the impious women struck him down. And (oh, the pity of it!) through those lips, to which rocks listened, and to which the hearts of savage beasts responded, the soul, breathed out, went faring forth in air." [Miller])

<sup>39</sup> For the speech of Pythagoras, see A. Schmekel, *De Ovidiana Pythagorae doctrinae adumbratione* (Diss. Greifswald 1885); D.A. Little, "The Speech of Pythagoras in *Metamorphoses* 15 and the Structure of the *Metamorphoses*," in *Hermes* 98 (1970): 340–60; B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 297–8; Buchheit, "Numa-Pythagoras"; Schmidt, "Ovids poetische Menschenwelt," 38–40, 46–7; Ph. Hardie, "The Speech of Pythagoras in Ovid. *Metamorphoses* 15: Empedoclean Epos," in *CQ* 45 (1995): 204–4; Bartenbach, *Motiv- und Erzählstruktur*, 196–219; G. Tissol, *The Face of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 186–7; N. Holzberg, *Ovid. Dichter und Werk* (Munich: Beck, 1997), 151–3; K. Galinsky, "The Speech of Pythagoras in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15, 75–478," in *Papers of the Leeds Latin Seminar* 38 (1998): 313–36; St. M. Wheeler, *Narrative Dynamics in*

philosopher first enlarges upon vegetarianism and the *metempsychosis* (cf. *Met.* 15.75–164=A). He then describes different kinds of metamorphoses such as they occur in physical processes of dead nature, in the plant and animal kingdoms and, with respect to humanity, in the handing over of political power and empires (cf. *Met.* 15.165–452=B). At the end of his speech, Pythagoras returns to its starting point and, dealing with vegetarianism and the *metempsychosis*, warns of a “Thyestean banquet” (cf. *Met.* 15.453–78=A). Pythagoras supports the “Heraclitean principle” and the idea of an eternal change that is permanently at work in the whole variety of phenomena and that glosses over the extinction wrought upon us by death.<sup>40</sup> This principle does not absolutely exclude the mythical idea of an underworld in which the souls are awaiting their reincarnation. On the contrary, the ensuing description of Hippolytus’ metamorphosis into Virbius presupposes his interim sojourn in Hades (cf. *Met.* 15.530–32). Simultaneously, the poet of the *Metamorphoses* picks up motifs and ideas from Lucretius and Empedocles.<sup>41</sup> The attempt has often been made to interpret this speech as the expression of Ovid’s philosophical creed, and the words *omnia mutantur, nihil interit* (*Met.* 15.165), as the condensation of this creed into a formula. In Christoph Ransmayr’s version, “Keinem bleibt seine Gestalt” (*no one holds on to their shape*), this motto has almost become the leitmotif of the view currently held of the *Metamorphoses* and of Ovid’s life.<sup>42</sup> But Ovid is no philosopher and it is by no means clear whether he himself believed in the statements we find in his works (*Met.* 15.359: *haud equidem credo*). One could rather say that the poet of the *Metamorphoses* uses the doctrine of Pythagoras to insert it into his account of Roman history, shortly before the latter reaches its climax and culmination point in the Augustan *restitutio rei*

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Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Tübingen: Narr, 2000), 114–26; E. Fantham, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 114–8; P. Kuhlmann, “Theologie und Ethik in Ovids Metamorphosen,” *Gymnasium* 114 (2007): 321–3. For Pythagoras in general, see W. Burkert, *Weisheit und Wissenschaft. Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon* (Nuernberg: Carl, 1962).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Siegmur Döpp, *Werke Ovids* (Munich: DTV, 1992), 121.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Hardie, “Speech of Pythagoras,” 210–4.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. U. Schmitzer, *Ovid* (Hildesheim: Olms 2001), 135. Bömer, *Metamorphosen* 1986, 302, on the other hand, writes in his commentary that the word of Pythagoras has become “a veritable playground of modern conjectures on the history of philosophy,” and instead emphasizes the importance of the verb *mutare* for the stories of transformation with regard to both their respective composition and narrative.

*publicae*. After he has presented different cycles of nature, he describes the living metamorphosis of Phoenix (cf. *Met.* 15.391–407). Why does Phoenix celebrate its own death as a feast (cf. *Met.* 15.398–400)? Death, for it, is not the end, but the beginning of a new life. Life comes full circle with the building of a new nest as the foundation of a new existence. This bird that restores and renews itself (*Met.* 15.392: *reparet seque ipsa reseminet*), marks the transition from the *metamorphoses of nature* to the increasingly significant *historical metamorphosis of the Roman Empire* (cf. *Met.* 15.418–452), which Priam's son Helenus is said to have prophesied to Aeneas, the bearer of the Penates (*Met.* 15.439–49):

*Nate dea, si nota satis praesagia nostrae  
mentis habes, non tota cadet te sospite Troia!  
flamma tibi ferrumque dabunt iter: ibis et una  
Pergama rapta feres, donec Troiaequae tibi que  
externum patrio contingat amicus arvum.  
urbem etiam cerno Phrygios debere nepotes,  
quanta nec est nec erit nec visa prioribus annis.  
hanc alii procures per saecula longa potentem,  
sed dominam rerum de sanguine natus Iuli  
efficiet: quo cum tellus erit usa, fruentur  
aetheriae sedes, caelumque erit exitus illi.*

'O son of Venus, if you keep well in mind my soul's prophetic visions, while you live Troy shall not wholly perish! Fire and swords shall give way before you. You shall go forth and with you shall you catch up and bear away your Pergama, until you shall find a foreign land, kinder to Troy and you than your own country. I see even now a city destined to the descendants of the Phrygians, than which none greater is or shall be, or has been in past ages. Other princes through the long centuries shall make her powerful, but a prince sprung from Iulus' blood shall make her mistress of the world. When earth shall have had her share of him, the celestial regions shall enjoy him and heaven shall be his goal.' (transl. Miller)

Unlike the goddess Persephone and the mythical bard Orpheus, both of whom we encounter in a prominent place of the mantuan's work, Pythagoras does, chronologically and historically speaking, not belong to Roman history in the stricter sense of the word. He would therefore hardly have been capable of making his appearance in Virgil's *katabasis*, neither could Ovid use him for intertextual references. His teachings, however, can be detected in both epics, and echoes of Books VI and VIII of the *Aeneid* can be heard at the Augustan end of the

speech of Pythagoras,<sup>43</sup> which, modelled on the prophecy of Anchises in Virgil's *katabasis*, emphasizes both the *translatio imperii* from Troy to Rome as a determining aspect of the cultural transfer from East to West and the particular significance of the Julian house (*Met.* 15.447 *de sanguine natus Iuli*).<sup>44</sup>

To sum up: the episodes we have dealt with here are, through the respective authorities of the muse Calliope, the bard Orpheus, and the philosopher Pythagoras, of central importance for the explanation of the cosmos of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the description and the implicit assumption of an underworld which the souls of the dead, in accordance with traditional myths, reach after their demise, they convey a common idea of death and the hereafter. Not that this were surprising: a completely different conception would hardly have been compatible with a mythological epic. And yet, by tying his own work intertextually to Virgil's epic tradition, Ovid does not only remind the reader of the philosophical and moral refinement of the myths underlying the different episodes, he also makes the allegorical dimension of the narratives accessible to the educated public of the Augustan Age, thus opening up *different vistas* of the same background. More precisely, the conscious altering of his view-point enables Ovid to develop *those* perspectives on death and the hereafter that, although

<sup>43</sup> *Met.* 15.432: *mole sub ingenti rerum fundamina ponit* refers the reader to *Aen.* 1:33 and, as R. Lamacchia, "Ovidio interprete di Virgilio," in *Maia* 12 (1960): 310–30, here 315, has pointed out, also to *Aen.* 5:118 and *Aen.* 6:232–3: *at pius Aeneas ingenti mole sepulcrum / imponit suaque arma viro*. Cf. also Buchheit, "Numa-Pythagoras," 89–93, esp. 91; Hardie, "Speech of Pythagoras," 211, remarks that both Virgil's *katabasis* and the speech of Pythagoras in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are modeled after the dream of Ennius in Homer (see also O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Q. Ennius* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985], 1, III, IV [~ *Lucr.* 1:120–26]). The emphasis here is on the 'revelations of the world' provided by Calliope, Orpheus and Pythagoras, respectively, and their common relationship to Virgil's *katabasis*. It is therefore not necessary to deal systematically with all the references to death and the hereafter that can be found in the *Metamorphoses*. See, however, note 5 and the remarks concerning Juno, *Met.* 4:432–80.

<sup>44</sup> Among the many allusions, there is, first of all, the verbatim agreement between the addresses delivered to Aeneas by Anchises and Helenus (*Aen.* 6:781: *en huius, nate, auspicii illa incluta Roma*; 6:868: *o gnate, ingentem luctum ne quaere tuorum* ~ *Met.* 15:439–40: *nate dea, si nota satis praesagia nostrae / mentis habes, non tota cadet te sospite Troia*); the allusion to the origins of Aeneas is in both cases paralleled by the reference to the founding hero's grandchildren in their capacity as his descendents (*Aen.* 6:756: *nunc age, Dardaniam prolem quae deinde sequatur / gloria, qui maneant Itala de gente nepotes* ~ *Met.* 15:444: *urbem etiam cerno Phrygios cerno debere nepotes*).

their respective historical origins differ from one another, have been combined and eventually merged into one in the process of tradition. It is in this later stage of their development that we find these perspectives, considered individually and as an ensemble, already in Virgil's *katabasis* and that both here and in Ovid's adoption they can be interpreted as implying a *gemina doctrina*: (I) Both the Rape of Proserpine and her retrieval through Ceres are references to the Eleusinian Mysteries and put the Roman readership in mind of the hopes for a life after death that were connected with these mysteries and that run like a thread through Book VI of the *Aeneid*. (II) The *descensus ad inferos* not only takes Orpheus as mythical bard to the classical places of the underworld described in the *Aeneid* and reserved by Virgil to those who have recently died, to the penitents and the shadows received in Elysium; it also reminds attentive readers of the Orphean doctrines conveyed in Virgil's *katabasis*. (III) Not only is the speech of Pythagoras conspicuously indebted to the way in which Virgil presents the Rome of Augustus in the three historical perspectives developed in the *Aeneid*, but also is the doctrine of *metempsychosis* expounded in the two epics a prerequisite both for Ovid's prophecy of a *translatio imperii* from Troy to Rome and for the "vision of heroes" presented by Anchises. The fact that the view-point is altered from one episode to the other is therefore neither accidental nor can it be explained as the arbitrary use of poetic licence. The change of perspective rather betrays the poet's hand-writing. It shows that Ovid systematically organizes his epic on the model of Virgil and that he enters into an intellectual and intertextual play with the *Aeneid*, playing his game according to the rules. In its poetic microstructure *any one* text is capable of being connected with *several* texts existing prior to it, according to the principle of 'multiple imitation'. But *any one* text can also be "split up" and imitated in *several* different episodes or "epi-texts" of *one* later work. Ovid uses this poetic process of "splitting up", when he ties his own work to the *katabasis*, thus taking Virgil, on a macro-structural poetic level, as his literary model.<sup>45</sup> Four aspects are involved in this process. First, the different hermeneutical patterns already exist in Virgil; Ovid only adopts and develops them in the three episodes of the

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<sup>45</sup> In her commentary on Book IV of Statius's *Thebaid* (Stuttgart 2005, see esp. 52f.), J. Steiniger describes the poetic process of "splitting", in contrast to the "partition" (*partitio*), as an inversion of the "multiple imitation."

*Metamorphoses* we have dealt with here. Second, at least in part does Ovid take up the different perspectives in the order set by Virgil in the *Aeneid*. This becomes obvious in the similarity between the prophecy of a *translatio imperii* from Troy to Rome and the dawning of the Augustan Age, delivered by Helenus to Aeneas towards the end of the speech of Pythagoras and the prophecy in which Anchises, at the end of his “vision of heroes”, announces to his son the imminent end of all civil wars and the pacification of the world during the principate of Augustus as the goal of history that fate had determined. Third, allusions to the *Aeneid* can be found in all Ovidian episodes; they might be seen in the context of other literary models referred to by Ovid such as Empedocles, Ennius or Lucretius, and can be explained with regard to the possible use of mythological handbooks and/or historiographical works; but they might also be the result of an oral tradition. Finally, we can assume that also the “splitting up”, or “partitioning”, of the *Metamorphoses* into three episodes and parts has been adopted from Virgil, who in three ‘historical perspectives’ unveiled to his contemporary readers the destiny of Rome and its culmination in the Augustan present. Thus, while Ovid might have been at home neither in glorifying the Augustan principate nor in satisfying its need to have the mythical prehistory of Rome acknowledged, he nevertheless ventured, in developing his ideas of death and the hereafter, to enter into an artistic contest with his predecessor and to playfully experiment with the standards set by this *anima naturaliter christiana*.



## THE OTHERWORLD AND THE NEW AGE IN THE LETTERS OF PAUL<sup>1</sup>

Adela Yarbro Collins

Troels Engberg-Pedersen and other scholars at the University of Copenhagen have argued that Paul is best understood in the context of Stoic philosophy.<sup>2</sup> My colleague at Yale, Dale Martin, has argued that Paul's letters also ought to be interpreted in the context of popular beliefs and conceptions and of apocalypticism.<sup>3</sup> Although some of Paul's statements are similar to Stoic doctrines,<sup>4</sup> I agree with Dale Martin's view, especially with regard to the otherworld and the new age. I will begin my discussion with Paul's earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians.

Near the end of the first unit of the long thanksgiving in this letter,<sup>5</sup> Paul celebrates the fact that believers in Macedonia and Achaia report how the Thessalonians have turned from idols to serve the living and true God "and to await his son from the heavens whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who rescues us from the wrath that is coming" (1 Thess 1:9–10). We learn from this statement that Paul envisaged a plurality of heavens. This inference is supported by Paul's talk about

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<sup>1</sup> Only the undisputed letters of Paul will be discussed in this paper: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians and 1 Thessalonians. Although Philemon is also authentic, it contains nothing relevant to the topic.

<sup>2</sup> See now Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), see also idem, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000); see also idem and H. Tonier, eds., *Philosophy at the Roots of Christianity* (Copenhagen: Biblical Studies Section, The Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, 2006); the latter contains papers from a Conference held in Copenhagen from August 31 through September 3, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> D.B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT – London, UK: Yale University Press, 1995), 22, 31, 36–37, 110, 112, 124–25; idem, "The Promise of Teleology, the Constraints of Epistemology, and Universal Vision in Paul," in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 91–108.

<sup>4</sup> According to H. Conzelmann, the "points of agreement do not go beyond the terms and ideas of popular philosophy with which it was possible for any and everyone to be acquainted," in his *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 10.

<sup>5</sup> A.J. Malherbe defines the thanksgiving as 1 Thess 1:2–3:13 and the first unit of it as 1:2–10; *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AncB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000) viii; but see the slightly different definition on 103.

“the third heaven” and “Paradise” in 2 Cor 12:2–4. We also learn about “the wrath that is coming” and that Jesus will rescue those who believe in him from the consequences of that wrath. The formulation “the wrath that is coming” suggests that this wrath is not merely a matter of the punishment of sinners in this life by illness and other misfortunes. It also implies that it is not simply a matter of an individual judgment immediately after death followed by an afterlife designed to deprive or punish sinners. It suggests rather a public, cosmic event, the definitive divine Visitation of the last days in which the righteous will be blessed and the wicked punished.<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy that 1 Thess is addressed to Gentiles and that it contains no evidence of Jews in the community. The nature of the audience explains why Paul emphasized wrath in his discussion of the final divine intervention. Paul shared the widespread Jewish view that Gentiles as such are sinners. This perspective is clearly expressed in his indictment of Gentiles in Rom 1:18–32<sup>7</sup> and in his statement in Gal 2:15, “We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.” In Rom 1, the major Gentile sin is defined as idolatry. Similarly, the third book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, a Jewish work disguised as prophetic speech of the Sibyl, condemns Gentiles for their idolatry and says that they will seek someone to rescue them when the great wrath of God comes upon them.<sup>8</sup>

We also learn from 1 Thess that Paul considered himself to be involved on the side of God and Christ in a struggle against Satan. This is evident from his remark in 2:17–18 that he wanted to come to see them again face to face, more than once, but Satan thwarted each attempt. He alludes to the activity of Satan again in 3:5 when he

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<sup>6</sup> The thanksgiving extends from 1:2 to 3:13; the first unit, 1:2–10, concerns the conversion of the Thessalonians; Malherbe, *Thessalonians* viii. Cf. Paul’s description of the “day of wrath” (ἡμέρα ὀργῆς) in Rom 2:5–11.

<sup>7</sup> R. Jewett gives the title “The Revelation of Divine Wrath” to Rom 1:18–32, in *Romans: A commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), vii. For arguments that Romans 5–8 is addressed to Gentiles, see St. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (New Haven, CT – London: Yale University Press, 1994), chapter 9. For arguments that Romans 7 is addressed to Gentiles, see E. Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (WUNT 2.256; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008).

<sup>8</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3.545–572; see J.J. Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85), 1.374. For further references to such texts, see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 122. The text cited dates to the second Century B.C.E. (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” 355).

expresses his fear that the Tempter had tempted them and that his own labour would be in vain.

The most interesting part of 1 Thess for discerning Paul's ideas about the afterlife is 4:13–18.<sup>9</sup> Apparently, during his initial visit, Paul had not addressed the problem of what would happen to those believers who died before the coming of Christ.<sup>10</sup> To deal with that issue, he relates their deaths to the shared belief that Jesus died and was raised (4:14). If God had the power and graciousness to raise Jesus, they can be confident that God will bring with Jesus the believers who have fallen asleep when Jesus returns. As he says in 1 Cor 15:23, "Each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then those who belong to Christ at his parousia."

Paul then communicates further teaching about the coming of Jesus in 4:15–17. He says that his source for this doctrine is a *λόγος κυρίου*. This phrase is often interpreted to mean a saying of the risen Lord delivered through an early Christian prophet.<sup>11</sup> A good case can be made, however, that Paul refers here to a saying of Jesus handed on in oral tradition. Mark 13:26–27 is based on a variant of the same oral saying.<sup>12</sup>

In v. 15 the problem in Thessalonica becomes clearer: "For this we say to you with a word of the Lord, that we who are living, who remain until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep." It is likely that when Paul founded the community he spoke about the imminent coming of the risen and exalted Jesus as the "Lord"<sup>13</sup> and the benefits that the believers alive at that time would enjoy. The kind of tradition Paul probably taught the Thessalonians occurs in the interpretation of the vision of the man from the sea in *4 Ezra*:

The one who brings the peril at that time will protect those who fall into peril, who have works and faith toward the Almighty. Understand

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<sup>9</sup> Malherbe gives this section the title "On Those Who Have Fallen Asleep" (*Thessalonians*, viii).

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thess 4:13; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 261.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 268–69.

<sup>12</sup> See the section ["History of the Tradition" in the commentary on Mark 13:1–37 in A. Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008).]

<sup>13</sup> In certain contexts in Paul's letters, "Lord" is equivalent to "Son of Man" in the Synoptic Gospels. A likely hypothesis is that Paul did not use the term "Son of Man" because it is based on an Aramaic idiom that would be difficult for his Gentile audience to grasp and appreciate.

therefore that those who are left are more blessed than those that have died.<sup>14</sup>

Now, in v. 15, Paul corrects that earlier teaching by explaining that those who are alive when the Lord comes will have no advantage over those who have died in Christ.

In v. 16, Paul gives a vivid account of the coming of the Lord, describing him as descending from heaven.<sup>15</sup> A “command,” a “voice of an archangel” and the sound of a trumpet accompany the descent.<sup>16</sup> The command may be addressed to the dead, perhaps through the agency of the archangel’s voice, since the next event described is the rising of “the dead in Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

Then the resurrected dead and the living, those who are left, will be snatched up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air (v. 17). The verb used to describe the snatching or taking up of the dead and the living to meet Christ, ἀρπάζειν, is the same verb that Paul uses in 2 Cor 12:2 to speak about his ascent to the third heaven. The term used to speak about the “meeting” with the Lord, ἀπάντησις, is among a group of related words often employed in accounts of an ancient ceremonial custom. Prominent citizens used to go out from their city to meet a visiting dignitary to welcome him and then to escort him back into the city. Erik Peterson argued that the term has that connotation in 1 Thess 4 and that, therefore, the meaning is that the resurrected dead and those who are left meet the Lord in the air and then escort him back to earth, where “they will always be with the Lord.”<sup>18</sup> Abraham Malherbe has rightly rejected this interpretation for several reasons. First, the citizens take the initiative in the customary practice, whereas here, those “in Christ” are snatched up by divine power. Second, the

<sup>14</sup> 2 Esdras 13:23–24; translation from the NRSV. See also M.E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 392. For more such references, see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 284.

<sup>15</sup> Note the contrast between the use of the singular οὐρανός here and the plural in 1:10. The singular may be used here to make a simple contrast between “heaven” and “earth.”

<sup>16</sup> On the imagery, its sources, and uses elsewhere, see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 274.

<sup>17</sup> This interpretation is supported by Phil 3:20–21, where it is Christ who has the power to transform (μετασχηματίζειν) our lowly bodies to be similar in form to his glorious body by the power that enables him also to subject all things to himself.

<sup>18</sup> E. Peterson, “Die Einholung des Kyrios,” *ZST* 7 (1930): 682–702.

purpose of the meeting is “to bring about their gathering with the Lord and each other, not to escort the Lord, of which nothing is said.”<sup>19</sup>

Since they will hardly remain in the atmosphere of the earth, in the air (τὸ ἄήρ), the implication of the account is that they will accompany the Lord in his ascent back to heaven to be with the Lord and one another forever. Thus, according to 1 Thess, the “otherworld,” heaven, is the place where the new age occurs. Let us conclude our discussion of this letter with Paul’s summary statement of his eschatological teaching in 5:9–10:

For God has not assigned us to wrath but to attaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us in order that, whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with him.

As in Thessalonica, virtually all the members of the communities Paul founded in Galatia were Gentiles, as is clear from the controversy about whether they should be circumcised or not.<sup>20</sup> In the epistolary prescript of the letter to the Galatians, in the elaboration of the greeting, Paul says of Jesus Christ that he “gave himself for our sins so that he might deliver us from the present evil age” (1:4).<sup>21</sup> Instead of emphasizing the wrath that is coming, as he did in 1 Thess, Paul focuses here on the present evil age and the powers that rule it.

In 3:22 Paul speaks about the present age, which, apart from those who have faith in Christ, has been confined or imprisoned by Scripture under sin. In the next verse he explains that “before faith came,” we were held in custody by the Law. In 4:3, he seems to restate this point in different terms. When we were minors, as good as slaves, we were enslaved under the power of the “elements of the world” (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου). Judging from the context, the “elements of the world” seem to be equivalent to “those who by nature are not gods,” mentioned in 4:8, to whom the Galatians were enslaved before they came to know God.<sup>22</sup> Since, however, by using the first person plural Paul implies that both Jews and Gentiles were enslaved before “faith came,” “the elements of the world” probably include the angels through whom the Law was ordered by God (3:19). The inclusion of

<sup>19</sup> Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 277.

<sup>20</sup> I assume here that the vast majority of religious Judeans/Jews circumcised their male children.

<sup>21</sup> The verb translated “deliver” here is ἐξαιρεῖν

<sup>22</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 205.

both the traditional gods of the Gentiles and the angels of Jewish tradition explains how Paul can associate observances of the law with “the weak and beggarly elements” in 4:9–10.<sup>23</sup>

The material we have been discussing so far relates to “the present evil age” mentioned in the greeting at the beginning of the letter to the Galatians. Paul’s understanding of “the otherworld” becomes visible in the allegory concerning the two sons of Abraham and their mothers (4:21–31). The two women are contrasted as slave and free, and the two births as according to the flesh and through the promise. The slave, Hagar, is also associated with Mount Sinai and the Sinai covenant, which Paul polemically associates with slavery. She is also identified with “the present Jerusalem.” With all this, Paul contrasts “the Jerusalem above” which is free. It is she who is “our mother,” as he puts it (4:26).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in Phil 3:20, Paul says, “But our commonwealth is in the heavens, from where we also await a saviour, Lord Jesus Christ.”

Although Paul gives no details concerning this heavenly Jerusalem, other texts roughly contemporary to his letters attempt to describe it and assign it a major role in the new age. For example, it is the subject of the fourth vision of *4 Ezra*.<sup>25</sup> It is the focus of the new heaven and the new earth in the book of Revelation.<sup>26</sup> It also seems to be the subject of a fragmentary work among the Dead Sea Scrolls, *The Description of the New Jerusalem*.<sup>27</sup>

We turn now to a discussion of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. The audience of this letter was predominantly gentile.<sup>28</sup> After distancing himself from “the wisdom of the world” (1 Cor 1:18–29; cf. 2:1–5)

<sup>23</sup> In light of the pressure on the Galatians to be circumcised, the “days and months and seasons and years” of 4:10 probably refer to the Sabbath, new moons, festivals, and the new year’s celebration of the Jewish calendar.

<sup>24</sup> On the relation of Gal 4:26 to Psalm 87, see C.M. Maier, “Psalm 87 as a Reappraisal of the Zion Tradition and Its Reception in Gal 4:26,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 473–86.

<sup>25</sup> *4 Ezra* 9:26–10:59.

<sup>26</sup> Revelation 21–22.

<sup>27</sup> 4Q554; 5Q15; 11Q18; see A.Yarbrow Collins, “The Dream of a New Jerusalem at Qumran,” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 3, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 231–254, especially 246–48.

<sup>28</sup> Crispus is mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor 1:14 and Rom 16:23. Only Acts implies that he was Jewish by designating him as the leader of a synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:8).

in favour of Christ Jesus, “who became wisdom for us from God,” (1 Cor 1:30) he speaks about God’s wisdom in the following terms:

Yet in the presence of the mature we do speak wisdom, but a wisdom that does not belong to this age or to the rulers of this age, who are being brought to an end. Rather, we speak, in the form of a secret, God’s hidden wisdom which God decided upon before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew. If they had known (it), they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:6–8).

In Galatians Paul spoke about “the elements of the world” to whom all people were enslaved before the coming of “faith.” It is likely that “the rulers of this age” are the same powers, namely, traditional Gentile gods and the angels who gave the law. Paul can say that “they crucified the Lord of glory” because of the traditional view that earthly groups and their leaders have heavenly representatives or counterparts who influence their behaviour.<sup>29</sup> The Gentile gods were identified by Paul with demons (cf. 1 Cor 10:20–22). Thus it was the influence of such beings that brought about the crucifixion of Jesus.

The expression “Lord of glory” is common in *1 Enoch* as an epithet of God.<sup>30</sup> It “alludes to the effulgent splendour that envelops the enthroned deity.”<sup>31</sup> Here that epithet is transferred to Jesus. One need not infer from this usage that Jesus was pre-existent and descended from heaven through the cosmos.<sup>32</sup> Rather, in light of the connection between the phrases “for our glory” and “the Lord of glory,”<sup>33</sup> one may infer that Jesus is the “Lord of glory” because God raised and glorified him and through him will raise and glorify those who belong to him. This inference is supported by the following verse which speaks about the wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love him:

But as it is written:  
Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard  
And have not entered the human mind,  
These things God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Deut 32:8–9; Dan 10:13, 20–21; 11:1; 12:1; cf. 1QS 3:13–26.

<sup>30</sup> *1 Enoch* 22:14; 25:3, 7; 27:3, 5; 36:4; 63:2; 83:8. Cf. 81:3.

<sup>31</sup> G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 316.

<sup>32</sup> Contra Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> Εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν in v. 7 and ὁ κύριος τῆς δόξης in v. 8.

<sup>34</sup> On the difficulties of the syntax of the sentence and its translation, see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 56.

Although the text that is cited here has not been identified, it has affinities with biblical, post-biblical apocalyptic, and rabbinic language.<sup>35</sup> Paul is reticent about details, but conveys the impression that the new age, when the power of the rulers of this world is entirely ended, will be wonderful in a way beyond all human experience.

In his discussion of marriage and other matters in 1 Cor 7, Paul's principle is that each believer should remain the way he or she is with regard to marriage, circumcision, and slavery: "In the state in which each one was called, brothers, let him remain in this state before God" (1 Cor 7:24; cf. 7:17–24). The most important thing, in Paul's view, is that all the members of the congregation concentrate on pleasing the Lord and on serving the Lord in a constant, undistracted manner (cf. 1 Cor 7:32,35). In order to convey the urgency of the matter, Paul gives the following rationale, "For the world in its present form is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31b). Paul gives no details about what this statement implies, but the context suggests the abolition or transformation of social structures such as slavery and marriage and of bodily characteristics and practices like sexual relations and circumcision.<sup>36</sup>

As Paul had to correct, in 1 Thess, his original teaching about the benefits that the coming of the Lord would bring for the living, he apparently had to correct, in 1 Cor 15, his original teaching about resurrection. He says explicitly that he proclaimed the good news of the resurrection of Christ during an earlier visit to Corinth, probably the first visit when he founded the community there (cf. 1 Cor 15:1, 3–4). After reviewing his earlier proclamation, he addresses the problem at hand: "If then it is proclaimed that Christ has risen from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor 15:12). Many ancient Gentiles, including some educated people, could accept the resuscitation of a corpse to ordinary life on earth.<sup>37</sup> Many of them could also accept the embodied character of the afterlife.<sup>38</sup> Others, however, especially those with some awareness of popular philosophy, could not accept the idea that an earthly body could ascend to heaven.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 63–64.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Mark 12:18–27; Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, ad. loc.

<sup>37</sup> Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 111–13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 109–10; O. Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (NovTSup 123; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007), 81–117.

<sup>39</sup> Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 113–14; J.R. Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15* (HUT 42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 117–29.

Plutarch, for example, expresses such a view:

At any rate, to reject entirely the divinity of human virtue, were impious and base; but to mix heaven with earth is foolish. Let us therefore take the safe course and grant, with Pindar, that "Our bodies all must follow death's supreme behest, but something living still survives, an image of life, for this alone comes from the gods." Yes, it comes from them, and to them it returns, not with its body, but only when it is most completely separated and set free from the body, and becomes altogether pure, fleshless, and undefiled.<sup>40</sup>

Paul probably taught the Corinthians during his initial visit that Jesus had been raised from the dead and exalted to heaven. In the near future, he would come as Lord to gather the elect, both living and dead (cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; cf. 1 Cor 15:23). Thus he apparently taught that, as the body of Christ had been taken up into heaven, the bodies of those who belong to Christ would also be transported to heaven.

In writing 1 Cor 15, Paul corrected his earlier teaching, or at least clarified and elaborated it, in order to accommodate it to the principle of polarity, that is, the conviction that heavenly bodies belong in heaven and earthly bodies belong on earth. At the same time, he corrects the conclusion of his interlocutors, that there is no resurrection of the dead.<sup>41</sup> He affirms the principle of polarity by declaring "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and corruption does not inherit incorruptibility" (1 Cor 15:50). Yet he can affirm resurrection in terms of change: what is imperishable will put on imperishability, and what is mortal will put on immortality.<sup>42</sup>

There is a certain analogy to this change in 2 Cor 3:18. In that passage Paul says "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from splendor to splendor, as from the Lord, the Spirit."<sup>43</sup> On the one

<sup>40</sup> *Plutarch Vit. Rom.* 28.6–7; translation from B. Perrin, *Plutarch's Lives* (11 vols; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1914), 1.181; cited by Martin *Corinthian Body*, 113–14.

<sup>41</sup> Asher, *Polarity*, 81–88.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor 15:51–53. Cf. Phil 3:20–21 and Rom 6:5, where Paul says "If we have been united (with him) in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also (be united with him in the likeness) of his resurrection."

<sup>43</sup> Trans. from V.P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AncB 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 202. The Greek verb translated here "transform" is μεταμορφοῦν; the verb in 1 Cor 15:51–52 translated "change" is ἀλλάσσειν.

hand, "the *beholding* and the attendant transformation into Christ's image are both going on in the present." On the other hand, "Paul characteristically reserves the believer's full and direct encounter with God for the eschatological future."<sup>44</sup> The transformation that is going on now is not primarily an ecstatic or mystical experience. It is a process in which the believer, by faith working in love, is conformed to the image of God present in God's Son who loved and died "for us." The end-point of this process is the direct vision of God in the new age.<sup>45</sup>

2 Cor contains one of the few passages in which Paul describes the afterlife in some detail. In 2 Cor 4:16–5:5 he articulates a series of contrasts between aspects of the present age that still affect him and the other apostles and aspects of the partially present new age that already affect them now; he also refers to the eventual full reality of the new age.<sup>46</sup> The afflictions that the apostles suffer do not invalidate their authority and their work. On the contrary, the apostles do not become discouraged because "our momentary trifling affliction is bringing about for us an absolutely incomparable, eternal abundance of glory" (2 Cor 4:17).<sup>47</sup> The confidence of the apostles in spite of their hardships is grounded in their knowledge that "if our earthly, tent-like house should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1).<sup>48</sup> The earthly, tent-like house is "our outer person" (ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) mentioned in 4:16, which is also referred to in the context as "our mortal flesh" (ἡ θνητὴ σὰρξ ἡμῶν) and as "our body" (τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν).<sup>49</sup>

The "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" may refer to the heavenly temple in the new Jerusalem.<sup>50</sup> This interpretation fits with Paul's remark in Gal 4:26 that "the Jerusalem above" is "our mother" and the one in Phil 3:20 that our commonwealth is in the heavens. Paul and Mark seem to share a common tradition on this point. In Mark 14:58, the false witnesses accuse Jesus of having

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 239; emphasis original.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 241. Cf. Rom 12:2.

<sup>46</sup> Furnish describes these contrasts as between "what is of preliminary significance only and what is of absolute significance" (*II Corinthians*, 288).

<sup>47</sup> Translation from Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 252. The notion of an abundance of future glory is typically apocalyptic (ibid., 290).

<sup>48</sup> Trans. from Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 252.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Cor 4:10–11; Trans. from Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 293.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. ibid., 294–95.

said "I will destroy this sanctuary, which is made with hands, and in the course of three days I will build another, which is not made with hands." The witnesses are labelled "false" because the Markan Jesus did not say "I will destroy." In 13:2, rather, he uses the divine passive. The saying of 14:58 alludes to the definitive, eschatological temple that God would build or reveal.<sup>51</sup>

Paul also gives some clues about his ideas concerning the other-world in 2 Cor 12:1–10. Although he begins the account with the words "I know a man in Christ" who was snatched up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2), it becomes clear as the account continues that he is speaking about himself. Although he is reluctant to boast about "visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Cor 12:1), he does so in this "Fool's Speech"<sup>52</sup> because his rivals for leadership of the Corinthian community, the "super-apostles," have spoken of their ascents to heaven and visions of God or the risen Christ and based their authority in part upon such experiences. The verb used here "to be snatched up" (ἁρπάξειν) is the same one he uses in 1 Thess 4:17 with regard to the living and the resurrected dead being caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

There has been a debate about whether the place called "Paradise" or "the Garden" in 12:4 is in the third heaven or in a higher one.<sup>53</sup> It is likely that, in Paul's view, Paradise was in the third heaven, since it is so described in two roughly contemporary Jewish texts.<sup>54</sup>

In v. 4 Paul also says that he heard, presumably in Paradise, "inexpressible words" (ἄρρητα ῥήματα). The phrase is drawn from the mystery cults and from the common motif of secrecy characteristic of many Hellenistic cults.<sup>55</sup> He goes on to say that a human being is not

<sup>51</sup> See Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, the commentary on 14:57–58.

<sup>52</sup> 2 Cor 11:1–12:13; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, xii.

<sup>53</sup> J.D. Tabor argues that the text describes a single journey with two stages (*Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* [Studies in Judaism; Lanham – New York – London: University Press of America, 1986], 115). In support of this hypothesis he refers to Lucian's account of Menippus' flight to heaven to see Zeus; he ascends first to the moon and then to the highest heaven; Lucian *Icaromenippus* 22 (*Things Unutterable*, 115). Cf. *Icaromenippus*, 11.

<sup>54</sup> *Apocalypse of Moses* (*Life of Adam and Eve*) 37:5; 40:1; 2 *Enoch* 8:1–9:1.

<sup>55</sup> H. Windisch, *Der Zweite Korintherbrief* (9th ed.; KeK 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1924), 377–378; A. Yarbrow Collins, "Messianic Secret and the Gospel of Mark: Secrecy in Jewish Apocalypticism, the Hellenistic Mystery Religions, and Magic," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*

permitted to speak these words (ὁ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι). Again, Paul adapts the language of the mystery religions. Speaking about the mysteries was punishable by exile or death.<sup>56</sup> The main experience that Paul had in Paradise may have been a vision of Christ seated at the right hand of God in glory.<sup>57</sup> Paul also says in this passage:

For this reason, that I not be overly exalted, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to abuse me, that I not be overly exalted. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it should go away from me. And he said to me: "My grace is enough for you; for power is made fully present in weakness" (2 Cor 12:7b–9).<sup>58</sup>

The "thorn in the flesh" may be related to the tradition concerning the dangers of ascent.<sup>59</sup> Another possibility is that the purpose of the ascent was to inquire about the "thorn in the flesh." Compare the oracular purpose of the ascent in the Mithras Liturgy.<sup>60</sup> Or, if the ascent was involuntary, Paul may still have taken the opportunity to inquire about this affliction.

In any case, if Paul encountered the risen Lord in Paradise and if the account implies that Paradise was located in the third heaven, then in this account the third heaven is also the highest heaven. Most ancient Jewish and Christian texts presuppose that there are either three or seven heavens.<sup>61</sup>

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians while he was in prison, probably in Ephesus.<sup>62</sup> He expresses confidence that his imprisonment will

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(ed. E.R. Wolfson; New York/London: Seven Bridges Press, 1999), 11–30, especially 19–21.

<sup>56</sup> Yarbrow Collins, "Messianic Secret," 20–21.

<sup>57</sup> So Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 122–24; so also Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 377.

<sup>58</sup> Trans. from Furnish, *II Corinthians* 513.

<sup>59</sup> Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 69. Cf. the story about the four who entered the garden; *y. Hag.* 2:1 (Jerusalem Talmud); *b. Hag.* 14b (Babylonian Talmud); for discussion see A. Goshen Gottstein, "Four Entered Paradise Revisited," *HTR* 88 (1995): 69–133.

<sup>60</sup> See Hans Dieter Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy": Text, Translation, and Commentary* (STAC 18; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>61</sup> A. Yarbrow Collins, "The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (eds. J.J. Collins and M. Fishbane; Series in Judaica: Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Culture; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 59–93; reprinted in A. Yarbrow Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (JSJSup 50; Leiden – Boston – Cologne: Brill, 1996; paperback ed. 2000), 21–54.

<sup>62</sup> Phil 1:7, 13–14, 17. For a review of scholarship on the place and date of writing of Philippians, see G.F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco, TX: Word Books,

end with his deliverance (from death) through the prayer of the Philippians and the support of the spirit of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 1:19). It is his eager expectation and hope that he will not be put to shame in any way, but that, as always and now, Christ will be magnified by Paul's speaking openly and frankly and by his body, whether through life or death (cf. Phil 1:20). When he hopes that he will not be put to shame, he does not seem to mean that his execution and death would be shameful in themselves. Rather, he seems to hope that he will not be so weak as to deny Christ. As long as he speaks the truth boldly, Christ will be magnified, whether Paul dies or lives.

Paul's next statement is the famous aphorism, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). The next verse, 1:22, is difficult. J.B. Lightfoot proposed the translation, "But what if my living in the flesh will bear fruit" through my labor? "In fact what to choose I know not."<sup>63</sup> Carolyn Osiek argued that "His dilemma about which to prefer, life or death, is a rhetorical one. It is unlikely that Paul thinks he will ultimately have any choice in the matter."<sup>64</sup> Gerald Hawthorne suggested that the latter part of the verse could be translated "'I dare not reveal' my preference" or "I cannot tell what I would choose."<sup>65</sup> He quoted a comment by Maurice Jones with approval, "The Apostle will not venture to decide between the alternatives, and the choice must be left in his Master's hands."<sup>66</sup> The explanation by Hawthorne and Jones is preferable to that of Arthur Droge and James Tabor, who argue that, in this verse, Paul was considering taking his own life, an act they call "voluntary death."<sup>67</sup>

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1983), xxxvi–xliv; he opts for Caesarea (on the sea); J.B. Lightfoot assumes the traditional location, Rome; *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1913; reprinted: A Zondervan Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1953) 1–29; C. Osiek reviews the evidence and thinks Ephesus the most likely place of writing; *Philippians and Philemon* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000) 27–30.

<sup>63</sup> Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 92–93.

<sup>64</sup> Osiek, *Philippians*, 43.

<sup>65</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.; M. Jones, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen, 1918).

<sup>67</sup> A.J. Droge and J.D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1992) 120–23.

The clause “to live is Christ” is also difficult. The context implies an explanation in terms of the Philippians’ need for his continued guidance in their progress and joy in faith (Phil 1:24–26).<sup>68</sup> The clause “to die is gain” is elaborated in v. 23, “I am hard pressed between the two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, for (doing so) is better by far.” In this relatively late letter, Paul expresses the same hope that he taught the Thessalonians in his earliest letter, that at the coming of the Lord, all those in Christ will be united with him and will be with him forever (cf. Phil 1:23 with 1 Thess 4:17).

A difference between 1 Thess 4, on the one hand, and Phil 1:23 and 2 Cor 5:1, on the other, is that the earliest letter implies that living and dead believers will be united with Christ only at his parousia and not before. The later two letters, however, imply that Paul will be with Christ immediately after death. Some have argued that Paul’s teaching about the afterlife of believers changed during the time between the writing of 1 Thess and the writing of 2 Cor and Phil. The reason for the change was his gradual awareness that he might not live until the parousia.<sup>69</sup> Many who take this view argue that “the building from God... eternal in the heavens” in 2 Cor 5:1 is the new, immortal body that is given by God in place of “the earthly, tent-like house,” that is, the earthly body that is destroyed by death.<sup>70</sup> Victor Furnish rejects this interpretation and argues that “the house... in the heavens” is simply an image for the new age that gives the apostles hope in their hardships.<sup>71</sup>

It seems to me that an important clue to the tension between 1 Thess and 2 Cor is that in the earlier letter Paul is talking about *all* believers, whereas in the later one he speaks of the *apostles*.<sup>72</sup> This difference is analogous to the distinction between the ordinary dead and the special dead in Jewish, (classical) Greek, and Hellenistic texts. Already in Genesis and 2 Kings, Enoch and Elijah were portrayed as being

<sup>68</sup> Droge and Tabor argue that Paul is playing upon the similarity of the word Χριστός (“Christ”) with the word χρηστός (“useful”); *Noble Death*, 120–21.

<sup>69</sup> E.g., Murray J. Harris, “Paul’s View of Death in 2 Corinthians 5:1–10,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (eds. R.N. Longenecker and M.C. Tenney; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 317–28; cited by Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 292. Harris argues that the “building from God” is the σῶμα πνευματικόν and the “earthly, tent-like house” is the σῶμα ψυχικόν of 1 Cor 15:44 (“Paul’s View,” 321).

<sup>70</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 292.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 295, 296–97.

<sup>72</sup> 2 Cor 2:14–17; 3:1–6; 4:1–6:13; Furnish, *II Corinthian*, xii, 185–86, 349.

taken up to God while still living, instead of dying. By the early Roman period Moses was similarly believed to have been taken by God before death. The Iliad and the Odyssey also speak about human beings who were taken by the gods and made immortal. They are taken to Mount Olympus, White Island, or the Elysian Plain. In the Aithiopsis, a continuation of the Iliad that survives only in citations by other authors, Memnon and Achilles die first and then are made immortal.<sup>73</sup>

The hypothesis that Paul considered the apostles to be analogous to the biblical and Greek special dead explains how he could speak about the dead who belong to Christ rising at the time of the parousia in 1 Thess 4:16 and 1 Cor 15:23, yet speak about the apostles having a house or building in heaven, apparently immediately after death, in 2 Cor 5:1–10 and about himself being with Christ immediately after death in Phil 1:23.

A passage in the section just prior to the one about the heavenly house complicates the issue:

Because we have the same Spirit of faith as the one who wrote, “I believed, and so I spoke,” [Ps 115:1 LXX] we also believe, and so we speak, knowing that the one who raised [the Lord] Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will present us with you (2 Cor 4:13–14).<sup>74</sup>

The first problem is how to imagine the context in which God will present the apostles with the Corinthian addressees. One possibility is that the implied context is legal and that “present” is equivalent to “bring before a judge.” The sense would then be that God will raise the apostles and bring them, together with the Corinthians, before himself, i.e., before his seat of judgment.<sup>75</sup>

Another possibility is that the context is not legal; rather, it concerns the closeness that the elect will have with God in the new age.<sup>76</sup> This interpretation is supported by the account of the eschatological events in 1 Cor 15:23–28. After the resurrection of those who belong to Christ at the time of his parousia, “Then (comes) the end, when

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<sup>73</sup> For further examples and discussion see A. Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 138–43.

<sup>74</sup> Trans. from Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 252; Psalm reference added.

<sup>75</sup> W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (ed. W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich; 3rd ed. rev. by F.W. Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.) s.v. *παρίστημι/παριστάνω* i.e.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

[Christ] hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when [Christ] brings to an end every ruler and every authority and power.... When all things have been subjected to him, then the son himself [also] will be subjected to the one who subjected all things to him, in order that God (may be) all in all." The climax of the events of the eschatological scenario is God being all in all. This notion would seem to include the fellowship that the elect will have with God and Christ.

If the latter interpretation is valid, the passage we have been examining in 2 Cor 4:13–14 is compatible with the idea that the apostles will be united with Christ immediately after death, but the rest of the faithful will join them only at the parousia. God's "raising us with Jesus" can apply either to the union of the apostles with Christ immediately after death or to the resurrection of those in Christ at the parousia or to both events seen collectively. Furnish concluded that the emphasis in 2 Cor 4:14b is on "us," the apostles, being with "you," the Corinthians, in an eschatological context.<sup>77</sup> If so, the "presentation" of "us" with "you" may well take place at the final stage of the eschatological series of events, when God is becoming "all in all."

The most interesting passage for our topic in Romans is chapter 8. There human participation in the new age is described as deriving from divine adoption and the gift of the Spirit. Paul articulated these themes already in Galatians. In building on the legal point that an heir is no better than a slave until he comes of age, Paul argued in the earlier letter:

So also is the case with us; when we were minors, we were enslaved by the elements of the world; but when the fullness of time came, God sent his son, born of woman, born under the law, in order that he might redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption (as children of God) (Gal 4:3–5).

Paul went on immediately to say, "And because you are sons, God sent out the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying out 'Abba, Father!' So that you are no longer a slave, but a son; if a son, then also an heir through God" (Gal 4:5–6).

In Galatians, Paul's point is that the Gentiles are already not only children of Abraham, but of God also. Thus they do not need to be circumcised. In Rom 8, he develops these themes from another angle. The spirit of God dwells in those who belong to Christ (Rom 8:9–10).

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<sup>77</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 286.

The one who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to the mortal bodies of those in whom his spirit dwells (Rom 8:11). Those who live in accordance with the spirit, those who allow themselves to be led by the spirit, these are the ones who are sons of God:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery (so that you fall) back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption in which we cry "Abba, Father!" The same spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God. If (we are) children, (then we are) also heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with (him) in order that we may be glorified with (him) (Rom 8:14–17).

This discussion of the spirit, adoption, and inheritance is followed by a treatment of "the glory that is about to be revealed to us." The theme of suffering with Christ, mentioned in v. 17, is picked up in the contrast of v. 18:

I think that the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us. For the eagerly awaiting creation waits eagerly for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly but on account of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will also be freed from slavery to decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and experiences a common pain until now. Not only (the creation), but we also, having the first fruits of the spirit, groan within ourselves as we eagerly await adoption, (namely,) the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:18–23).

The subjection of the creation to futility appears to be equivalent to its subjection to transitoriness, as the phrase "slavery to decay" (δουλεία τῆς φθορᾶς) suggests. Paul here probably draws on a traditional interpretation of Gen 3:17, "cursed is the ground because of you." Compare 2 *Esdras* 7:11, "For I made the world for [Israel's] sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged" (2 *Esdras* 7:11)<sup>78</sup>

The context suggests that "the revelation of the sons of God" will bring about the end of the slavery of creation to transitoriness. It too will be granted "the freedom of the glory of the children of God." This freedom seems to be equivalent to "the redemption of our bodies."

It seems likely that "the redemption of our bodies" is equivalent to the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transformation of those

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<sup>78</sup> Translation from the NRSV; passage cited by E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980; 4th German ed., Tübingen, 1980), 233.

who are left into a form that may ascend to heaven. In light of the other passages we have discussed concerning these themes, the process to which Paul refers involves leaving what is earthly and corruptible behind and “putting on” what is heavenly and incorruptible.

Since the manumission or redemption of creation is closely linked to “the redemption of our bodies,” it appears from this passage that Paul’s view of the new age is entirely heavenly and spiritual. Perhaps Paul shared the view of the author of *4 Ezra*, who wrote: After those years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. Then the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings, so that no one shall be left. After seven days the world that is not yet awake shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish (*2 Esdras* 7:29–31).<sup>79</sup>

It is likely that Paul shared the view of this work that the present age is transitory and corruptible, whereas the age or world to come is spiritual and eternal (cf. *2 Esdras* 7:39–42). Yet the idea that “all who draw human breath” will die and that “the world will be turned back to primeval silence” does not fit with some of Paul’s ideas. The notion that those who are alive at the parousia will be “changed” (1 Cor 15:51; cf. 1 Thess 4:17) and the implication that the creation will be freed from its bondage when those in Christ are redeemed from their earthly bodies suggest that Paul envisaged a dramatic transformation, equivalent to a new creation, at the coming of Christ.<sup>80</sup>

In conclusion, I will offer a few general observations on Paul’s views of the otherworld and the new age as they can be reconstructed from his letters. Paul clearly views the universe as having at least two levels or stories, heaven and earth. According to the twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek text, he never mentions Hades.<sup>81</sup> He never mentions Gehenna, a name for a place of punishment used seven times by Matthew, three times by Mark, once by Luke, and once by James.<sup>82</sup>

As we have seen, however, Paul does speak about the wrath of God that is coming upon sinners (1 Thess 1:10) and the sudden destruc-

<sup>79</sup> Translation from the NRSV.

<sup>80</sup> This interpretation is supported by 1 Cor 15:23–24, if “the end” of v. 24 is rightly understood as following immediately upon the parousia of Christ in v. 23.

<sup>81</sup> Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and the text of the fourth edition of the United Bible Society’s *The Greek New Testament*, however, read ποῦ σου, ἔδη, τὸ κέντρον in 1 Cor 15:55, following the majority text.

<sup>82</sup> Matt 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6.

tion that will come upon those who say “there is peace and security” (1 Thess 5:3). He pronounced judgment on the man who was living with his father’s wife and instructed the Corinthians “to hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh” (1 Cor 15:5). This instruction is the counterpart to 1 Thess 1:10; those in Christ will be rescued by him from the wrath that is coming; those not in Christ, including the man handed over to Satan, will suffer the consequences of that wrath.<sup>83</sup> Along the same lines, Paul says with regard to those who build upon the foundation he has laid by founding the community in Corinth, “The work of each will become manifest, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed with fire; and the work of each, of what sort it is, the fire will test [it]” (1 Cor 15:5). In Rom 2 it becomes clear that “the day of wrath” is also the day on which God will conduct a universal and final judgment. In that context, however, Paul speaks about punishments and rewards in very general terms: “eternal life” for those who have done what is good and “wrath and anger” for the wicked. There will be “tribulation and distress” for those who do evil, and “glory and honour and peace” for those who do what is good (Rom 2:5–11). Since his rhetorical point here is that God shows no partiality and that sinners will be punished and the righteous blessed, regardless of whether they are Jews or Gentiles, he does not go into detail about the nature of these rewards and punishments or about the locations in which they will take place.

An important characteristic of Paul’s view of the otherworld and the new age is clear, however, from the passages that we have discussed. They will be radically different from this world and this age with respect to their form and probably substance as well. They will be heavenly and spiritual and the “bodies” that play a role in them will not be made up of most of the same “stuff” as their earthly counterparts.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> In the last part of 1 Cor 5:5, “the spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα) that us to be “preserved” (σώζειν) on the day of the Lord is probably not the personal spirit of the man in question, but the spirit of Christ or God that dwells in the Corinthian Community. If they do not expel the man, the spirit will depart from them because of the offense and the impurity caused by the man’s behavior. See A. Yarbro Collins, “The Function of ‘Excommunication’ in Paul,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 251–63.

<sup>84</sup> See the discussion of “astral souls and celestial bodies” in: Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 117–20.



## THE OTHERWORLD AND THIS WORLD IN 2 COR 12:1–10 IN LIGHT OF EARLY JEWISH APOCALYPTIC TRADITION

Albert Hogeterp

Among the Pauline letters, 2 Cor 12:1–10 provides one of the most visionary intimations about personal experiences with the ‘otherworld’,<sup>1</sup> being the third heaven (v. 2) or Paradise (v. 4), as well as that which keeps the apostle from being too elated about these revelations (v. 7). Paul mentions an abundance of visions and revelations of the Lord (2 Cor 12:1; cf. 2 Cor 12:7), but he singles out one visionary experience of ‘a man in Christ fourteen years ago’, πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων (2 Cor 12:2). This explicit chronological indication makes it possible to date the visionary experience related in 2 Corinthians 12:2–4 around 41 or 42 C.E., since the composition of Second Corinthians is usually dated to 55/56 C.E.<sup>2</sup> The vision of 2 Corinthians 12:2–4 should therefore be situated in the time of Paul’s early mission in Syria and Cilicia (cf. Gal 1:21), a period described as ‘the missing years’ in biographical discussions of Paul’s missionary life.<sup>3</sup>

The way Paul phrases the visionary experience and the obstacle to exaltation raises several questions. Why does Paul speak in the third person singular about his own visions and revelations? What is

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<sup>1</sup> In view of comparison with 2 Cor 12:6–7, it is generally agreed that the rapture to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2), to Paradise (2 Cor 12:4), stands for Paul’s visionary experience. See V.P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 524; R.P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1986), 398; J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (London: T&T Clark – Continuum, 1998), 108 n. 33: “Most assume that Paul is testifying to his own experience here (cf. 12.7a)”; M.E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians 2: Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 778. On the formulation of this visionary experience and its third person singular voice, see section 1 below.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Bieringer, “Der 2. Korintherbrief in den neuesten Kommentaren,” *ETL* 67 (1991): 107–30 at 125–8; U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (UTB 1830; 2nd ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 97–9.

<sup>3</sup> J. Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul. A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 95–101. Cf. M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Antiochien: die unbekannten Jahre des Apostels* (WUNT 108; Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

unutterable about the things heard in the rapture to the third heaven? How could the second half of the passage about the restraints which keep the apostle from being too elated (2 Cor 12:6–10) be understood? In other words, why does Paul phrase revelation the way he does it in this passage? In other passages of his Letters, Paul is all the more versatile about revelations concerning, for instance, the expected coming of the Lord (1 Thess 4:13–18) and resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15). Visions and revelations as uttered by Paul about the final age have been described in terms of an apocalyptic perspective which is various respects indebted to Jewish apocalypticism.<sup>4</sup> The visionary experience of 2 Corinthians 12:2–4 could generally be classified as an ‘otherworldly journey’, albeit in very terse form. This essay reconsiders Paul’s formulation in this passage in light of the larger context of the letter and of Jewish apocalyptic literature contemporary to Paul, in search of the meaning of the very restrained terms.

### 1. PAUL’S RELATION TO THE ‘OTHERWORLD’

The immediate context from which Paul starts to speak of visions and revelations of the Lord are the introductory words ‘I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it’ (2 Cor 12:1a, RSV). This introduction also connects with the preceding chapter in which Paul has gone at length to counter the boastful mission of his opponents with boasting from the conviction that it is foolish and worldly (2 Cor 11:12–33). This context and rhetorical situation<sup>5</sup> merits further attention, in order to evaluate the setting in which Paul goes on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. M.C. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death. Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (JSNTSup 22; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1988); idem, “Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (ed. J. Marcus and M.L. Soards; JSNTSup 24; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 169–90; idem, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism 1 The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. J.J. Collins; New York: Continuum, 1998), 345–83; J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (The Biblical Resource Series; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 264–8.

<sup>5</sup> L.F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14 has distinguished exigence, audience and constraints against persuasion as three factors in the ‘rhetorical situation’ of a communication.

1.1. *The Unutterable Vision of the Otherworld*1.1.1. *Rhetorical Setting and Formulation*

2 Cor 12:1–10 is often considered part of the larger textual section 2 Cor 10–13 because of its different tone and sense of acute challenge as compared with the supposedly ‘conciliatory tone’ of 2 Cor 1–9.<sup>6</sup> While the tone may be different in subsequent sections, other Pauline Letters, such as First Corinthians and Galatians, also combine confrontation (1 Cor 5–6, 11:17–22; Gal 1:6–9, 3:1–5, 4:8–11) and conciliation (e.g. 1 Cor 4:14–17, 15:58; Gal 1:1–5, 6:1–10). The coherence of Second Corinthians<sup>7</sup> is further underpinned by references to opponents to Paul’s mission throughout the letter (2 Cor 1:8–10, 2:10–11, 3:1, 4:3–4, 11:1–23) and by the recurring subject of boasting and commending oneself in reaction to or imagined dispute with opponents (2 Cor 3:1, 5:12, 6:3–4, 7:14, 10:8, 10:13–11:33).

The situation of exigence which occasioned 2 Cor should probably be explained in terms of searching for re-established mutual comfort and hope in face of tremendous affliction. 2 Cor 1:3–7 repeatedly mentions affliction and sufferings, but emphatically turns to hope: ‘Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort’ (2 Cor 1:7, RSV). The situation of affliction is approximated in the subsequent verses 8–10:

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God

<sup>6</sup> E.g. J. Murphy-O’Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 11; M. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians 1: Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I–VII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 24–5. However, Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 110 also notes changes of tone in 1 Cor 8 to 9, Gal 2 to 3, Rom 11 to 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Contra* ‘Teilungshypothesen’ which divide the letter in several units (hypothetical Letters A (2 Cor 2:14–7:4 without 6:14–7:1), B (2 Cor 10:1–13:10), C (2 Cor 1:3–2:11), D (2 Cor 2:12f, 7:5–16), E (2 Cor 8), F (2 Cor 9)) supposedly redactionally put together, as surveyed in H. Conzelmann and A. Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch zum Neuen Testament* (14th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 270–3 and as argued by D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1986), 1–25 at 14. Bieringer, ‘Der 2. Korintherbrief in den neuesten Kommentaren,’ 115–20 and Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 101–11 confirm a tendency to accept the literary unity and integrity of Second Corinthians, albeit with the observation that 2 Cor 10–13 was probably written with an altered situation in mind as compared to 2 Cor 1–9.

who raises the dead; he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again (2 Cor 1:8–10, RSV).

The events in Asia are not further described in detail to us in 2 Cor nor is it certain whether any passage in the Acts of the Apostles directly goes into this subject. 1 Cor 15:32 mentions the apostle's fight with beasts in Ephesus, while Acts 19:28–41 narrates a rage of Ephesian Artemis-worshippers against Paul and his companions in travel in the theatre of Ephesus (Acts 19:29). It seems that the events mentioned in these passages are among what the apostle calls hardships (cf. 2 Cor 6:4; 11:23b–33), since 2 Cor suggests a new situation different from what Paul wrote in 1 Cor.

A subsequent passage, 2 Cor 2:5–11, gives the impression that Paul had been confronted with a relentless opposition which took advantage of bitter resentment against the apostle's past as former persecutor of the church (cf. Gal 1:13–14). Paul writes in the third person singular about himself in 2 Cor 2:6–7: "For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; so you should rather turn to forgive and welcome him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow" (RSV). He further emphasises that if he has forgiven this person, that is, himself, anything, it is for the sake of the Corinthian congregation in face of Christ, "in order that we are not taken advantage of by Satan; for we are not unaware of his designs" (2 Cor 2:11 RSV). Paul's experienced punishment by the majority, ἡ ἐπιτιμία ἡ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων (2 Cor 2:6), is paralleled by the sense of isolation from his own mission which Paul expresses in Gal 2:1–14. However, with the 'deadly peril' (2 Cor 1:8) and the threat that Satan would take advantage over Paul's past as persecutor (2 Cor 2:11), the apostle appears to refer to a third party, beyond himself with fellow workers and beyond opposing circles among the 'holy ones' in the Jerusalem church with their reputed pillars (cf. Gal 2:9; Rom 15:26).

It could be that the deadly peril for Paul in Asia came from the same corner as circles in which the former persecutor had found a support base for his persecuting activity. The support base for such violence of former persecution should be situated among the group intrusively called the 'fourth philosophy' by Flavius Josephus, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> The origin as well as characteristics of the 'fourth

<sup>8</sup> On my argument that this "fourth philosophy" which according to Josephus 'agrees in all other respects with the way of thinking of the Pharisees (*Ant.* 18.23),

philosophy' are described by Josephus as a political ideology which did not shrink from bloodshed, not even among fellow Jews and friends (συγγενεῖς καὶ φίλοι, *Ant.* 18.23), to fight for the cause of liberty and theocracy (*Ant.* 18.5–8.23). Josephus draws a line from this 'fourth philosophy' right to the catastrophic end of the Jewish war (66–70 C.E.; *Ant.* 18.8–10). He also describes the appearance of radical elements in Judaea at the time of Felix' governorship (52–60 C.E.) in the form of murderous 'Sicarii'<sup>9</sup> and liars and traitors who pretended to be inspired by God, but who in reality aimed at revolutionary changes (*J.W.* 2.254–259).

When Paul speaks of 'danger from robbers', 'danger from my own people' and 'danger from false brethren' in the same breath (2 Cor 11:26, RSV), his language appears not unrelated to the radical elements described by Josephus. This danger of radical elements in an increasing degree could also be the sense of 'false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage' in Gal 2:4 (RSV), the fearful atmosphere around 'certain men from James' who came to Antioch (Gal 2:12), and 'those who unsettle you' (Gal 5:12), i.e. the Galatians.<sup>10</sup> This fearful atmosphere which Paul evokes in Galatians, which circles around certain men from Judaea, may have been a situation in spite of and at the expense of churches in Jerusalem and Judaea. 1 Thess 2:14–16 should probably be understood in this specific connection, in relation to the increasing radical elements in Judaea described by Josephus.

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see my *Paul and God's Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence* (BiTS 2; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 225–30 at 228.

<sup>9</sup> *Sicarii*, σικάριοι, called after the dagger, *sica*, which they wore under their clothes (*J.W.* 2.425; *Ant.* 20.186), are mentioned by Josephus in relation to Judaea (*J.W.* 2.254, 425; 7.254, 262; *Ant.* 20.185–6), Jerusalem (*Ant.* 20.204, 208, 210), Masada (*J.W.* 4.400, 516; 7.253, 275, 297, 311), Egyptian Alexandria (*J.W.* 7.409–410, 412, 415), and Cyrene (*J.W.* 7.431, 444). Judas Iskariot, Ἰσκαρι(ώθ)ώτης, has further been associated with the movement of Sicarii according to one etymological interpretation (אִישׁ שְׁקִרִיּוֹת, 'a man of the Sicarii'; cf. BDAG, 3rd. ed.; 2000, 480). Σικάριοι is also the term used in Acts 21:38 in the Roman tribune's interrogation whether Paul would be "the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" (RSV).

<sup>10</sup> On the connection between "false brethren" in Jerusalem (Gal 2:4), Antioch and the crisis in Galatia, cf. P.F. Esler, "Making and Breaking an Agreement Mediterranean Style: A New Reading of Galatians 2:1–14," *BibInt* 3 (1995): 285–314.

## 2. THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT TO THE VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF 2 COR 12:1–10

Returning to the immediate context of 2 Cor 12:1–10, more can be said on the subject of ‘boasting’ with which Paul introduces the visions and revelations of the Lord in 2 Cor 12:1. Paul goes at length to dissociate himself from ‘super-apostles’ (2 Cor 11:5) who “would like to claim that in their boasted mission the work on the same terms as we do” (2 Cor 11:12). The falsehood of this boasted mission is so harshly denounced by Paul that he compares their disguise as ‘apostles of Christ’ (2 Cor 11:13) with the idea that “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14) and identifies them as Satan’s servants. He also warns the readers about these ‘false apostles’ that “their end will correspond to their deeds” (2 Cor 11:15, RSV).

In spite of these warnings, Paul the apostle appears concerned that he will not reach the Corinthian congregation anymore, so that he introduces the hyperbolic language of boasting in 2 Cor 11:16–33. The Corinthian congregation was probably impressed by the religious tradition and authority which gospel missionaries conveyed, as may be indicated in passages like 1 Cor 1:12, 3:4–5, and 9:1–14. The boasting which Paul takes upon himself is that which is on the cover of the false boasted mission of opponents which the apostle denounces. He writes that “whatever any one dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that” (2 Cor 11:21, RSV) and then turns to the self-identifications as Hebrew, Israelite, descendant of Abraham, servant of Christ (2 Cor 11:22–23) as well as hardships and labours (2 Cor 11:23–33). Nevertheless, the apostle also readily admits beforehand that such boastful confidence is not expressed “with the Lord’s authority but as a fool” (2 Cor 11:17, RSV). In the verses closer to our passage, 2 Cor 12:1–10, Paul introduces the idea that boasting, if necessary, should be related to weakness: “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (2 Cor 11:30, RSV). This idea recurs in 2 Cor 12:1–10, as is indicated in verses 5 and 9. Right after the communication of the heavenly rapture, Paul insists that he will not boast on his own behalf, “except of my weaknesses” (2 Cor 12:5), while he also puts forward the revealed saying of Christ, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9, RSV). Boasting in Paul’s theological perspective can only be boasting of the Lord, as is indicated by his twofold citation of words from LXX Jeremiah 9:23 (1 Cor 1:31, 2 Cor 10:17).

## 3. VISIONS AND REVELATIONS AND THEIR CONCEPTUALIZATION

Paul's reference to individual visions and revelations of the Lord, ὄπτασῖαι καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου (2 Cor 12:1), which is subsequently specified by the verses about heavenly rapture (2 Cor 12:2–4), has both oral and aural dimensions.<sup>11</sup> The individual visionary experience of 2 Cor 12:2–4<sup>12</sup> should be differentiated from collective statements about visions of the Lord, such as in 1 Cor 15:6 and 2 Cor 3:18. Exegesis must take into account a theological understanding of what such visionary experience meant to the apostle in his world of thought. Paul's mention of the 'third heaven' and its association with Paradise (2 Cor 12:2–4) is not paralleled in other New Testament writings nor in the Old Testament. While we will turn to this subject in comparison with contemporary Jewish apocalyptic literature in the next section (section 2 below), Paul's conceptualisation of this visionary experience under the rubric of visions and revelations first merits comparative attention in view of biblical and apocalyptic traditions.

Biblical literature includes various examples of divine or divinely inspired visions by prophetic and priestly biblical figures alike (e.g. מראות אלהים / ὁράσεις θεοῦ in MT and LXX Ezek 1:1; cf. the paraphrase of 1 Sam 3:17 with the words מראה האלוהים in *4QVision of Samuel* [4Q160] 1:5). Daniel 10 includes many visionary terms (מראה / ὄπτασῖα / ὄραμα / ὄρασις, in MT and LXX G/Th Dan 10:1, 7–8, 16). Yet the concept of revelation, ἀποκάλυψις, only occurs in a few places in the Septuagint (1 Kgdms 20:30; Sir 11:27, 22:22, 42:1) and plays a more extensive role in apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple period.<sup>13</sup> The Enochic literature comprises many visions and their revelation (e.g. *1 Enoch* 1:2, 37:1, 83:1), including dream visions (*1 Enoch* 90:39–42). The Qumran text *4QVisions of Amram* adds further visions (חזות עמרם, 4Q543 1 1 // 4Q545 1 I 1) as well as dream

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 114 who mentions the interpretation of ὄπτασῖαι καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου as a “composite expression” denoting the dual aspects of vision and audition.

<sup>12</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 542; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 391–2; and Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 775 agree that 2 Cor 12:2–4 stands for one experience, not two.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2–5 at 3 observes that the “Greek title *apokalypsis* (revelation) as a genre label is not attested in the period before Christianity”, but also argues with justification that some Second Temple Jewish texts can be designated as apocalypses, such as *1 Enoch* and *Daniel*.

visions (חזון רי חלמא, 4Q544 1 10) to the evidence of Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic visionary experience and its interpretation. One passage in *4QVisions of Amram* directly links dream vision to its writing (“and I awoke from the sleep of my eyes and [I] wrote the vision”, 4Q547 4 8),<sup>14</sup> while another fragmentarily preserved text contains a vision, חזון, and its interpretation (4Q410 = *4QVision and Its Interpretation*). In the Jewish world of thought with which Paul grew up,<sup>15</sup> visionary experience probably had a place among different schools of thought such as those of the Pharisees<sup>16</sup> and the Essenes<sup>17</sup> in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Life* 10–12).

#### 4. THE THIRD PERSON SINGULAR REVELATION

The concept of visionary experience has a general setting in biblical and apocalyptic tradition, but Paul’s formulation in the third person singular in 2 Cor 12:2–5 seems unfamiliar, as compared to first person singular revelations such as those in 1 Cor 15:8–10 and Gal 1:15–17:

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which no one may utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. (2 Cor 12:2–5, after RSV)

<sup>14</sup> Translation from F. García Martínez and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition 2 4Q274–11Q31* (Leiden: Brill – Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 1093.

<sup>15</sup> On Paul’s youth and education, see Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 32–70; cf. A. Hogeterp, ‘Locating Paul’s Pharisaic Study of the Law’, in *Paul and God’s Temple*, 219–34 in view of the hypothesis of J. Knox.

<sup>16</sup> The Pharisees are attributed a belief in theodicy, the afterlife and retribution of deeds by Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.162–163 and *Jewish Antiquities* 18.13–14. They are attributed belief in the resurrection of the dead, angel and spirit in Acts 23:8, while resurrection of the dead is presupposed as a doctrine “prescribed in the Law” in *m.Sanhedrin* 10.1 (as translated in H. Danby, *The Mishnah* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933], 397).

<sup>17</sup> The Essenes are attributed a belief in the afterlife, retribution of deeds, as well as prophecy and divination by Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.154–159 (cf. *J.W.* 1.78 and *Ant.* 15.373–379), who further observes that Essene theology about the soul (περί ψυχῆς θεολογοῦσιν) irresistibly attracts those who have learned of their wisdom (σοφία).

Perhaps this third person singular could have a general analogy with visionary Son of Man sayings in the third person singular in the synoptic gospel tradition, but the context of 2 Cor provides further evidence to situate this way of speaking. In 2 Cor 2:6–8, a passage we already came across in our discussion of the situation of the letter, Paul also speaks about himself in the third person singular, begging the Corinthian readers ‘to reaffirm your love for him’ (2 Cor 2:8, RSV). When speaking in the third person singular, Paul probably enters a domain in the past and present of writing where he could only forgive himself if it were for the sake of other fellow believers and in the presence of Christ (2 Cor 2:10).

## 5. RAPTURE

Another aspect to the visionary experience in 2 Cor 12:2–4 which merits further attention is its formulation in terms of rapture. Paul uses the verb ἀρπάζειν twice, in 2 Cor 12:2 (ἀρπαγέντα) and in 2 Cor 12:4 (ἡρπάγη). Rapture is also what the apostle envisions at the expected time of resurrection and the Lord’s coming in 1 Thess 4:17 (ἀρπαγησόμεθα). On the other hand, rapture may also denote spiritual exaltation, as is indicated by Acts 8:39 which observes that ‘the Spirit of the Lord caught up (ἥρπασεν) Philip’ (RSV). Paul’s twice-stated phrase ‘whether in the body or outside the body, I do not know’ (2 Cor 12:2–3, RSV), to which we will further turn in a moment, leaves the question how the physical reality of visionary experience should be understood.

Literary evidence may provide further contextual information what Jews and Christian Jews<sup>18</sup> at the time of Paul understood by the idea of rapture. Documentary evidence from Leontopolis, dated between the mid-second century B.C.E. and the early second century C.E., speaks of rapture with the overtone of sudden death: “suddenly Hades came and snatched me away”.<sup>19</sup> Another example may be derived from a

<sup>18</sup> On the Jewish affiliations of emerging Christianity, including Pauline faith and mission, cf. A. Hogeterp. “Paul’s Judaism Reconsidered. The Issue of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence,” *ETL* 81 (2005): 87–108; cf. Paul’s references to ‘kinsmen’, συγγενεῖς (Rom 9:3, 16:7.11.21), and the identification of Aquila and Prisca and Apollos as Jews in Acts 18:2.24.

<sup>19</sup> [αἰ]φνιδίως με λαβὼν βῶν ὥχετ’ ἰὼν Αἴδη[ς], *CIJ* ii no. 1508 line 8; text and translation from W. Horbury and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*.

literary text, the mid-second to first century B.C.E. Qumran text 4QBeatitudes (4Q525) 14 II 14 which includes the sentence “you shall inherit honour; and when you are snatched away to eternal rest (וְאַם עַר נִסְפִּיתָהּ לַמְנוּחוֹת עַר) they will inhe[rit her]”.<sup>20</sup> The parallel language suggests that an otherworldly dimension beyond life is involved in the usage of the term rapture.

Paul expresses his visionary experience as a rapture to the third heaven or Paradise, which raises questions whether this rapture may be understood as heavenly ascent and how apocalyptic literature could perhaps illuminate further understanding of this phenomenon. Before turning to contextual evidence, with particular attention for Qumran texts, some comments should be made about the anthropological dimension to Paul’s visionary experience.

### 5.1. *Anthropological Dimensions*

#### 5.1.1. *‘Whether in the body or outside the body, I do not know’*

Paul surrounds his expression of the visionary experience with the twice-stated observation ‘whether in the body or outside the body, I do not know, God knows’ (2 Cor 12:2–3). This emphatic statement merits consideration, for it appears implausible that the apostle would write it twice, if it did not matter whether the visionary experience was ‘in the body or outside the body’, εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἔκτος τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα. This impression of an intentional statement is further confirmed by the repeated addition ‘God knows’, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν (2 Cor 12:2–3). The next question is what the apostle intended to convey with this statement. An answer to this question depends on what Paul thought of the body and corporeality on the one hand and what the third heaven or Paradise may stand for on the other.

The first part of the answer may be elaborated with the aid of anthropological observations. It should be noted from the start that Paul’s theology is characterised by a dual concept of corporeality, one term standing for the human body, σῶμα, and the other standing for the

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*With an Index of Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica* (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 60–3.

<sup>20</sup> Ed. pr. É. Puech, *Qumrân grotte 4.XVIII Textes hébreux* (4Q521–4Q528, 4Q576–4Q579) (DJD 25; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 145–51. Translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 2, 1057.

‘flesh’, σάρξ, opposed to God.<sup>21</sup> Paul uses the term for human body, σῶμα, in the visionary account in 2 Cor 12:2–3, whereas he uses the term ‘flesh’, σάρξ, in 2 Cor 12:7, where the apostle comes to speak about the ‘thorn in the flesh’, which keeps him from being too elated about the abundance of revelations. In Paul’s perspective, if any idea of sharing in the otherworld beyond life can be hoped for, it will not be ‘flesh and blood’, σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα (1 Cor 15:50), but it will be the body (σῶμα) God has chosen (1 Cor 15:38). Parallel formulations in 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Cor 15:50 appear to imply that ‘flesh and blood’ stand for unrighteousness.

Another section in Second Corinthians, 2 Cor 4:16–18 together with 2 Cor 5:1–10, gives further expression to the envisioned heavenly world in terms of things unseen and eternal (2 Cor 4:18). Paul emphasizes not to lose heart and to be of good courage (2 Cor 4:16; 5:6, 8) in face of expected glory in spite of momentary affliction (2 Cor 4:17) and in face of the guarantee of the Spirit (2 Cor 5:5). The passage is usually associated with Paul’s perspective on the resurrection beyond life. M.E. Thrall has also analysed the anthropological terms in this passage in connection with the theme of ‘continuity between the present life and the life of the resurrection’. The anthropological terms analysed by her include ‘the outer nature’, ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος, which is wasting away (2 Cor 4:16), the ‘inner nature’, which is being renewed every day (2 Cor 4:16), ‘body’, σῶμα (2 Cor 5:6.8.10), and ‘spirit’, πνεῦμα.<sup>22</sup> Yet the question remains how one could conceive of continuity in the case of a rapture to the third heaven still in the present life. In view of the expressed certainty about the resurrection (1 Cor 15), a different explanation is necessary than that of doubt whether Paradise would be a physical reality or incorporeal as a faint dreamlike notion which would only subsist,<sup>23</sup> in order to understand Paul’s way of thought. Paul speaks in unmistakably corporeal terms about resurrection in 1 Cor 15:37–44. It would be incomprehensible if, within the same

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of ‘Paul the Apostle’*, 55–73.

<sup>22</sup> M.E. Thrall, “Paul’s Understanding of Continuity between the Present Life and the Life of the Resurrection,” in *Resurrection in the New Testament* (ed. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire; FS J. Lambrecht; BETL 165; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 283–300.

<sup>23</sup> This is how in Greek viz. Stoic philosophy a distinction would be made between that which exists as corporeal reality and that which subsists as incorporeal ideas. See G. Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy. III. The Systems of the Hellenistic Age* (tr. J.R. Catan; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 226–35.

theological perspective, the third heaven as place of revelation would be conceived of as a faint notion. Paul does express a desire to be with the Lord in connection with bodily terms. In 2 Cor 5:6–8 the apostle writes, “So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body (ἐν τῷ σώματι) we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body (ἐκ τοῦ σώματος) and at home with the Lord” (RSV).<sup>24</sup> This search for closeness to the Lord could perhaps partly explain uncertain terms about the body, but the exploration of the question of what Paradise may stand for and how the ‘thorn in the flesh’ keeps the apostle from being too elated about visionary experience may yield further insight.

#### 6. PAUL’S RAPTURE TO THE THIRD HEAVEN AND JEWISH APOCALYPTIC VISIONS OF HEAVENLY ASCENT

Previous study compared the rapture to the third heaven where Paradise is situated according to 2 Cor 12:2–4 with the pseudepigraphical texts like *1 Enoch* 71:1–5, *2 Enoch* 8:1–8 and the *Testament of Abraham*.<sup>25</sup> These texts are respectively dated to the turn of the era, the late first century C.E., and the first to second century C.E.<sup>26</sup> The third heaven as place of the angels and God is further strongly implied in the *Testament of Levi* 3:3. The *Life of Adam and Eve* (L.A.E.) 37:5 is also drawn into the discussion for locating Paradise in the third heaven, of which the composition has been dated between 100 and 200 C.E.<sup>27</sup> The situating of Paradise in the third heaven is not a uniformly represented

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Phil 1:23b–24, ‘My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account’ (RSV).

<sup>25</sup> Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 786–90.

<sup>26</sup> See G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation based on the Hermeneia Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 6 (*1 Enoch* 71:1–5 making part of the Book of Parables, *1 Enoch* 36–71); F.I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” and E.P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 91–221 at 94–97 and 871–902 at 874–5.

<sup>27</sup> Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 792–3; on the date of L.A.E., see MD. Johnson, “Life of Adam and Eve,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 2: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 249–95 at 252.

doctrine. For instance, *1 Enoch* 32:3 and 77:3 associate the ‘Paradise of righteousness’ with a mythical earthly region. More important than the location of Paradise in earthly or heavenly dimensions is the question what associations with Paradise occur in Second Temple Jewish thought preceding and contemporary to Paul. An impression about the horizon of ideas about Paradise could perhaps further the understanding why Paul writes that at that place ‘he heard things that cannot be told, which no one may utter’ (2 Cor 12:4, after RSV).

Associations with Paradise may go back to the biblical story of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8–3:24). Other biblical texts which speak of Eden or the garden of Eden, גן עדן, in the Hebrew Bible (MT Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 28:13, 31:8–9) yield the Greek term παράδεισος in the old Greek translation of the Septuagint (e.g. LXX Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 28:13; 31:8–9). Hebrew biblical thought appears characterised by the term garden of Eden, while its conceptualisation as Paradise could belong to a later semantic development.<sup>28</sup> The term Paradise does also occur in Aramaic Qumran fragments of *1 Enoch*, which mention the ‘Paradise of righteousness’, פִּרְדֵּס קִשְׁטָא (*1 Enoch* 32:3 in 4Q206 (4QEn<sup>c</sup> ar) 3 21 and *1 Enoch* 77:3 in 4Q209 (4QEnastr<sup>b</sup> ar) 23 9).<sup>29</sup> The late second century B.C.E. Qumran text 4Q504 (*4QWords of the Luminaries*<sup>d</sup>) 8 6 mentions the biblical garden of Eden, גן עדן, in a liturgical setting. The first-century B.C.E. text 4Q265 (*4QMiscellaneous Rules*) 7 II 14 and the second-century B.C.E. text *Jubilees* 3:12 associate the garden of Eden and everything in it with holiness and purity. The second- to first-century B.C.E. text 4Q475 (*4QRenewed Earth*) envisions a future situation in which the earth will be in peace without guilty deeds or adversary, further characterised by the phrase והיתה כול תבל כעדן, ‘and all the world will be like Eden’ (4Q475 4–6 at 5).<sup>30</sup> The

<sup>28</sup> The Hebrew Bible only comprises three attestations of the term פִּרְדֵּס (Song of Songs 4:13, Nehemiah 2:8, Ecclesiastes 2:5), all of them only yielding a generic sense of garden or court yard.

<sup>29</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation*, date the *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1–36) to the mid- or late third century B.C.E. (3) and the *Book of the Luminaries* (*1 Enoch* 72–82) to the “third century B.C.E., possibly earlier”.

<sup>30</sup> Text and translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 2, 956–7. The different reading כעש תבל כעדן by T. Elgvin, “Renewed Earth and Renewed People: 4Q475,” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues* (ed. D.W. Parry and E. Ulrich; STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 576–91 at 577–8 also needs to take account of the fragmentarily preserved letter(s) after כע and seems to render more difficult sense in the context of this passage.

possibly second-century B.C.E. sectarian Qumran text *Hodayot* mentions 'streams of Eden', נהרות עדן, which "[will water its [bra]n[ch]es and they will be [seas without] limits; and its forest will be over the whole world, endless, and as deep as to Sheol [its roots.] The source of light [will] be an eternal spring, inexhaustible, in its shining flames all the son[s of injustice] will burn [and it will be turned] into a fire that sings all the men of guilt until destruction" (1QH<sup>a</sup> XIV 16–19 // 4Q428 5, 4Q429 2 1–11).<sup>31</sup>

Heavenly ascent is further a recurring theme in several Qumran texts. The evidence has been surveyed by James R. Davila, who discusses heavenly ascents of specific figures (Enoch, Melchizedek, Levi, Methuselah, Noah, and Moses), the 'Self-Glorification hymn' (1QH<sup>a</sup> XXVI, 4Q471b, 4Q427 7, 4Q491 11–12 = 4Q491c), ascent motifs in sectarian passages such as 1QS XI 7b–9a and 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI 19–23a, and the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*.<sup>32</sup> Some further passages from a recently published Aramaic text, 4Q536,<sup>33</sup> could now be added to this survey, since this text associates the revelation of mysteries with 'the lights' and 'the most high ones' (4Q536 1I3 and 8) and includes the phrase 'the mystery ascends', (ס)לק רזא (4Q536 1 I 12). Davila's article includes reference to "an address to God in (*Hodayot*) 7:21 asserts that he has not only created the righteous, but 'You have exalted his glory beyond flesh'" (1QH<sup>a</sup> VII 19–20).<sup>34</sup> The immediate context implies a revelatory experience, addressing God "with the abundance of your compassion, to open all the narrowness of his soul to eternal salvation and endless peace, without want" (1QH<sup>a</sup> VII 19).<sup>35</sup> The exaltation of glory above flesh, ותרים מבשר כבודו (1QH<sup>a</sup> VII 19–20), seems to indicate the contrast between the lowly flesh and narrowness of the soul of a human being and God's providence (cf. 1QH<sup>a</sup> VII 24). In this respect, the passage might provide an analogy with Paul's idea that boasted confidence is 'boasting according to the flesh' (ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ καυχῶνται

<sup>31</sup> Translation from F. García Martínez and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition 1 1Q1–4Q273* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans – Leiden: Brill, 2000), 175.

<sup>32</sup> J.R. Davila, "Heavenly Ascents in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years. A Comprehensive Assessment* (ed. P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 461–83.

<sup>33</sup> Ed.pr. É. Puech, *Oumrân Grotte 4. XXII: Textes Araméens. Première Partie, 4Q529–549* (DJD 31; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 161–70.

<sup>34</sup> Davila, "Heavenly Ascents in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 477.

<sup>35</sup> Translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition 1*, 155.

κατὰ σάρκα, 2 Cor 11:18), up to and including boasting of visions and revelations (2 Cor 12:1, 5–6).

In light of this contrast between flesh and heavenly exaltation, Paul's idea that the visionary experience is accompanied by hearing 'unutterable things', ἄρρητα ῥήματα (2 Cor 12:4), could, for one thing, denote that the vision does not exalt one's position vis-à-vis other human beings beyond human flesh. Paul writes in 2 Cor 12:6 that "no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me" (RSV). The notion of unutterable words has sometimes been compared with parallels from mystery religions.<sup>36</sup> However, Paul's sense of mystery is related to God's wisdom (1 Cor 2:1, 7), prophetic powers (1 Cor 13:2), the Spirit (1 Cor 14:2), ideas about change to immortality and resurrection in the final age (1 Cor 15:51f), and all Israel's ultimate salvation (Rom 11:25–26). The apostle further circumscribes the 'mysteries of God' (1 Cor 4:1)<sup>37</sup> as things now hidden in darkness which will be brought to light and as purposes of the heart which will be disclosed by the Lord (1 Cor 4:5).

The question why the visionary experience is accompanied by things heard 'which no one may express', ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι (2 Cor 12:4) may perhaps be probed in several respects. The theological restraint could be related to Paul's idea that only in the end seeing 'face to face' or 'understanding fully' (1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 3:18) may be possible. A further point is the theological *topos* that God's ways are inscrutable (Rom 11:33–36).<sup>38</sup> The rapture to the third heaven or Paradise is also a domain which could otherwise be associated with a place of righteousness (1 *Enoch* 32:3, 77:3).<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the setting of the visionary experience in 2 Cor 12:1, 5–6 underpins the idea that

<sup>36</sup> Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 795–6 refers to comparative discussion in a commentary by H. Windisch, but also observes about the view that "Paul was consciously dependent upon the terminology of the mystery religions" that "this is perhaps doubtful" in view of Jewish background, "its currency in more general religious usage", and inexact parallels (796).

<sup>37</sup> A general analogy to Paul's notion of mystery and "unutterable words" could perhaps be provided by words in a "sealed book" in Daniel 12:4 and a "sealed vision" in 4Q300 (4QMyst<sup>b</sup>) 1 II 2.

<sup>38</sup> Rom 11:33–36 cites, among other scriptural passages, Isaiah 40:13 and Job 41:3. Cf. e.g. 1QS XI 18–22.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (WBC 35C; Waco, Tx.: Word, 1993), 1153 who observes in connection with Luke 24:39–43 that "in connection with a developing understanding of Hades, paradise came to be understood as the pleasant resting place of some of the privileged dead prior to the great day of resurrection".

the apostle does not wish to make any claim other than that ‘this man’ about whom he relates the vision has been in contact with Paradise. Paul presupposes that righteousness is related to God’s grace and redemption in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:21–26), while understanding the kingdom of God in terms of ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (Rom 14:17). In several letters, the apostle voices a sense of human predicament. 2 Cor 2:16 expresses this idea by posing the rhetorical question ‘who is sufficient for these things, while in Rom 3:10 Paul introduces a scriptural chain of quotations (Rom 3:10–18) with the verse from Eccl 7:20, ‘none is righteous, no, not one’ (RSV). In connection with the question whether the heavenly rapture took place in the body or outside the body, emphatically answered by Paul that ‘God knows’, it may also be important to keep in mind what the apostle has written in 2 Cor 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to *what one has done in the body*” (2 Cor 5:10, after RSV). Finally, the emphasis on gospel instruction for communal upbuilding rather than boasting of abundant visionary experience may also be in agreement with Paul’s teaching to “learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favour of one against another” (1 Cor 4:6, RSV).

## 7. THE OTHERWORLD AND THE THORN IN THE FLESH

Having discussed 2 Cor 12:1–6 with its restrained formulation, some comments should further be made about 2 Cor 12:7–10, which goes into the most severe restriction against elation by an abundance of revelations:

And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor 12:7–10, RSV).

A ‘thorn in the flesh’ harasses the apostle even in a state of heavenly revelation, which could otherwise perhaps have been expected to ‘exalt

above the flesh' (cf. 1QH<sup>a</sup> VII 19–20). Much scholarly discussion on the question what this thorn is has been conducted in terms of psychological condition, in relation to opponents, physical illness or disability.<sup>40</sup> Yet it is highly questionable whether this language should *a priori* be explained in 'scientific diagnosis' terms of a physical or psychological condition, without further consideration of what a 'thorn in the flesh' could proverbially stand for in Paul's world of thought. M.E. Thrall has compared the 'thorn in the flesh' with metaphorical usage of a 'thorn' on a person's way in biblical literature (Ezek 28:24, Hos 2:6).<sup>41</sup> This biblical imagery shows that thorns on the way can be related to idolatrous worship of Ba'al (Hos 2:6–8), while the prophetic vision of Israel's restoration in Ezekiel promises that there will be 'no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbours who have treated them with contempt' (Ezek 28:24, RSV).

Paul's reference to a thorn in the flesh given by a 'messenger of Satan' has such dualistic overtones that it may be informative to turn to an analogy from dualistic language in apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple period.<sup>42</sup> In anthropological terms, it is a question of "reading cultural sub-texts",<sup>43</sup> of recognising what the language of a 'thorn in the flesh' stands for in the world of thought of Paul who addressed his original readers.

By way of analogy, we will turn to passages from the Qumran text *Hodayot*, which also comprises imagery of physical torment, death and Belial. The protagonist of the *Hodayot*, of which parts have been identified as 'teacher hymns' (1QH<sup>a</sup> X–XVII) and other parts as 'community hymns', includes an envisaged struggle against the "council of futility, the assembly of Belial", סוד שוא ועדת בליעל (1QH<sup>a</sup> X 22),<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> BDAG, 3rd. ed., 2000, 555 lists seven explanations of physical torment expressed by the Greek verb *κολαφίζω*, "characterized by much guesswork" (epilepsy, hysteria, periodic depression, headaches, malaria, leprosy, an impediment in speech); Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 809–18 classifies the explanations among three general rubrics: "an internal psychological state, whether of temptation or of grief, "external opposition", and "physical illness or disability" (809).

<sup>41</sup> Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, 807.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 20 on dualism as a component of apocalyptic language, "(while) greatly exaggerated in the past, ... cannot be dismissed entirely".

<sup>43</sup> C. Bennett, *In Search of the Sacred. Anthropology and the Study of Religions* (London: Cassell, 1996), 137.

<sup>44</sup> Translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 1, 163.

who drag away the life of the protagonist, גרו על נפשי (1QH<sup>a</sup> X 23–24). The part of ‘teacher hymns’, which a scholarly line of interpretation tends to associate with the figure of the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’, מורה צדק, known from other sectarian Qumran texts,<sup>45</sup> includes language of moral outcry combined with physical torment.

Before turning to this language, some comments are in place about this ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ as illustrated from the evidence of other sectarian Qumran texts, without aiming at a comprehensive survey. According to the Qumran *Pesher to Habakkuk*, the Teacher of Righteousness was persecuted up to the place of his banishment by the ‘Wicked Priest’ (מורה הצדק לבלעו), בבכעס חמתו אבית גלותו הכוהן הרשע אשר רדף אחר מורה הצדק (1QpHab XI 4–6). The *Damascus Document* informs us that the Teacher of Righteousness directed people who “were like blind persons and like those who grope for a path over twenty years” in the path of his heart (CD-A I 8–11 // 4QD<sup>a</sup> 2 I 12–15).<sup>46</sup> The Qumran *Psalms Pesher*<sup>47</sup> (4Q171) IV 26–27 applies a citation of words from Psalm 45:2, ‘my tongue is the pen of a skilled scribe’ to the Teacher of Righteousness.<sup>47</sup> While the time of the Teacher of Righteousness and his inspiration for a separate religious community is dated to an earlier historical period, ranging between events since the Maccabean revolt (165 B.C.E.) and king and high priest Alexander Jannaeus’ reign (103–76 B.C.E.),<sup>48</sup> further exploration of parallel language may help to illuminate what Paul’s ‘thorn in the flesh’ could stand for.

The teacher hymns voice a setting of rejection (1QH<sup>a</sup> XII 8), expulsion (1QH<sup>a</sup> XII 8–9),<sup>49</sup> the ‘bitterness of my soul’, מרורי נפשי, and an

<sup>45</sup> See recently M.C. Douglas, “The Teacher Hymn Hypothesis Revisited: New Data for an Old Crux,” *DSD* 6 (1999): 239–66 with further bibliography, who identified בי הגבירה in 1QH<sup>a</sup> X–XIII as a ‘signature phrase’.

<sup>46</sup> Translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 1, 551.

<sup>47</sup> Translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 1, 347.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. J.C. VanderKam, “Identity and History of the Community,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years. A Comprehensive Assessment* 2 (ed. P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 487–533; J. Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 47–72; M.O. Wise, “Dating the Teacher of Righteousness and the Floruit of His Movement,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 53–87.

<sup>49</sup> “For they drive me from my land (ידיחני מעצי) like a bird from its nest; all my friends and my acquaintances have been driven away from me, and rank me like a broken jug,” 1QH<sup>a</sup> XII 8–9. Translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 1, 169.

‘outcry of my pain’, גווי הכרתה (1QH<sup>a</sup> XII 12–13). The teacher hymns denounce those who “said of the vision of knowledge: It is not certain! and of the path of your heart: It is not that!” (1QH<sup>a</sup> XII 17–18).<sup>50</sup> Analogously with the apostle’s situation of a tormented state and the revelation of ‘unutterable things’, the Qumran *Hodayot* also express a hidden source of revelation: “And about the mystery (רז) which you have concealed in me they go slandering to the sons of destruction. In order to show my [pa]th and because of their guilt you have concealed the source of understanding and the foundation of truth” (1QH<sup>a</sup> XIII 25–26).<sup>51</sup> The tormented state of the protagonist also expresses itself in terms of physical illness: “incurable pain, a wasting disease in the innards of your servant (בתכמי עבדכה), which makes [the spirit] stagger and makes an end of strength, so that he is unable to remain firm in his place” (1QH<sup>a</sup> XIII 2S–29).<sup>52</sup> Moral outcry and outcry of pain join hands, analogously with the case of Paul’s ‘thorn in the flesh’.

Paul’s situation of having been in deadly peril and experiencing affliction (cf. 2 Cor 1:8–10, 2:10–11, 4:7–12, 6:4–10, 11:23–33) explains the language of a ‘messenger of Satan’ who gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him from being too elated about revelations. The outcry that ‘even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light’, whose servants disguise themselves as false apostles (2 Cor 11:13–15) stands in relation to the ‘messenger of Satan’ (2 Cor 12:7) and may well have confronted the apostle with his past as persecutor of the church. Paul goes on to communicate that “three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor 12:8–9, RSV). In other passages of the same letter, Paul associates bodily weakness with Christ’s crucifixion and death (2 Cor 4:10–12, 13:3–4). The threefold appeal to the Lord may be proverbial in light of a number of gospel traditions. According to the Gethsemane tradition in Matthew and Mark, Jesus comes three times to his disciples (Matt 26:44, Mark 14:41). According to the Synoptic Gospels, Peter denies Jesus three times at the time of his trial, while the Gospel of John comprises a visionary account of a threefold question of

<sup>50</sup> Translation from *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>51</sup> Translation from *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>52</sup> Translation from *Ibid.*, 173.

the risen Jesus to Peter whether he loves him (John 21:15–17). Paul may not have been unaware of (some of) these gospel traditions, in view of his contact with Peter in Jerusalem according to Galatians 1:18 (ἱστορήσαι Κηφᾶν).

The strength which the apostle nevertheless found in weakness for the sake of Christ (2 Cor 12:10) underpins the importance of his visionary experience. In an earlier passage of the letter, Paul has repeatedly stressed in indicative moods that ‘we do not to lose heart’ (2 Cor 4:16, RSV) and ‘we are always of good courage’ (2 Cor 5:6, RSV). The rapture to the third heaven stands for visionary experience which transcends affliction (cf. 2 Cor 4:16–18).

## THE RICH, THE POOR, AND THE PROMISE OF AN ESCHATOLOGICAL REWARD IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Outi Lehtipuu

In the gospel of Luke, the poor and the rich, the mighty and the lowly, the insiders and the outsiders are repeatedly portrayed as contrasting pairs whose status and conditions are reversed.<sup>1</sup> “There are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last”<sup>2</sup> (Lk 13:30) is a typical example of such a polar reversal.<sup>3</sup> This saying, among some other reversal sayings, is traditional (cf. Mark and Matthew)<sup>4</sup> but the author has clearly expanded the use of this rhetorical device. A reversal is a salient feature in many parables of the Lukan Jesus and their immediate contexts. There are the sinful woman and the Pharisee (7:36–50), the despised Samaritan and the priest and the Levite (Luke 10:30–35),<sup>5</sup> the prodigal son and his obedient older brother (Luke 15:11–32), the poor Lazarus and his rich neighbor (Luke 16:19–31), the penitent tax collector and the arrogant Pharisee (Luke 18:10–14).<sup>6</sup> Many of these reversal texts have a polemical edge, a sharp division between those

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<sup>1</sup> See J.O. York, *Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke*. (JSNTSup 46; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 92–93, 160–63, 182–84.

<sup>2</sup> All biblical quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*, if not otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> The term “polar reversal” is from J.D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992), 54. In his words, a polar reversal describes “...a reversal of world as such. When the north pole becomes the south pole, and the south becomes the north, a world is reversed and overturned and we find ourselves standing firmly on utter uncertainty.”

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Luke 13:30 par. Mark 10:31; Matt 19:30; 20:16. See also Luke 14:11; 18:14 and Matt 23:12; Luke 9:24; 17:33 and Mark 8:35; Matt 16:25.

<sup>5</sup> The reversal also happens between the Samaritan of Jesus’ story and the teacher of law testing Jesus; see the immediate context of the Good Samaritan in vv. 25–29 and 36–37.

<sup>6</sup> A reversal pattern can also be seen in the overall structure of Luke’s story of Jesus where the one who is humbled on the cross is exalted in the resurrection and ascension into heaven; York, *Last Shall Be First*, 166–73. David Rhoads elaborates York’s thesis and finds the polar reversal on the one hand, in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus whose birth and life were humble and whose death was a humiliation, and, on the other hand, the rejection and humiliation of the leaders of Israel who have shed innocent blood by killing Jesus. Similarly, in Acts, the Gentiles become insiders while the former “people of the covenant” in their stubbornness stay unrepentant and

who accept Jesus' message and those who reject it.<sup>7</sup> The lowly, poor and outcast receive Jesus while the powerful, wealthy and religiously esteemed do not.

A common element in many Lukan reversal texts is their eschatological overtone.<sup>8</sup> Reversal is a divine action that will end earthly injustice. In the very beginning of the gospel, Mary rejoices at how the Lord "...has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52–53). Luke supplements his beatitudes to the poor, hungry, and bereaved with woes to the rich, satiated, and laughing (Luke 6:20–26). In Luke's version of the parable of the great supper, it is the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame who will "taste my dinner" (Luke 14:16–24; cf. Matt 22:1–10) while those first invited—probably the "rich neighbors" referred to in v. 12—are not let inside. The eschatological reward and threat are most explicit in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31); a passage where Luke more clearly than anywhere else in his double work reveals how he envisions the otherworld.<sup>9</sup>

A prominent feature in all of these eschatological reversals is that the two contrasted groups are characterized as rich and poor.<sup>10</sup> All through the gospel, the Lukan Jesus promises that the *eschaton* and the coming of the Kingdom will bring relief to the poor. At the same time, the rich are warned that they will face an unexpected judgment and they will lose what they now have. Strikingly, these eschatological

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outside. Cf. D. Rhoads, *The Challenge of Diversity; The Witness of Paul and the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 104.

<sup>7</sup> York, *Last Shall Be First*, 132–33.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the texts mentioned below, the promise of an eschatological reward occurs in one form or another in connection with other reversals, such as the Good Samaritan ("do this and you shall live;" 10:28); the table fellowship instructions ("you shall get your reward in the resurrection of the just;" 14:14), and the combination of the stories of the rich ruler (Luke 18:18–30) and Zacchaeus (19:1–10; "Today salvation has come to this house," v. 9.)

<sup>9</sup> Scholars often play down the significance of the afterlife scene in the story and emphasize that the story is "...not a Baedeker's guide to the next world." (S. MacLean Gilmour, *The Gospel According to Luke* [IB 8, 24th ed. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1982], 290.) The primary point of the story does lie elsewhere, in its exhortation aimed at a change of praxis but the eschatological retribution described in it functions as an integral part of this teaching. In this respect, it does not differ from other apocalyptic stories, such as Plato's myth of Er in *Resp.* 10:614b–621d. See my discussion in O. Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (NovTSup 123; Leiden and Boston: Brill), 4–8 and 163–70.

<sup>10</sup> Usually πλουσιοί and πτωχοί. In the Magnificat, the verb πλουτέω is contrasted with πεινάω, but the basic idea remains unchanged.

reversal texts seldom give an explicit reason why the fate is changed. The poor are not characterized as pious nor the rich as wicked. They are simply rich and poor. Is poverty, then, an adequate reason for the eschatological bliss and wealth an adequate reason for the punishment? To properly understand how the eschatological reversal functions in Luke's narrative, I shall first briefly look at some other texts with the same motif, then analyze some key texts in Luke's gospel, and finally, raise the question who the rich and poor are in the Lukan narrative world.

# 1. THE REVERSAL OF FATES AFTER DEATH: THE RICH AND THE POOR IN OTHER ANCIENT TEXTS

A reversal of otherworldly fates is not a uniquely Lukan theme. It is a common motif in many Greco-Roman accounts of an otherworldly judgment that often include an element of surprise: those who on earth are powerful and mighty are stripped of their glory. What is important is the true nature of people, not their outward appearance.<sup>11</sup> A reversal is also a prominent theme in many Jewish apocalyptic accounts. For example, in the *Parables of Enoch* (1 *En.* 62–63), 4 *Ezra* (6:55–7:44; cf. 4:22–32; 5:21–40) and 2 *Baruch* (15:8), the righteous who struggle in the midst of their oppressors on earth will be exalted after the judgment while their oppressors will be punished. Even though the sinners in these texts are the powerful ones oppressing the weak righteous ones, the accent is not so much on their social status but on the righteousness vs. unrighteousness. People are divided into two groups according to how they keep the law of God. This is most prominent in

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<sup>11</sup> An early example is the eschatological myths of Plato, e.g., *Gorg.* 523–525 and *Resp.* 10:614–21. In the former, Plato describes why the souls are judged only after death. In ancient times, under the rule of Cronos, he explains, the living judged the living but then the outward splendor of clothing led the judges astray. Even though the souls retain after death the characteristics of the body so that, for example, a fat person is distinguishable from a thin one, the judges cannot say who is who. They only see if the soul bears scars of perjury and iniquity and send these souls to be tormented. The worst punished souls are those of the tyrants. However, the reason for their gruesome fate is not their earthly power and might as such but their immoral lifestyle, made possible by their elite status. Moreover, there is no compensation offered for a humble and meager life but in the Platonic accounts, all souls are purged of their misdeeds—those who have committed the worst crimes receive the worst punishments. Thus, the reversal only applies to the potentates who will be brought down and tormented.

4 Ezra where the elect are the righteous in Israel and their opponents the powerful Gentile nations.

What distinguishes Luke from most other ancient judgment descriptions is that he depicts a contrast between rich and poor, not righteous and unrighteous. An eschatological reversal of rich and poor does occur in some other texts, as well. There is an interesting parallel, e.g., in the *Testament of Judah* (*T. Jud.* 25:4)<sup>12</sup> but the question arises whether the resemblance of this text to the Lukan beatitudes is too close; with the many problems linked with the textual tradition and transmission of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*,<sup>13</sup> the possibility that the Lukan text has influenced that of the *Testaments* cannot securely be ruled out. Another intriguing collection of texts are the many writings of Lucian of Samosata where he mocks the rich and powerful and depicts them as losing their status at death. In his accounts, however, death brings not so much of a reversal but instead is the great equalizer.<sup>14</sup> Death removes the privileges of the rich whose most severe punishment is the memory of the luxurious lifestyle they have lost. The poor who on earth had no part of this luxury, find death a relief.

Another relevant text for comparison is the last chapters of *1 Enoch*, the so-called *Epistle of Enoch* (*1 En.* 91–104).<sup>15</sup> These chapters describe a struggle between two groups, the righteous and the sinners.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the accusations of impiety the sinners are also called rich and mighty<sup>17</sup> and accused of oppressing and impoverishing the righteous.<sup>18</sup> The righteous, “the lowly ones” (*1 En.* 96:5), are never explicitly called poor but this is implicitly clear from the way they are contrasted to the rich sinners.

<sup>12</sup> “And those who have died in grief, will arise in joy and those who were in poverty for the Lord’s sake will be made rich (and those who were in want will be fed and those who were in weakness will be strong) and those who died for the Lord’s sake will awake to life.” (Trans. by Hollander & de Jonge; see the following note.)

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (SVTP 8; Leiden and Boston: Brill), 1985.

<sup>14</sup> *Catapl.* 15, 20; *Men.* 17; *Dial. mort.* 1, 26.

<sup>15</sup> For further information see also L.T. Stuckenbruck’s article in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 423–24.

<sup>17</sup> *1 En.* 94:8; 96:4–5; 97:8–10.

<sup>18</sup> *1 En.* 95:5–7; 96:5, 8; 97:8; 98:13; 99:11, 15; 100:7–8; 102:9.

The similarities between the *Epistle of Enoch* and Luke's special material have not escaped the attention of scholars.<sup>19</sup> Both writings always mention riches in connection with judgment or salvation.<sup>20</sup> Both describe a sudden death that means an otherworldly punishment for the rich and a reward for the poor. In both writings, the poor and the oppressed are the ones who have no one on earth to help them. That is why God is on their side and will compensate for the injustice experienced on earth. The rich are likewise characterized in several similar ways in both writings. They trust their wealth instead of God, their wealth may be acquired unjustly and they use it to commit iniquity. But God will not tolerate this forever. A judgment will suddenly come, the riches will be taken away, and the rich will be punished. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the writings in their overall attitude toward the rich. Whereas the rich and powerful are always seen in a negative light in the *Epistle*, Luke does not rule out the possibility that by sharing their wealth, renouncing their riches and giving alms to the poor, the rich may be saved.<sup>21</sup>

In the *Epistle of Enoch*, there is no such alternative for the rich. The rich are the enemies of the righteous and of God. After all, the contrast in the *Epistle* is between the righteous and the sinners. These two are mutually exclusive groups sinners can not become righteous; repentance is utterly impossible for them. The writer of the *Epistle* understands the term "sinner" in the sense of the word used in the Hebrew Bible; especially in the Psalms, a "sinner" symbolizes the thoroughly wicked who is excluded from the people of God.<sup>22</sup> Luke's view of the rich is different. The rich can change their course; they can repent and be counted among the poor—at least in theory. Moreover, Luke never equates "sinners" with "the rich" even though some of the "sinners" he describes are rich (most notably Zacchaeus). This is due to the way

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<sup>19</sup> See S. Aalen, "St. Luke's Gospel and the Last Chapters of *1 Enoch*," *NTS* 13 (1966–67): 1–13; G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "Riches, the Rich and God's Judgment in *1 Enoch* 92–105 and the Gospel According to Luke," *NTS* 25 (1979): 324–44, and his "Revisiting the Rich and the Poor in *1 Enoch* 92–105 and the Gospel According to Luke," *SBL Seminar Papers* 37.2 (1998): 579–605.

<sup>20</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 541.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. further below.

<sup>22</sup> D.A. Neale, *None But the Sinners: Religious Categories in the Gospel of Luke* (JSNTSup 58; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 86–88, 96–97, 193. According to him, the "sinners" form an ideological, not a social category, that is necessary for the self-identification of the "righteous." They are "the mental product of his [the writer's or reader's] world view."

Luke understands the term. As in many of the pseudepigrapha, a “sinner” in Luke’s terminology is an object of God’s mercy.<sup>23</sup> In his story, “sinners” are paradoxically “righteous.” They are paradigmatic figures who recognize Jesus and respond to him in the right way.<sup>24</sup> That is why a wicked character in Luke’s narrative cannot be called a “sinner”. Instead, he can be “rich”—and what he must do is repent.

## 2. THE RICH, REPENTANCE, AND SALVATION

Throughout his double work, Luke emphasizes the importance of repentance and associates it with ethical behavior.<sup>25</sup> In his view, “metanoia” seldom means a change of thinking alone but it leads to a change of praxis and way of life. Often this goes hand in hand with the proper use of wealth.<sup>26</sup> The significance of repentance is evident all through Luke’s gospel. In the very beginning, John proclaims “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:3) and in the very end, Jesus instructs his disciples to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47). In Acts, those who repent and become Christians show it in their new way of life, which involves using their possessions properly (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35).

Luke makes it abundantly clear that the rich must repent and share their wealth in order to be saved. Luke introduces both positive and negative paradigmatic figures who either provide an example worth imitating or show what will happen if one stays unrepentant. The positive model of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) who shares his possessions and by so doing secures his salvation (v. 9) is contrasted with the negative model of the rich ruler who is not ready to give up his possessions (Luke 18:18–27). This causes Jesus to declare: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to

<sup>23</sup> Neale, *Sinners*, 91–92.

<sup>24</sup> Neale, *Sinners*, 114–15, 181. Cf. York, *Last Shall Be First*, 13, n. 5. Even though the term “sinner” usually describes the outcasts of society who by their behavior are shown to be “righteous,” there are exceptions to this use of the word; notably Luke 6:32–34; Luke 13:2; Luke 24:7.

<sup>25</sup> G.D. Nave, *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts* (SBL Academia Biblica 4; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 147, 189 and passim.

<sup>26</sup> J.-W. Taeger, *Der Mensch und sein Heil: Studien zum Bild des Menschen und zur Sicht der Bekehrung bei Lukas* (SNT 14; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1982), 222.

enter the kingdom of God" (v. 25). Sometimes scholars make a sharp distinction between the Lukan demand to renounce one's possessions and the right use of them.<sup>27</sup> However, the juxtaposition of these two stories<sup>28</sup> points to the conclusion that, in Luke's mind, the exhortation to the rich ruler to sell everything and give it to the poor aims at a similar practice as shown by Zacchaeus, for whom it was enough to distribute half of his wealth to the poor.<sup>29</sup>

A similar antithetical pair is found in Luke's chapter 16 where the story of the unjust steward (16:1–9) is contrasted with that of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31).<sup>30</sup> The latter story is very explicit in its teaching concerning riches, repentance and salvation. The fault of the rich man was that he did not listen to Moses and the prophets and their exhortations to repent. This leads to otherworldly punishments. After death it is too late to repent.

The preceding parable, that of the unjust steward, is more complicated. It is certainly one of the most difficult and most controversial passages in Lukan scholarship.<sup>31</sup> The fundamental problem is why the

<sup>27</sup> Recently K. Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus According to L.* (JSNTSup 147; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 122–23. He makes this into a source critical argument: the attitude towards wealth in L material is "quite lax indeed" compared to Luke's own attitude. According to "L," it is enough to be generous and there is no need to renounce everything (Luke 3:10–14; 19:8) and possessions are viewed negatively only if they become the most important thing in one's life (Luke 12:16b–20; 16:19–31). Luke, on the other hand, views wealth thoroughly negatively and emphasizes the necessity of giving up everything. In my view, this kind of distinction is unconvincing.

<sup>28</sup> The passages between the stories of these two rich men, the rewards of the disciples (Luke 18:28–30), the third announcement of Jesus' death (Luke 18:31–34) and the healing of a blind man near Jericho (Luke 18:35–43) are there because, in this section, Luke follows Mark and his order of the pericopae; cf. Mark 10:17–27, 28–31, 32–34, 46–52. The only difference in the sequence is Luke's omission of the question of the sons of Zebedee (Mark 10:35–45).

<sup>29</sup> Another case in point is Levi who, after leaving everything (καταλιπὼν πάντα), gives a big party in his house. How did he still have a house and was able to afford a party if he had literally left everything? Renouncing one's possessions and using them properly are not alternatives for Luke but point to the same kind of praxis.

<sup>30</sup> See A. Feuillet, "La parabole de mauvais riche et du pauvre Lazare (Lc 16,19–31) antithèse de la parabole de l'intendant astucieux (Lc 16,1–9)," *NRTh* 111 (1979): 212–23; R.A. Piper, "Social Background and Thematic Structure in Luke 16," in *The Four Gospels* 1992 (ed. by F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle & J. Verheyden; FS Frans Neirynck; BETL 100.2; Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 1637–62.

<sup>31</sup> See the various different interpretations collected by D.J. Ireland, *Stewardship and the Kingdom of God: An Historical, Exegetical, and Contextual Study of the Parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1–13* (NovTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 5–47.

master—rather the master of the steward or Jesus<sup>32</sup>—praises the dishonest behavior of the steward. An answer seems to be connected with v. 9: “Make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal habitations.” Who are these friends? And who are those who will welcome you into the eternal habitations? A common, and in my view convincing reading is that the “friends,” who also are the ones who do the welcoming, are the poor who should be recipients of charity.<sup>33</sup> It has, quite rightly, been pointed out that this reading does not fit very well the story of the unjust steward where charity is not very explicit.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted, however, that v. 9 does not speak about the unjust steward and his otherworldly fate. It is an application where the behavior of the steward is given as an analogous model for the disciples (“you”). Just as the steward secured his future so that people may welcome him into their homes (v. 4), the disciples should act prudently with their possessions, i.e., do charitable deeds, so that they may be welcomed into the eternal habitations. Charitable works and eschatological reward are related to one another in many other passages in Luke (and in the synoptic tradition as a whole).<sup>35</sup> The rich ruler will inherit eternal life if he sells all that he owns and distributes it to the poor (Luke 18:22).<sup>36</sup> The rich are instructed to invite the poor and

<sup>32</sup> The verse is ambiguous: καὶ ἐπήνεσεν ὁ κύριος τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας... In most English translations, this κύριος is understood as the master of the steward but, e.g., in the German *Lutherbibel* and the recent Swedish (2000) and Finnish (1992) translations, it is taken to refer to Jesus (“Und der HERR lobte den ungerechten Haushalter...”).

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., F.E. Williams, “Is Almsgiving the Point of the ‘Unjust Steward?’” *JBL* 84 (1964): 293–97, esp. 295; R.H. Hiers, “Friends by Unrighteous Mammon: The Eschatological Proletariat (Luke 16:9),” *JAAR* 38 (1970): 30–36, esp. 33–36; D.P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt B/6; Linz: Fuchs, 1982), 169.

<sup>34</sup> The amounts owed are so large that the debtors cannot themselves be poor and thus belong to the “friends;” D.R. Fletcher, “The Riddle of the Unjust Steward: Is Irony the Key?” *JBL* 82 (1963): 15–30, esp. 23. Piper assumes that the debtors are wholesale dealers who could transfer the benefit they gained by reducing the price of oil and wheat and thus pass on the benefaction to their poor customers (“Social Background,” 1649–51). This would be an appealing interpretation but it is not without problems. First, how would the poor customers know that it was the steward whom they are to thank and thus pay him back by receiving him in their homes? Secondly, it is hardly believable, as Fletcher points out, “... that the elegant steward, who shrinks from digging and from begging, would make it his hope to be received into the huts of peons.”

<sup>35</sup> Williams, “Almsgiving,” 293–94; Hiers, “Friends,” 33–34.

<sup>36</sup> Par. Mark 10:21; Matt 19:21.

the disabled to feast “for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:13–14). Not of minor significance in this respect is the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) where the neglect of the poor means condemnation for the rich. The two stories of chapter 16 are antithetical to each other: whereas the unjust steward provides an example of the prudent use of possessions (16:9) which secures an eschatological reward in the company of others, the rich man finds himself separated from others by the great chasm (16:26) because of his selfish use of his wealth.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. THE POOR, THE OTHERWORLD, AND THE MESSIANIC BANQUET

What, then, is the reward that awaits the poor? Luke is not very explicit about this. First of all, he uses several different terms that might (or might not) refer to one and the same place. Secondly, besides the well-known concept of paradise and the common but ambivalent expression kingdom of God, the abode of the righteous dead is described by expressions such as “eternal habitations” or “Abraham’s bosom” that do not occur in any writings prior to Luke.<sup>38</sup> Here I concentrate on the two last mentioned.

The expression “eternal habitations” (αἱ αἰώνιοι σκηναί) (Lk 16:9) is often taken to be ironic since the basic meaning of the word σκηνή is a tent, a collapsible shelter. The irony can be detected in the striking combination of impermanent dwellings and eternity.<sup>39</sup> However, even though in the LXX the word σκηνή most frequently refers to the tabernacle which, during the wilderness wandering, was a portable construction, σκηνή is also used to translate the Hebrew word *mishkan* (משכן) which denotes a lasting tabernacle.<sup>40</sup> Most of the 20 occurrences of the word in the New Testament refer to the tabernacle of

<sup>37</sup> Feuillet “Mauvais riche,” 222.

<sup>38</sup> Both expressions occur, together with “paradise,” in the *Testament of Abraham* (T. Ab. A 20) where God declares to the angels escorting Abraham’s soul: “Take, therefore, my friend Abraham, to paradise, where there are the tents (σκηναί) of my righteous ones and the mansions (μοναί; cf. John 14:2) of my holy ones Isaac and Jacob, in his bosom (ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ αὐτοῦ).” It is fairly certain that this passage is late and reflects Lukan (and Johannine) terminology.

<sup>39</sup> Fletcher, “Riddle,” 29.

<sup>40</sup> W. Michaelis, “σκηνή κτλ.,” *TWNT* 7 (1964): 369–96, esp. 373.

Israel<sup>41</sup> but it also denotes the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:5) and the heavenly temple, the dwelling place of God (Rev 13:6; 15:5; 21:2–3)—which certainly are of an eternal, not an impermanent nature. Thus, it is likely that Luke uses the word σκηνή in a similar fashion, to refer to a heavenly dwelling place. The more precise nature of this dwelling place remains unknown.

The fate of the poor man Lazarus whom the angels carry to Abraham's bosom reveals more. First, it should be pointed out, however, that Luke hardly envisioned "Abraham's bosom" as a dwelling *place* for the righteous but the expression denotes an intimate fellowship with the patriarch. It is a more figurative way of saying that Lazarus is taken to be with Abraham. Luke does not explicitly state where he envisions this fellowship to take place. The only "geographical" name used in the story is Hades. Whether Abraham and Lazarus are in the "happy side of Hades"<sup>42</sup> or in a totally different region such as a heavenly paradise cannot be determined for certain. However, since the whole point of the story is the impossibility of changing one's fate after death, Lazarus is in all likelihood in his final dwelling place. Despite this, many commentators have argued that Lazarus is in an intermediate abode in order to harmonize different ideas, such as rewards and punishments straight after death and the notion of a coming judgment that all appear in Luke's gospel. Such coherence, however, should not be expected of an ancient text.

The intimate fellowship of Abraham most likely refers to a heavenly banquet. Luke frequently uses banquet imagery to depict the otherworldly reward.<sup>43</sup> Earlier in the gospel, Jesus declares how people come "...from east and west, from north and south, and will eat (ἀνακλιθήσονται) in the kingdom of God" with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets (Luke 13:28–29). Similarly, the parable of the great supper, itself a metaphor for a heavenly feast, begins with an exclamation: "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15–24).<sup>44</sup> At the last supper, Jesus promises his disciples that they will eat and drink at his table in the

<sup>41</sup> Acts 7:44; Heb 8:5; 9:2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 21; 13:10.

<sup>42</sup> A.J. Mattill, *Luke and the Last Things: A Perspective for the Understanding of Lukan Thought* (Dillsboro, NC: Western Norm Carolina Press, 1979), 31.

<sup>43</sup> This fits well with Luke's frequent use of the motif of table fellowship in his story of Jesus. See D.E. Smith, "Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke," *JBL* 104 (1987): 613–38, esp. 624–27.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. 6:21 where Jesus promises that those who hunger now will be fed.

kingdom of God (Luke 22:29–30). The feast the father arranges for the prodigal son can also be interpreted as having eschatological overtones.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, part of the eschatological promise to the poor in the Magnificat (1:53) and the beatitudes (6:21) is that their hunger will be assuaged. Thus, Luke envisions the “kingdom of God” as eating and drinking in the company of other righteous ones. The image has several counterparts in Greco-Roman literature where the just, to give but one example, are imagined as taking part in a “symposium of the saints.”<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the idea of a messianic banquet is deeply rooted in the Jewish prophetic tradition. Isaiah predicts a “feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear” which the Lord will “make for all peoples” at the end of time (Isa 25:6; cf. 33:15–16; 49:10).<sup>47</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, this *topos* is not often nor very explicitly used in later apocalyptic texts.<sup>48</sup> In some texts, the image was broadened into a fertile eschatological paradise.<sup>49</sup>

What is striking in Luke’s description of the eschatological reward is its “real-life” character. There is no indication that the dead would be transformed into another shape or condition.<sup>50</sup> The blissful state consists of familiar bodily experiences, the habitual joys of life, only in an intensified form, with all needs fulfilled. The lack of transformation, frequent in apocalyptic literature and also hinted by Luke, e.g., in the transfiguration story, is perhaps due to the fact that recognition is of utmost importance in the reversal stories. It does make a difference that the rich man immediately recognizes that the figure with Abraham is his former, poor neighbor. Similarly, those who are left outside the messianic banquet in the kingdom of God recognize the

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<sup>45</sup> The son who was “dead” is “alive”; see C. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (WUNT II.94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 92–3 and further below.

<sup>46</sup> Plato, *Resp.* 2:363c–e. Cf. Pseudo-Plato, *Ax.* 371d; Vergil, *Aen.* 6:656–57; Lucian, *Ver. hist.* 2:11 and 5; 7; 14; 25; Dio Chrysostom, *Charid.* 29.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. P.F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 192.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. 1 *En.* 62:14; 2 *En.* 42:5; *Apoc. El.* 1:10; 3:61.

<sup>49</sup> 2 *Bar.* 29:5–6; cf. 1 *En.* 10:19.

<sup>50</sup> T. Karlsen Seim, “In Heaven as on Earth? Resurrection, Body, Gender and Heavenly Rehearsals in Luke-Acts,” in *Christian and Islamic Gender Models in Formative Traditions* (ed. K.E. Borresen; Studi e Testi TardoAntichi 2; Roma: Herder, 2004), 17–41, 20.

patriarchs and the many people from east and west and north and south. Recognition is important because it ensures that the outcome of the judgment is just; no one is mistaken for another. However, it is not only justice that is at stake but also the very judgment itself: it is important to show that the threat of punishment is actually carried out and everybody receives their due reward or punishment.<sup>51</sup>

#### 4. PARTICIPATION IN THE ESCHATOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

The eschatological fulfillment, participation in the messianic banquet, will occur in the future, after the death of each individual, as is made explicit in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Similarly, other passages referring to the messianic banquet often use the future tense of the verbs. For example, there *will be* (ἔσται) weeping and gnashing of teeth when people *will come* (ἔξουσιν) to the kingdom of God and *will eat* (ἀνακλιθήσονται) there (Luke 13:28–29).<sup>52</sup>

The beatitudes and woes also include a future orientation of the eschatological fulfillment. Those who hunger and weep will (one day in the future) be filled (χορτασθήσεσθε) and laugh (γελάσατε); likewise those who are full now and laugh will be hungry (πεινάσατε), mourna (πενθήσετε) and weep (κλαύσετε). However, the poor are called blessed because the kingdom of God *is* (ἐστίν) *already* theirs; likewise the rich have already received their consolation (ἀπέχετε τὴν παράκλησιν). In the Magnificat, Mary proclaims that the eschatological salvation is already fulfilled. The salvific age has begun with the promise of a Saviour (all verbs in past tense; 1:52–53). This kind of realized eschatology is a vital part of Luke's salvation-historical scheme. The kingdom is a present reality in Jesus' deeds and words, especially in his healing miracles. According to Luke's programmatic manifesto, the good news promised to the poor by Isaiah has been fulfilled in Jesus' mission (Luke 4:16–21). That is why the Lukan Jesus can declare to Zacchaeus that "today" salvation has come to his house.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Neale, *Sinners*, 83. In many ancient texts, seeing the bliss and the torments of others is one part of the punishment and reward.

<sup>52</sup> Similarly, in the parable of the great banquet, none of those who were invited *will taste* (γεύσεται) the dinner which the poor and other outcasts will enjoy (14:24). In the preceding instructions, Jesus exhorts that the one who invites the poor and disabled to feast instead of the rich who can pay it back will be blessed, for "*you will be repaid* (ἀνταποδοθήσεται) at the resurrection of the righteous" (14:14).

The beatitudes and woes are not so much blessings and curses as such but descriptions of two contrasting groups and their character,<sup>53</sup> the poor already have the kingdom of God while the rich already have lost it. This comes close to the Jewish wisdom tradition where people are categorized into two groups, the righteous and the unrighteous, the wise and the foolish. Moreover, righteousness is connected with immortality while the ungodly have no hope. In the first chapters of the Wisdom of Solomon (Wis. 1–5), for example, the ungodly think that nothing exists after death and, therefore, they want to enjoy what good life has to offer, even by unrighteous means: “Let us oppress the righteous poor man; let us not spare the widow” (Wis. 2:10). Moreover, they think that righteousness has no merit since the destiny of the righteous is death. But, the writer reaffirms, the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and they will be exalted while the ungodly will be destroyed.<sup>54</sup> Even though the righteous seem to suffer, in real terms they are already immortal; their physical death will not change this. Likewise, even though the unrighteous seem to prosper, they are already dead and will remain dead after their life on earth is over. A similar notion of immortality as a present reality occurs in many Qumran writings.<sup>55</sup> It is not alien to Luke’s thinking, either. Outwardly, the poor seem to suffer but in reality, they are to be called blessed since the kingdom of God is theirs. This is evident not only in the beatitudes and woes but also in the story of the rich man and Lazarus and in all “last will be first” type of reversals.

Elsewhere in his gospel, Luke also juxtaposes two coexisting groups that differ morally from each other. In the parable of the unjust steward, they are called the “sons of light” (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ φωτός) and the “sons of this age” (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου; 16:8). In the debate with the Sadducees, the Lukan Jesus distinguishes the “sons of this age” (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) from the “sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (υἱοὶ εἰσιν θεοῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ ὄντες; 20:34–36). Luke’s redactional changes to this controversy over the resurrection

<sup>53</sup> E.E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (NCB; Revised Edition; London: Oliphants, 1977), 112; Ireland, *Stewardship*, 172.

<sup>54</sup> A similar idea also occurs in some apocalyptic texts, cf. *1 En.* 102:4–103:4.

<sup>55</sup> Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 144–69.

reveal that he understands resurrection at least partly in spatial terms.<sup>56</sup> For Luke, it is not so much a distinction between this life and the life to come as such (as it is for Mark and Matthew) but between those belonging to this age and those considered worthy of the coming age. Even though the eschatological fulfillment is reserved for the future, the “sons of God” already are the “sons of resurrection,” partaking in the immortal life which will continue after their death, as the example of the patriarchs (20:37–38) shows.<sup>57</sup>

In Luke’s view, the church is an eschatological community that offers salvation to its members. Those inside the church already are saved. The life of the church is characterized by the proper behavior of the believers. This praxis involves asceticism—the believers are supposed to be “like angels” (ἰσάγγελοι) who neither marry nor are given into marriage (cf. Luke 20:35–36)<sup>58</sup>—and the proper use of wealth. In the summaries of the life of the Jerusalem community in Acts (2:44–45 and 4:32–37), Luke emphasizes how the members would sell their possessions, lay what they received at the apostles’ feet where it was distributed to anyone who had need.<sup>59</sup> The Christian community is characterized by its sharing of possessions and looking after the needy. If the rich want to step inside this salvific community, they need to repent, which in practical terms means undergoing baptism and adopting a proper lifestyle, chastity and the renunciation of possessions.

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<sup>56</sup> T. Karlsen Seim, *Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1994), 216–17.

<sup>57</sup> Another example of resurrection as a present reality is the story of the Prodigal Son who “was dead and lives again,” as the father explains (Luke 15:24, 32); Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 92–3. The story ends up with a celebration at a banquet, a proleptic image of the messianic banquet.

<sup>58</sup> This is strongly emphasized by Seim, “In Heaven as On Earth,” 27–28. Over against the Sadducean position that a man should *anistanai sperma* and gain immortality by posterity, the Lukan Jesus holds that marriage (and thereby procreation) is no longer necessary in order to survive death; instead, there is resurrection and immortality. Whether or not one enters upon marriage in this present time, reveals to which group one belongs. Cf. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 79.

<sup>59</sup> The absence of poverty was regarded as a characteristic of salvation in the Deuteronomistic tradition where one sign of the Lord’s blessings in the promised land is that “...there will be no one in need among you” (Deut. 15:5); cf. Seccombe, *Possessions*, 222, n. 126. In the later apocalyptic tradition, e.g., in the *Sibylline Oracles*, eschatological salvation means that there will be no more poverty but “wealth will be common to all” (*Sib.Or.* 8:208; cf. 3:378).

## 5. WHO ARE THE RICH AND THE POOR IN LUKE'S NARRATIVE?

But how does Luke's depiction of the early Christian community relate to reality? To what extent does Luke's portrayal of rich and poor correspond to the social circumstances within which he lived and wrote? What is the relation of the expected otherworldly reversal to the actual living conditions in and around Luke's community?

There seem to be two basic models of interpreting the Lukan attitude towards the rich and the poor. The first, often adopted by scholars on the theologically more conservative side, emphasizes that it is not the riches themselves but the attitude toward them and attachment to them that counts. To cite a recent assessment, "...the basic issue in all the materials on riches and poverty in Luke-Acts is religious. What matters most is one's attitude toward God."<sup>60</sup> Thus, the Lukan "Jesus *does* demand total renunciation of possessions, but only if and when they are an obstacle to wholehearted commitment to himself."<sup>61</sup> This view has been criticized for its "middle-class bias" which has distorted Luke's radical message by spiritualizing it.<sup>62</sup> To "rescue" Luke from being too overtly on the side of the poor often seems to be the result of the embarrassment of the commentators who themselves tend to belong to the well-to-do section of society.

According to the second alternative, influenced by liberation-theological readings, Luke is literally on the side of the poor and against wealth. According to this view, the radical message of Luke was to insist that salvation also has a this-worldly dimension and begins in this life where the rich Christians are exhorted to take care of their poorer brothers and sisters, P.F. Esler, a representative of this second view, concludes:

E. Käsemann has described apocalyptic as "the mother of Christian theology". But not for Luke's theology of the poor!... So what has been the mother of this element in Luke's theology? There is only one credible candidate—his unusual compassion for the poorest members of his community and of society generally, together with his passionate belief that the gospel was not gospel unless it offered them immediate relief for

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<sup>60</sup> Ireland, *Stewardship*, 195.

<sup>61</sup> Ireland, *Stewardship*, 187 (emphasis original).

<sup>62</sup> Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 170 & 199.

their physical miseries and gave them, perhaps for the first time, a sense of their own dignity as human persons.<sup>63</sup>

As appealing as this interpretation would theologically and morally be, it seems to be based on a one-sided reading of the evidence. Part of the argument rests on the understanding of the word *πτωχός*. According to Esler, it should be taken as a beggar since there were other Greek words, such as *πένης* and *ἐνδεής*, for describing those poor who were not destitute.<sup>64</sup> This might have been true in the classical usage of the word where a *πτωχός* denotes a beggar while the word *πένης* was used of those who were poor in the sense that they had to work for their living.<sup>65</sup> This kind of understanding of who were poor reflects (somewhat pathetically) an upper class attitude on the part of those who themselves did not have to work. Poverty was relative (as it still is); a *πένης* might have owned slaves, for example.<sup>66</sup> However, in later times, the meaning of these words was not clear-cut at all. In the LXX, for example, both words are used to translate a variety of Hebrew words, most often *ʿānī* (עני) and *ebīōn* (עביון).<sup>67</sup> Both refer to the economically weak, especially those who own no land but must work for others as day-laborers. Both may also carry a religious overtone: the poor are the ones who are unjustly oppressed. Since the poor have no one else to help them, YHWH is on their side and acts as their protector.<sup>68</sup>

All this makes it probable that the word *πτωχός* also has a wider range of meaning in the New Testament. This likelihood is strengthened by the fact that the word *πένης* occurs only once in the whole NT corpus—in 2 Cor 9:9 which is a *verbatim* citation of Psalm 112:9 (LXX 111:9).<sup>69</sup> Is it likely that no other writer would want to refer to some kind of a poor person other than a beggar? Moreover, the word *πτωχός* is used in connections where the translation into beggar seems inapt, such as Matt 5:3 (μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι) or Rom 15:26 (οἱ πτωχοὶ τῶν ἀγίων).

<sup>63</sup> Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 199.

<sup>64</sup> Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 180.

<sup>65</sup> E. Bammel, “πτωχός κτλ.,” *TWNT* 6 (1959): 885–915.

<sup>66</sup> F. Hauck, “πένης,” *TWNT* 6 (1959): 37–40.

<sup>67</sup> Most often, the Hebrew עני is rendered as πτωχός (37x), while עביון is πένης (29x). However, עני is translated as πένης 12 times and עביון as πτωχός 11 times. The words may also occur together עני ועביון (LXX: πτωχός καὶ πένης).

<sup>68</sup> This kind of understanding of the poor comes close to being humble and meek. Indeed, *ʿānī* and *ebīōn* are sometimes translated as ταπεινός or πραῦς in the LXX.

<sup>69</sup> Once (Acts 4:34) the word ἐνδεής “in need of” is used.

If Luke does not mean beggars by his use of πτωχός, what does he mean then? In my view, the problem of both above-sketched interpretations is that they too quickly understand “the poor” as a socio-economic term and read Luke’s text as transparently commenting on his own social world.<sup>70</sup> After all, the text does not describe the reality as such, but a socially—and ideologically—constructed reality. Part of this ideology in Luke is the way he uses the word “poor” which he seems to understand in the above-mentioned Hebrew Bible sense of the word. A similar use of the word occurs in other early Jewish and Christian writings as well where it is used as a honorific title, e.g. in the *Psalms of Solomon* (Pss. Sol. 5:2, 11; 15:1) and in many Qumran writings (e.g., CD 19:9–11; 1QH 10:34; 1QM 14:7) and also appear in the name of the early Christian Ebionites.

In scholarship on the synoptic gospels, it has in recent years become evident that a designation of “Pharisees” does not refer to the historical Pharisees at the time of Jesus but to a highly ideologized portrayal of a group playing a certain role in the Lukan narrative. D.A. Neale has likewise persuasively shown that the category of “sinners” in the gospel of Luke is a subjective category, revealing “...more about the ideological point of view of the writer than the historical or sociological identity of those designated ‘sinners.’”<sup>71</sup> A sinner is who the writer believes to be a sinner, not a member of a group that was generally known to be “wicked.”<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the designations of “rich” and “poor” in the gospel of Luke are utterly stereotypical and used in a collective sense. Even when Luke depicts an individual rich person—such as Zacchaeus—he is more of a representative of a type, not an individualized person.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Esler who argues on the basis of passages such as the parable of the rich fool (12:13–21), the command to sell one’s possessions and give alms (13:33), the instruction on whom to invite to banquets (14:12–14), the saying concerning unrighteous mammon (16:9), the story of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31), and Luke’s modification of the Markan story of the rich ruler (Luke 18:18–30) that there must have been wealthy Christians among Luke’s audience (*Community and Gospel*, 184–85).

<sup>71</sup> Neale, *Sinners*, 80.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making, Vol. 1; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 528–34.

<sup>73</sup> This kind of understanding of the poor does not mean that the ideological and economic categories could not have overlapped. After all, the vast majority of people were poor. In some passages, poverty seems to be understood in a concrete sense. Luke 7 where Jesus declares how the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them is a case in point. Just before this, Luke has referred to several healing miracles

In conclusion, Luke seems to be writing to people who mainly identify themselves with the poor, despite their own economic situation. The poor are ultimately the good and humble; the insiders who lead the right kind of life. On the other hand, the rich are the arrogant outsiders whose lifestyle is wrong. The rich can be saved and become insiders—if they become poor. Thus, salvation is open to both rich and poor—but for the rich it is more costly, in the very literal sense of the word. Repentance for the rich means using wealth properly, for the benefit of the whole community. This kind of community model, however, remains highly utopian.<sup>74</sup> The final consolation of the poor awaits them only after death. Luke does exhort the rich to share their wealth which would bring relief to the poor in this life, but this does not count as a real promise to the poor.<sup>75</sup> The rich may not heed the exhortation and the poor remain as poor and destitute as before. All Luke promises the poor is an eschatological reward. Even though Jesus' proclamation means the beginning of the *eschaton*, the fulfillment, the messianic banquet will happen in the otherworld. After all, this kind of promise is rather easy to make when the maker of the promise does not have to bear the responsibility for its fulfillment.

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of Jesus. However, he does not envision a social revolution or question the social stratification of the society. Rather, the healing miracles are signs of the presence of the kingdom and the eschatological age. When the poor and the disabled have no one else to help them, God—and Jesus as his messenger—takes care of them.

<sup>74</sup> The Deuteronomistic tradition is likewise utopian in this respect (cf. n. 59 above). In the same context with the promise of the absence of poverty in the promised land, it is stated that "...there will never cease to be some in need on the earth" (Deut 5:11).

<sup>75</sup> Contra Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 190–1.

DIESSEITS AUS DER SICHT DES JENSEITS:  
DIE SENDSCHREIBEN DER OFFENBARUNG DES JOHANNES  
(OFFB 2–3)

Tobias Nicklas

Auch wenn die Frage sicherlich weiterhin offen bleiben muss, ob von einer Gattung „Apokalypse“ in gleicher Weise gesprochen werden kann, wie dies etwa beim „Evangelium“ oder „Apostelbrief“ der Fall ist,<sup>1</sup> trifft die bekannte Definition eines Genres „Apokalypse“ der *Apocalypse Group* des *Genre Project* der *Society of Biblical Literature*, die bereits 1979 veröffentlicht wurde, einen auch für die im vorliegenden Band verhandelte Frage entscheidenden Punkt. Diese Definition lautet:<sup>2</sup>

“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

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<sup>1</sup> Zur Problematik vgl. u.a. D.E. Aune, “The Apocalypse and the Problem of Genre,” in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity. Collected Essays* (ders.; WUNT 199; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 39–65.

<sup>2</sup> J.J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Sem.* 14 (1979): 1–20, hier 9. – Weiterführend zum Ringen um den Begriff „Apokalypse“ bzw. „apokalyptisch“ vgl. u.a. D. Hellholm, “The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John,” *Sem.* 36 (1986): 13–64; G. Boccaccini, “Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Contribution of Italian Scholarship,” *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium* (ed. J.J. Collins – J.H. Charlesworth; JSP.S 9; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1991), 33–50; A. Bedenbender, *Der Gott der Welt tritt auf den Sinai. Entstehung, Entwicklung und Funktionsweise der frühjüdischen Apokalyptik* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 8; Berlin: Institut für Kirche und Judentum, 2000), 32–53, sowie D.E. Aune, “The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre,” in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity* (ders.; WUNT 199; Tübingen: Mohr, 2006), 39–65. Sehr stark an Collins angelehnte Definitionen finden sich z.B. bei D. Hellholm, “Apokalypse. Form und Gattung,” *RGQ* I (1998): 585–8, hier 586, oder R. Bauckham, “Apocalypses,” *Justification and Variegated Nomism I: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D.A. Carson; WUNT II 140; Tübingen: Mohr, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 135–87, hier 135. – Anders allerdings J. Carmignac, “Qu’ est-ce que l’apocalyptique? Son emploi à Qumrân,” *RdQ* 10 (1979): 3–33, hier 20 sowie ders., “Description de phénomène de l’apocalyptique dans l’Ancien Testament,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala August 12–17, 1979* (Tübingen: Mohr, <sup>2</sup>1989), 163–70, hier 164–5.

temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.

Apokalypsen thematisieren also immer – auf durchaus verschiedene Weisen – eine Berührung transzendenter Realitäten mit der immanenten Welt bzw. den immanenten Möglichkeiten ihres „menschlichen Empfängers“. Dies lässt sich bereits anhand der Definition selbst schon weiter ausdifferenzieren:

1. Ein Wesen einer jenseitigen Welt übermittelt eine Offenbarung an einen menschlichen Empfänger. Bereits die Rede von einem „menschlichen Empfänger“ aber ist problematischer, als dies auf den ersten Blick der Fall scheint: In den allermeisten bekannten jüdischen und christlichen Apokalypsen ist der im Text genannte Empfänger ja eine fiktive literarische Figur – fast immer sind Apokalypsen ja unter dem Pseudonym einer Gestalt der Vergangenheit, ja in vielen Fällen gar der „grauen Vorzeit“ verfasst. Die Berührung von „Transzendenz“ und „Immanenz“ findet also auf einer deutlich komplexeren Stufe statt, als sie viele Texte zumindest auf den ersten Blick suggerieren: Ein menschlicher Autor versteckt sich hinter dem Pseudonym einer Gestalt der Vergangenheit, der er eine wie auch immer zu beschreibende Erfahrung aus der Transzendenz zuschreibt, mit Hilfe derer er aber Adressaten seiner Gegenwart – mit ihren konkreten Problemen – ansprechen möchte. Die sich zusätzlich ergebende Frage, inwiefern einem konkreten apokalyptischen Text tatsächliche wie auch immer zu beschreibende „Transzendenz“-Erfahrungen zugrunde liegen mögen bzw. inwiefern hier mehr oder weniger mit bereits vorliegenden sprachlichen Mustern gearbeitet wird, ist damit natürlich noch nicht entschieden – sie ist sicherlich auch für jeden Text gesondert zu stellen.
2. Der Inhalt der jeweiligen Offenbarung hat mit transzendenten Realitäten zu tun. Diese aber sind nicht ohne einen Bezug zu immanenten Realitäten zu beschreiben. Auch wenn die oben zitierte Definition den Immanenzbezug der Offenbarungen nicht explizit macht, ist er doch implizit angesprochen:
  - 2.1 Die in vielen Apokalypsen angesprochenen temporalen Realitäten beziehen sich, wie angedeutet, auf eschatologische Erlösung. Bereits der Begriff „End“-Zeit aber bezeichnet eine Vorstellung, die nicht ohne Bezug auf „Zeit“ – und damit

nicht ohne Bezug auf „Geschichte“ – gedacht werden kann. Aber auch der Begriff Erlösung ist nicht ohne einen immanenten Bezugspunkt denkbar: *Wer* soll Erlösung *wovon* erlangen? Und was muss/müssen er/sie leisten/tun, um dies zu erreichen?

- 2.2 Noch deutlicher ist der Immanenzbezug im Zusammenhang mit räumlichen Realitäten: Die Rede von einer „anderen“, einer „übernatürlichen“ Welt schließt „diese“, die erfahrene „natürliche“ Welt automatisch als ihr Gegenüber ein.

Was aber in einer allgemein formulierten Definition offen bleiben muss, ist die Frage, wie sich diese Bezüge in konkreten Texten tatsächlich realisieren. Eine Antwort auf diese Frage kann natürlich nur anhand konkreter Texte erfolgen und wird sicherlich bei jedem Text andere Schwerpunkte legen können: Im Folgenden soll eine derartige Untersuchung am Beispiel der sicherlich bekanntesten „christlichen“ Apokalypse, der Offenbarung des Johannes, erfolgen.

Der vorgegebene Rahmen erlaubt dabei nur, einige Aspekte aufzuzeigen. Das Thema verlangt eigentlich eine Aufarbeitung von monographischem Umfang – ich konzentriere mich deswegen auf Aspekte eines Abschnitts der Apokalypse, der auf den ersten Blick für die vorliegende Frage wenig ertragreich zu sein scheint, nämlich die Sendeschreiben der Kapitel 2–3: Während etwa Kapitel 4–5 einen Blick in den himmlischen Thronsaal wagen, der – wie wir aus einschlägigen Arbeiten von D.E. Aune wissen, nicht nur Visionen des Ezechiel weiterspinnt,<sup>3</sup> sondern auch – überaus kritisch – Aspekte der Situation widerspiegelt, der sich die frühchristlichen Gemeinden Asias ausgesetzt sehen,<sup>4</sup> bieten Kapitel 2–3 einen Aspekt des Themas „Other Worlds in their Relation to this World,“ der in der bisherigen Diskussion weniger beachtet wurde: Sie beurteilen die Lage der sich in „unserer“ Welt befindlichen Gemeinden aus der jenseitigen Perspektive des

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<sup>3</sup> Zur Ezechielrezeption der Offenbarung des Johannes vgl. die Beiträge bei D. Sänger (Hg.), *Das Ezechielbuch in der Johannesoffenbarung* (BThSt; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2006), sowie S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNT.S 115; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995), 64–84, und B. Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (SBB; Stuttgart: Bibelwerk, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Besonders wichtig: D.E. Aune, „The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John,“ in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (ders.; WUNT 199; Tübingen: Mohr, 2006), 99–119.

gekreuzigt-erhöhten Christus<sup>5</sup> bzw. geben dies vor. Damit formuliere ich eine der Leitfragen unseres Symposiums im Grunde um und frage nicht: *Inwiefern wollen Vorstellungen und Beschreibungen jenseitiger Welten Einfluss nehmen auf Fragen, Probleme und Situationen diesseitiger Welten?*, sondern stelle die umgekehrte Frage: *In welcher Weise beeinflusst der (vorgegebene) Blick aus dem Jenseits die Beschreibung diesseitiger Situationen? Und: Worin besteht die Funktion dieser eigenartigen Konstruktion?*

# 1. DIE BERÜHRUNG VON DIESSEITS UND JENSEITS IN DEN SENDSCHREIBEN (OFFB 2–3): ALLGEMEINE GEDANKEN ZUR KOMMUNIKATIONSSITUATION<sup>6</sup>

Die sieben Sendschreiben an die Gemeinden von Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Thyatira, Sardes, Philadelphia und Laodizea können nur im allerweitesten Sinne als „Briefe“ bezeichnet werden. Zwar bietet ja Offb 1,4–8 eine Art brieflicher Einleitung, die sich deutlich an den Präskripten paulinischer Briefe orientiert,<sup>7</sup> die Sendschreiben selbst aber wei-

<sup>5</sup> Das Christusbild der Johannesoffenbarung wurde wiederholt zum Thema wissenschaftlicher Untersuchungen. Vgl. z.B. T. Holtz, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes* (TU 85; Berlin: Akademie, 1971); E. Boring, „Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 702–23; D. Guthrie, „The Christology of Revelation,” in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays on the historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. J.B. Green & M. Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 397–409; T. Söding, „Gott und das Lamm: Theozentrik und Christologie in der Johannesoffenbarung,” in *Theologie als Vision: Studien zur Johannes-Offenbarung* (ed. K. Backhaus; SBS 191, Stuttgart: Bibelwerk, 1991), 77–120; D. Sänger, „Amen, komm, Herr Jesus!“ (Apk 22,20): Anmerkungen zur Christologie der Johannes-Apokalypse,“ in *Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung und ihrer Auslegung: Festschrift für Otto Böcher zum 70. Geburtstag* (Hg. F.W. Horn & M. Wolter; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2005), 71–92; D.E. Aune, „Stories of Jesus in the Apocalypse of John,” in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity* (ders., WUNT 199; Tübingen: Mohr, 2006), 190–211, sowie ausführlich K. Huber, *Einer gleich einem Menschensohn: Die Christusvisionen in Offb 1,9–20 und Offb 14,14–20 und die Christologie der Johannesoffenbarung* (NTA-NF 51; Münster: Aschendorff, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Weiterführend zur Kommunikationssituation der Johannesoffenbarung bleibt M. Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief: Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort* (FRLANT 140; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 85–131, entscheidend.

<sup>7</sup> Eine Analyse des Briefpräskripts Offb 1,4ff. bietet auch H. Ulland, *Die Vision als Radikalisierung der Wirklichkeit in der Apokalypse des Johannes: Das Verhältnis der sieben Sendschreiben zu Apokalypse 12–13* (TANZ 21; Tübingen – Basel: Francke, 1997), 22–3.

sen nicht die klassischen Aufbaumerkmale eines „Apostelbriefs“ auf; auch ist kaum davon auszugehen, dass sie tatsächlich in der Form von Einzelbriefen an die Gemeinden versandt wurden.<sup>8</sup> Vielmehr könnte man von einer Art fiktiver „himmlischer Korrespondenz“ sprechen. Diese ist eingebettet in die große Christusvision Offb 1,9–20.<sup>9</sup> Jeder der sieben Texte setzt mit einem an Johannes gerichteten „Schreibbefehl“ ein:<sup>10</sup> Dieser besagt ausdrücklich, dass das nun Folgende nicht an die Gemeinde selbst gerichtet ist, sondern an die „Engel der Gemeinde“, von denen ja bereits in Offb 1,20 die Rede war. Dort sind diese Engel als Sterne der göttlichen Macht Christi unterstellt; sie repräsentieren vor Gott die irdischen Gemeinden. Auch als Absender soll natürlich nicht der menschliche Schreiber Johannes gelten: Die jeweilige Botenformel der Schreiben, die an alttestamentlich-prophetische Formen erinnert,<sup>11</sup> macht klar, dass Christus Absender der Botschaft ist. Der Bezug zwischen diesseitiger Gemeindesituation und Beurteilung durch den jenseitigen, erhöhten Christus wird aber auch über die jeweiligen Christusprädikate der „Botenformeln“ hergestellt, die einerseits zum großen Teil bereits in der einleitenden Christusvision verankert sind,<sup>12</sup> andererseits dann aber gerne in der Beschreibung der jeweiligen, im

<sup>8</sup> So auch P. Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 149, der auch auf den Unterschied zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien verweist. – Anders noch R. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John I* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920 [repr. 1956]), 37, 44–46.

<sup>9</sup> Zum Zueinander zwischen der Christusvision 1,9–20 und den folgenden sieben Sendschreiben vgl. u.a. F. Hahn, „Zum Aufbau der Johannesoffenbarung,“ in *Studien zum Neuen Testament II: Bekenntnisbildung und Theologie in urchristlicher Zeit* (ders.; WUNT 192; Tübingen: Mohr, 2006), 531–40, bes. 534.

<sup>10</sup> Die Form der Texte wurde immer wieder beschrieben: Vgl. u.a. F. Hahn, „Die Sendschreiben der Johannesapokalypse: Ein Beitrag zur Bestimmung prophetischer Redeformen,“ in *Studien zum Neuen Testament II: Bekenntnisbildung und Theologie in urchristlicher Zeit* (ders.; WUNT 192; Tübingen: Mohr, 2006), 557–94, und D.E. Aune, „The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3),“ in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity. Collected Essays* (ders.; WUNT 199; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 212–32, bes. 213–23. Kritisch allerdings M. Karrer, *Brief*, 160, der betont, dass zu den Sendschreiben streng genommen ja keine formalen Parallelen vorliegen. – Allerdings ist es denkbar, dass die in den heutigen Textausgaben wiedergegebene sehr einheitliche Form der Sendschreiben nicht ursprünglich ist, wie ein Blick in die Textgeschichte nahe legt. Den Gedanken hierzu verdanke ich einem bisher unpublizierten Vortrag von M. Karrer (30.09.2009 in Innsbruck).

<sup>11</sup> Weiterführend hier v.a. F. Hahn, „Sendschreiben,“ 566–70.

<sup>12</sup> Hierzu z.B. M.R. Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb: The Relationship between Angelomorphic and Lamb Christology in the Book of Revelation* (WUNT 2.203; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 213–5.

Text angesprochenen Gemeindesituation oder der ihr verheißenen Zukunft aufgegriffen werden.<sup>13</sup> Nur zwei Beispiele seien ausgeführt (vgl. auch 2,12.16):

- Im Sendschreiben an die *Gemeinde von Ephesus* bezeichnet Christus sich als der, „der die sieben Sterne in seiner Rechten hält (?)“<sup>14</sup> und mitten unter den sieben goldenen Leuchtern *einhergeht*“ (Offb 2,1). Der Text greift also auf Bilder aus Offb 1,12–13 und 16 zurück und intensiviert diese gleichzeitig:<sup>15</sup> So wird gleich zu Beginn des ersten Sendschreibens explizit das Verhältnis zwischen erhöhtem Christus und seinen Gemeinden thematisiert. Deren „Sterne“, d.h. die sie repräsentierenden Engel, hält er in seiner Hand fest, er „wandelt“ aktiv unter den „Leuchtern“ her, die die Gemeinden repräsentieren. All dies sind Zeichen für „das dynamische Gegenüber Christi zu seiner Kirche“. <sup>16</sup> Dieses Bild wird zum Hintergrund der Ermahnung der Gemeinde, welche ihre „erste Liebe verlassen“ hat (Offb 2,4), zu ihren „ersten Werken“ zurückzukehren. Sollte dies nicht gelingen, werde Christus den „Leuchter“ der Gemeinde „von seiner Stelle wegrücken“ (2,5). Der Text drückt mit keinem Wort aus, was dies *konkret* für die angesprochene Gemeinde in ihrem historischen Umfeld bedeuten mag – daran aber ist er auch nicht interessiert: Wenn Christus „kommt“, wird er den Leuchter „wegrücken“. In Verbindung mit der Aussage Offb 2,1 verweist dies auf die Unbedingtheit der nun verlangten Entscheidung, an der sich auch der Christusbezug der Gemeinde – und damit ihre endzeitliche Zukunft vor dem, der „bald“ beim Weltgericht auftreten wird – entscheidet.

<sup>13</sup> Zu den Christusprädikationen der Sendschreiben vgl. auch F. Hahn, „Sendschreiben“, 567–9.

<sup>14</sup> Das Verbum κρατέω wird meist als „Festhalten“ verstanden. Zu beachten aber ist auch der folgende interessante Hinweis von E.F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (Italian Texts and Studies on Religion and Society; Grand Rapids – Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 115: „The verb κρατέω can be used to indicate placing in chains (7:1; 20:1–2), a characteristic punishment for angels, who can, however, be released (see 9:14).“

<sup>15</sup> Vgl. hier auch K. Huber, *Einer gleich einem Menschensohn*, 201–2: „Gegenüber der Eingangsvision ist dieses Herrschafts- und Beziehungsmoment zudem auch sprachlich intensiviert, wenn in den partizipialen Titulierungen anstelle des ἔχων von Offb 1,16a das stärkere κράτων zu stehen kommt und anstelle der statischen Positionsbestimmung des Menschensohnsgleichen in Offb 1,14a nun von ὁ περιπατῶν (vgl. Lev 26,12) die Rede ist.“

<sup>16</sup> U.B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ÖTK.NT 19; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 101.

- Dass die konkret historische Zukunft der Gemeinde dann nicht mehr im Blick ist, hat entscheidend mit dieser Perspektivik zu tun.
- Noch komplexer ist das Zueinander von Aussagen im Sendschreiben an die *Gemeinde von Smyrna* (Offb 2,8b.10b). Offb 2,8b findet seinen Hintergrund natürlich in Offb 1,17b–18 (vgl. auch Jes 44,6; 48,12; Offb 22,13): „Ich bin der Erste und der Letzte und der Lebendige. Ich war tot, doch nun lebe ich in alle Ewigkeit...“ – diese Selbstbezeichnung des erhöhten Christus unterscheidet sich aber etwa von der in 2,1 dadurch, dass sie die Verbindung zwischen irdischem Jesus, der als Mensch in den Tod ging, auferstandenem Christus, der „wieder lebendig“ wurde, und präexistentem wie endzeitlich wirkendem Christus – der „Erste und der Letzte“ – herstellt:<sup>17</sup> Bereits in dieser Christusbezeichnung selbst also wird das Zueinander von Diesseits und Jenseits thematisiert. Der als „arm“ und doch „reich“ bezeichneten bedrängten Gemeinde von Smyrna (Offb 2,9) werden große Leiden angekündigt, die sie aber furchtlos durchstehen soll. Der Christus, der selbst tot gewesen und nun für alle Zeiten lebendig ist, fordert von der Gemeinde in diesen Bedrängnissen, „treu bis in den Tod“ (2,10b) zu sein<sup>18</sup> – dann wird auch sie den „Kranz des Lebens“<sup>19</sup> (2,10c) erhalten. Die Prädikate des erhöhten Christus, der die irdische Gemeinde anspricht, stehen so für eine Form des Zueinanders von Diesseits und Jenseits, das sich auch für die Gemeinde als entscheidend erweisen wird: Treue zu Christus bis in den Tod lässt den „Kranz des Lebens“ erringen, ewigen Lebens

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<sup>17</sup> Einen Bezug zwischen der Selbstbezeichnung Christi, als dessen, „der tot war und lebendig wurde,“ und der Situation von Smyrna als einer Stadt, die nach Zerstörungen erst im 1. Jh.v.Chr. wieder aufgebaut worden war, herzustellen, scheint mir recht weit hergeholt. Vgl. dagegen aber die Diskussion bei C.J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting* (JSNT.S 11; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1986), 60–65, der hier bereits auf W.M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse* (London, 1904) verweist, oder J.M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta, 1979), 30.

<sup>18</sup> U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 106, spricht in diesem Zusammenhang sicherlich zu Recht vom „Geschick Christi als tröstliches Vorzeichen für eine Gemeinde, die in höchster Bedrängnis lebt und der Hoffnung bedarf, die in der Orientierung am Vorbild Christi gründet.“

<sup>19</sup> Der traditionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund dieser Vorstellung ist umstritten. Bedenkenswert ist die Idee von R. Zimmermann, *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis: Traditionsgeschichte und Theologie eines Bildfelds im Urchristentum und antiker Umwelt* (WUNT 2.122; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001), 449–52, neben dem üblichen Hintergrund des „Siegeskranzes“ die Motivik des Brautkranzes mit einzubeziehen.

natürlich, wie 2,11 deutlich macht: Nicht der erste Tod sei zu fürchten, sondern der zweite!<sup>20</sup>

So sehr die Christusprädikate der Botenformeln aber einerseits einen Bezug zur Situationsbeschreibung der angesprochenen Gemeinde zum Ausdruck bringen, so sehr thematisieren sie „das gottgleiche Wesen Christi und seine außerordentliche Gottesbeziehung“.<sup>21</sup> Mit dem Bezug zwischen einleitenden Prädikationen des erhöhten Christus und der gegenwärtigen Situation der Gemeinde, bzw. dem, was ihr in Aussicht gestellt wird, wird also in jedem Falle das konkrete Dasein der Gemeinden im Diesseits in den Bezug zum transzendenten Christus gesetzt und somit selbst transzendiert. Umgekehrt aber wendet sich der erhöhte Christus nicht *nur* als jenseitige Gestalt an die Gemeinden: Er selbst ist ja *als Gekreuzigter* erhöht und hat den Sieg bereits errungen, der den angesprochenen Gliedern der Gemeinden im Überwinderspruch am Ende in Aussicht gestellt werden wird.

Wichtig für die Kommunikationssituation sind zudem weitere Elemente, die sich in jedem der Sendschreiben finden:

- So spricht der erhöhte Christus den Gemeindeengel (und mit ihm die Gemeinde) nicht nur mit „Du“ an, sondern erinnert in jedem Brief aufs Neue zunächst einmal daran, dass er die Situation der Gemeinde „kenne“. Diese οἶδα-Formeln sehen jeweils folgendermaßen aus:<sup>22</sup>

Offb 2,2: οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ τὸν κόπον καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου καὶ...

Offb 2,9: οἶδά σου τὴν θλιψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν,...καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν...

Offb 2,13: οἶδα τοῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ...

Offb 2,19: οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν...

Offb 3,1b: οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ...

Offb 3,8: οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα,...

Offb 3,15: οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα...

<sup>20</sup> Was damit gemeint ist, wird hier noch nicht gesagt – der Text kommt erst am Ende (20,6.14; 21,8) darauf zurück.

<sup>21</sup> K. Huber, *Einer gleich einem Menschensohn*, 202.

<sup>22</sup> Zu den οἶδα –Abschnitten der Sendschreiben vgl. F. Hahn, „Sendschreiben“, 570–7.

In jeder von ihnen – jeweils einfachen Aufzeihungen – wird ein konkreter Bezug zwischen Diesseits und Jenseits hergestellt, der entscheidend für das Folgende werden wird: In fünf Fällen wird betont, dass der sprechende erhöhte Christus die „Werke“ der Gemeinde kennt (2,2.19; 3,1b.8.15) – worum es sich konkret handelt, wird allerdings kaum einmal unmittelbar deutlich.<sup>23</sup> Es werden aber auch andere Dinge thematisiert, wie ihre Bedrängnis und Mühen, ihre Liebe, ihr Glauben oder zumindest die Situation an ihrem Wohnort (2,13). Das οἶδα des erhöhten Christus macht klar: Aufgrund seines überirdischen Wissens kann er die Situation der Gemeinde – positiv wie negativ – beurteilen. Diese wiederum ist in ihrer Situation weder verloren und allein gelassen, noch kann sie ihre guten wie ihre ungenügenden Taten im Diesseits vor dem Wissen des erhöhten Christus verbergen.

Dieses Wissen wiederum wird im Folgenden inhaltlich gefüllt: in einer Beschreibung der Situation wie auch ihrer Beurteilung. Der Text schafft damit Distanz und Nähe gleichzeitig: Die Angesprochenen aus den Gemeinden sollen sich in der Beschreibung der jeweiligen Situation wiederfinden können – wohl aber nicht nur sie: Viele der Situationsbeschreibungen sind so wenig konkret formuliert, dass sie zumindest in ihrem Grundbestand auch offen für Leser außerhalb der angesprochenen Gemeinden sind.<sup>24</sup> Wie auch immer: In jedem Falle will diese Analyse nicht einfach als Selbstbespiegelung oder Analyse von innen her gelesen werden, sondern ist als autoritative Darstellung, eine Art Zwischenbilanz, aus der Perspektive dessen, der eine entscheidende Rolle auf dem Weg zum göttlichen Endgericht spielen

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<sup>23</sup> H. Ulland, *Vision*, 52–3, sucht am Beispiel von Offb 2,2a zu zeigen, dass der Leser erst im Verlauf der Lektüre der gesamten Offenbarung erschließen kann, was unter den Werken der Gemeinde zu Ephesus zu verstehen ist. Ich halte es hier eher für wahrscheinlich, dass der Text Leser voraussetzt, die mit „Werken“ bereits bestimmte Assoziationen verbinden – und den Begriff nicht erst mühsam im Verlauf ihrer Textlektüre zu füllen suchen.

<sup>24</sup> Besonders deutlich wird dies in den Sendschreiben an die Gemeinden von Ephesus (2,2: „Werke“, „Mühen“ und „Ausharren“) und Thyatira (2,19: „Werke“, „Liebe“, „Glauben“, „Dienst“, „Ausharren“). Die Sendschreiben an die Gemeinden von Sardes, Philadelphia und Laodicea konzentrieren sich jeweils auf die „Werke“, die dann unterschiedlich – aber doch so offen, dass sie auch Identifikationsmöglichkeiten nach außen bieten – beschrieben sind. Anders formuliert ist 2,9 an die Gemeinde von Smyrna – doch auch die Rede von „Bedrängnis und Armut“ ist offen genug zur Identifikation mit Gemeindesituationen aller Orte und Zeiten. Konkret auf *nur* die angesprochene Gemeinde anwendbar ist im Grunde nur 2,13, wo der Wohnort der Gemeinde von Pergamon thematisiert ist.

wird, formuliert.<sup>25</sup> Bedenkt man zusätzlich, dass dieser Christus in der Offenbarung immer wieder sein „Siehe, ich komme bald!“ (in den Sendschreiben 2,16; 3,11; vgl. aber 22,7.12.20) formuliert, so versteht sich diese Zwischenbilanz als ungemein dringende letzte – und zugleich letztgültige – Mahnung, die den bedrängten Gemeinden die Möglichkeit gibt, das sich von Christus her bestimmende Ziel des endzeitlichen Siegeskranzes zu erringen.

Ein etwas anderes Signal im Hinblick auf die Kommunikationssituation gibt die die jeweiligen Sendschreiben beendende Kombination aus Weckruf und Überwinderspruch. Auch die Form des Weckrufs ist im Hinblick auf die Pragmatik des Textes aufschlussreich: „Wer Ohren hat, der höre, was der Geist *den Gemeinden* sagt.“ Die in Schreibbefehl und Botenformel suggerierte Kommunikationssituation ist damit im Grunde aufgebrochen.<sup>26</sup> Was im Hauptteil des Textes steht, richtet sich nicht nur an den Engel: Angesprochen ist nicht einmal *nur* die konkrete Gemeinde, sondern jeder, „der Ohren hat“. Der aber soll hören, was „der Geist den Gemeinden sagt“. Die „himmlische Korrespondenz“ zwischen Christus und dem Engel der jeweiligen Gemeinde richtet sich also natürlich an die konkreten Gemeinden; was aber über diese ausgesagt wird, ist von Relevanz auch über die konkret angesprochene Situation hinaus.

Auch das „wer siegt...“ der zunächst an die konkreten Gemeinden gerichteten Überwindersprüche ist natürlich offen formuliert: Die jeweiligen Verheißungen stehen, wie sich zeigen wird, natürlich in ihrer konkreten Ausformulierung in mehr oder weniger engem Bezug zur geschilderten Situation der Gemeinde, sie weisen aber alle in ihrer Form auf die für alle offene Vision des vom Himmel herabkommen-

<sup>25</sup> W. Zager, „Gericht Gottes in der Johannesapokalypse,“ in *Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung und ihrer Auslegung: Festschrift für Otto Böcher zum 70. Geburtstag* (hg. F.W. Horn & M. Wolter; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2005), 310–27, bes. 310, schreibt vom „Züchtigungsgericht“ der Sendschreiben, dem das „Vernichtungsgericht“ des apokalyptischen Hauptteils folge.

<sup>26</sup> So auch F. Hahn, „Sendschreiben,“ 562–3, 577–81, oder W. Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (KeK 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), 207: „Zum Schluß erfolgt in allen Briefen eine Wendung von der einzelnen Gemeinde zur gesamten Christenheit.“ A.-M. Enroth, „The Hearing Formula in the Book of Revelation,“ *NTS* 36 (1990): 598–608, bes. 607, dagegen spricht von „a call to hear and an encouragement openly directed to the communities and to the Christians of Asia Minor [Herv. TN].“ – Weiterführend zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der Formel vgl. darüber hinaus G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 236–9.

den Jerusalem voraus, wo in 21,7 noch einmal ein Überwinderspruch derselben Form begegnen wird: *Wer siegt, der wird dies erben: Ich werde ihm Gott sein, und er wird mir Sohn sein.*

Damit aber ist noch nicht alles gesagt: Die „himmlische Korrespondenz“ wird ja durch den menschlichen „Schreiber“ Johannes festgehalten, der diese wiederum in seinen Text eingliedert, der in der Einleitung zweifach charakterisiert wird:

- als Offenbarung von Jesus Christus her, als „Wort Gottes und Zeugnis Jesu Christi“ (1,2; vgl. auch 1,10) und somit „Prophetie“ (1,3),
- als Brief des Johannes an die sieben Gemeinden in der Provinz Asia.

Die in den Sendschreiben zum Tragen kommende Kommunikationssituation ist somit äußerst komplex. Gerade diese Komplexität aber ist (mit-)entscheidend für die Verflechtung der im Text zum Tragen kommenden Vorstellungen des Zueinanders von Diesseits und Jenseits:

Auf einer ersten Ebene geben die Sendschreiben tatsächlich vor, eine Art „himmlischer Korrespondenz“ zwischen dem erhöhten Christus und den Engeln der jeweiligen Gemeinden<sup>27</sup> zu sein. Dies aber wird bereits dadurch aufgebrochen, dass als Mittler zwischen den beiden Größen der menschliche Seher Johannes dient,<sup>28</sup> der nicht nur die Worte Christi an die Engel der Gemeinden, sondern „alles, was

<sup>27</sup> Die Idee, dass der Mensch Johannes im Auftrag Christi an die „Engel der Gemeinden“ geschrieben habe, hat Ausleger immer wieder – im Grunde seit der Antike (weiterführend vgl. J. Kovacs & C. Rowland, *Revelation* [Blackwell Bible Commentaries; London: Blackwell, 2004], 53–4) – irritiert: So hat man das Wort ἄγγελος immer wieder in seiner ursprünglichen Bedeutung „Boten“ zu deuten gesucht und sich vorgestellt, Boten der angesprochenen Gemeinden hätten sich bei Johannes auf Patmos versammelt, oder hinter der Bezeichnung ein altkirchliches Amt vermutet. Gegen solche Hypothesen spricht nicht nur die Beobachtung, dass die Offenbarung mit dem Wort ἄγγελος sonst immer Engel bezeichnet: sie unterschätzen vielmehr auch die Möglichkeiten apokalyptischen Denkens, das von der Verbindung immanenter Realitäten und transzendenter Größen lebt. Zur Forschungsgeschichte vgl. zuletzt kritisch F. Tavo, *Woman, Mother and Bride: An Exegetical Investigation into the 'Ecclesial' Notions of the Apocalypse* (BiTS 3; Leuven – Paris – Dudley: Peeters, 2007), 90–7, der die Gemeindeengel vor dem Hintergrund der Zweidimensionalität der Kirche als himmlischer und zugleich irdischer Entität als „heavenly dimension of the church“ (S. 96; vgl. auch 131) interpretiert.

<sup>28</sup> Eine vergleichbare Kommunikationssituation findet sich in *1Hen* 12,3–14,7; 15,1–16,3, wo ebenfalls Henoch zum Mittler der Kommunikation zwischen Gott und den Wächterengeln wird. Zu diesem Hinweis vgl. weiterführend Lupieri, *Commentary*, 115.

er sieht,“ (1,10) in ein Buch aufzuschreiben und an die Gemeinden zu senden hat, d.h. die Sendschreiben in einen Gesamttext integriert, der sich nicht nur als prophetisch zu bestimmende Offenbarung von Christus her, sondern auch als Brief versteht.

Die Möglichkeit der Verbindung beider Kommunikationssituationen – die Engel der Gemeinden als himmlische, die Gemeinden selbst damit untrennbar verbunden als irdische Adressaten – aber ist in Offb 1,20 thematisiert: Die Gemeinden sind nicht nur als bloße irdisch-empirische Größen angesehen, sie werden vielmehr durch die sieben Leuchter der einleitenden Christusvision symbolisiert und vor Christus durch die als sieben Sterne dargestellten Engel repräsentiert.

Doch auch damit ist noch nicht alles gesagt: Das Buch der Offenbarung hat nicht nur den Anspruch, an die konkreten sieben Gemeinden gerichtete Botschaft zu sein. Die briefliche Form ist ja eingebettet in die Aussage, dass das Folgende als „Apokalypse“ zu verstehen sei, die sich an alle Knechte Gottes bzw. Jesu Christi (1,1) richtet.<sup>29</sup> Und tatsächlich wird der Text heute ja – und wurde über Jahrhunderte – als Teil eines Kanons christlicher Bibel gelesen, als Text, der sich nicht allein auf die konkrete Situation der sieben angesprochenen Gemeinden bezieht. Dass der Text auf eine solche Öffnung über die in 1,4 thematisierte Kommunikationssituation hinaus sicherlich mit angelegt ist, zeigt sich nicht nur – wie schon angedeutet – in den Weckrufen der Sendschreiben, sondern entscheidend bereits in der allgemein formulierten Seligpreisung aus 1,3 und der den Text abschließenden allumfassenden „Gnadenformel“ (Offb 22,21).

Mit Hilfe dieser komplexen Kommunikationssituation wollen die Aussagen in den jeweiligen Hauptteilen der Sendschreiben selbst nun nicht nur als Darstellung der (diesseitigen) Lebenswirklichkeit der jeweils adressierten Gemeinde angesehen werden: Sie wollen vielmehr als Interpretation der Situationen der Gemeinden aus jenseitiger Perspektive – konkret aus der Perspektive des erhöhten Christus, der sich dem auf der Insel Patmos (1,9) befindlichen Johannes offenbart – verstanden werden. Die angesprochenen Gemeinden wiederum sind nicht *nur* pur empirisch diesseitige Größen, sondern stehen, wie das Zueinander von Offb 1,20 und den jeweiligen Überwindersprüchen

<sup>29</sup> Schon E. Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT 16; Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), 42, schreibt, dass die Gemeinden auch „die Gesamtheit aller urchristlichen Gemeinden“ repräsentieren: Damit aber sprechen die Sendschreiben – zumindest bis zu einem gewissen Grade – Leserinnen und Leser aller Zeiten an.

ausdrückt, in einem komplexen Verhältnis zwischen ihrer konkret historischen Situation, ihrer bereits vorhandenen himmlischen Repräsentation und ihrem zu erhoffenden endgültigen „Sieg“<sup>30</sup> als Braut des Lammes und Bewohner des himmlischen Jerusalem. Zieht man die zusätzliche Offenheit des Textes über die konkret genannten Gemeinden hinaus in Betracht, so können diese wiederum als Repräsentanten der Kirche auch über die sieben Gemeinden hinaus gesehen werden.

## 2. KONKRETIONEN

Dieses auf mehreren Ebenen beschreibbare Verhältnis zwischen „Jenseitsperspektive“, diesseitiger Lebenssituation (sowie menschlichem Autor und menschlichen Lesern der Apokalypse) lässt Texte entstehen, die – wie bereits angesprochen – die übliche Kommunikationssituation von Briefen auf verschiedenen Ebenen überschreiten. Beeinflusst werden dadurch zunächst Details der Darstellung; die Perspektivik wirkt sich aber auch ganz entscheidend auf das Gesamtbild aus: Vieles, was den Historiker unserer Zeit interessieren würde, ist ausgeblendet, anderes nur chiffriert dargestellt. Die jeweiligen Chiffren wiederum zeigen sich klar durch die Perspektive beeinflusst. Konkret ist zum Beispiel an folgende Aspekte zu denken – eine vollständige Analyse würde den vorgegebenen Rahmen sicherlich um ein Mehrfaches sprengen:

2.1 Im Zusammenhang mit dem Sendschreiben an die *Gemeinde von Ephesus* (2,1–7) fällt auf, wie unkonkret die Beschreibung von deren Situation formuliert ist: Welche konkrete historische Situation denn damit gemeint ist, dass die Gemeinde „die Bösen“ nicht „tragen“ bzw. „ertragen“ (βαστάζω) könne, bzw. die Falschapostel „geprüft“ (πειράζω; vgl. auch 2,10; 3,10) und als Lügner befunden habe (2,2), wird aus dem Text alleine nicht klar und kann nur mit Hilfe von Spekulationen aufgrund anderer Texte konkretisiert werden.<sup>31</sup> Genauso wenig

<sup>30</sup> Zum Motiv des „Siegens“ in der Offenbarung des Johannes vgl. v.a. J.-W. Taeger, „Gesiegt! O himmlische Musik des Wortes!“ Zur Entfaltung des Siegesmotivs in den johanneischen Schriften,“ in seinen *Johanneische Perspektiven: Aufsätze zur Johannesapokalypse und zum johanneischen Kreis 1984–2003* (hg. D.C. Bienert und D.-A. Koch; FRLANT 215; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 81–104, bes. 91–9.

<sup>31</sup> Zu den Möglichkeiten, was mit dem „Prüfen“ der Falschapostel gemeint sein könnte, vgl. z.B. die Überlegungen bei P. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus*

wird deutlich, was denn an „Schwerem“ die Gemeinde um Christi willen ertragen habe (2,3). Diese Offenheit des Textes aber will nicht als Zeichen einer Unkenntnis der konkreten Situation interpretiert werden – das Wissen Christi wird ja explizit thematisiert (2,2). Sie findet ihre Wurzel vielmehr in der Kommunikationssituation: Der erhöhte Christus braucht bestimmte Dinge nicht konkreter anzusprechen, als er dies tut. Die Gemeinde weiß ja um ihre Situation. Deren Beschreibung wie Beurteilung ist vollkommen an Aspekten ihrer Christusbeziehung orientiert, wie Motive wie „um meines Namens willen Schweres ertragen“ (2,3), indirekt wohl aber auch „deine erste Liebe verlassen“ (2,4)<sup>32</sup> oder „du verabscheust...“, die *auch ich* verabscheue“ (2,6) ausdrücken. Die tadelnd zum Ausdruck gebrachte Veränderung der Christusbeziehung wird als ein „Fallen“ (πίπτω) beschrieben – interessant ist hier die folgende Beobachtung von H. Ulland: „Im Visionsteil (4,1–22,5) wird πίπτω zur Beschreibung der Demutsgeste vor Gott und als Beschreibung von (Natur-)Katastrophen gebraucht: Sterne fallen vom Himmel, oder die Stadt fällt. Die Leser haben also die Möglichkeit, ihr eigenes Fallen im Kontext der großen Vision in Analogie zum Fallen der Sterne zu verstehen und/oder im Kontrast zum rechten Fallen, nämlich in Demut vor Gott.“<sup>33</sup> Während der zweite Bezug, den Ulland herstellt, etwas weit entfernt vom ja negativen Bild aus 2,5 scheint, scheint vor allem der erste bedenkenswert: Das „Fallen“ der Einzelgemeinde rückt damit in den Horizont der im Folgenden beschriebenen Ereignisse von kosmischer Tragweite.

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from Paul to Ignatius (WUNT 166; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 300–3. Zu ihrer Lehre: J. Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ZBK; Zürich: TVZ, 1984), 49, vermutet, die falschen Apostel hätten eine „Frühform christlicher Gnosis“ vertreten, erschließt dies aber nicht aus dem Text selbst, sondern aus frühchristlichen Parallelen; U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 101–2, erinnert an die Auseinandersetzungen des Ignatius von Antiochien mit doketischen Wanderpredigern, betont aber, dass „[v]on dieser Irrlehre... in der Polemik des Johannes noch nichts zu spüren“ sei.

<sup>32</sup> Damit mag durchaus die „Liebe, die die Gemeindeglieder in der Vergangenheit untereinander geübt haben...“ gemeint sein, wie U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 103, betont. Diese aber gründet in der Christusbeziehung bzw. drückt etwas über sie aus. So auch R. Kampling, „Vision der Kirche oder Gemeinde eines Visionärs? Auf der Suche nach der Ekklesiologie der Johannesapokalypse,“ in *Theologie als Vision. Studien zur Johannes-Offenbarung* (ed. K. Backhaus; SBS 191; Stuttgart: Bibelwerk, 2001), 121–50, bes. 138.

<sup>33</sup> H. Ulland, *Vision*, 59. Mag hier auch Jes 14,12 im Hintergrund des Bildes stehen, wie H. Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 1997), 99, erkennt?

Offb 2,5b bringt die Autorität der Rede Christi auch formal zum Ausdruck: Die mit „Wenn du nicht umkehrst...“ eingeleitete Gerichtsdrohung entspricht dem Stil prophetischer Bußpredigt.<sup>34</sup> Auf die im Hinblick auf die konkrete Gemeindesituation sehr offen formulierten V. 2–5 folgt nun eine recht konkrete Aussage: Interessant hier ist allerdings, dass die Rede über die Nikolaiten (2,6) die Kenntnis dieser Gruppe voraussetzt und dem Nichteingeweihten keinerlei historische Information über sie bietet.<sup>35</sup> Dies ist auch im Hinblick auf die Pragmatik des Textes interessant: Der zunächst sehr offen formulierte Text mit seinen Angeboten auch für nicht als Glieder der Gemeinde angesprochene Leser, sich zu identifizieren, entzieht sich dem Außenstehenden hier also wieder – und will sich offensichtlich auch nicht vollständig erschließen: Er signalisiert, dass das jenseitige „Wissen“ des erhöhten Christus das des irdischen Lesers überschreitet.

Der Abschnitt mündet in den Weckruf, dem der Überwinderspruch „Wer siegt, dem werde ich zu essen geben vom Holz des Lebens, das im Paradies Gottes steht“ (Offb 2,7b)<sup>36</sup> folgt, der wiederum in scharfem Kontrast zur in V. 5 ausgesprochenen Drohung steht. Im Kontext des Sendschreibens gelesen, stellt er der Gemeinde natürlich in Aussicht, dass ihr „Ertragen“ und „Nicht Müde werden“ (2,3) im Namen Christi, wie auch ihr mögliches Umkehren als „Sieg“ verstanden werden kann: Dies wiederum würde – wie auch ein Versagen (cf. 2,5b) – Konsequenzen

<sup>34</sup> Vgl. auch U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 103.

<sup>35</sup> Vgl. auch das klare Urteil von E.F. Lupieri, *Commentary*, 116. H. Ulland, *Vision*, 61–3, geht gar noch weiter und stellt die Frage, ob es eine solche Gruppe überhaupt gegeben habe. – Rekonstruktionsversuche (auch aufgrund einer Kombination verschiedener frühkirchlicher Notizen) bieten u.a. N. Brox, „Nikolaos und die Nikolaiten,” *VigChr* 19 (1965): 23–30; H. Räisänen, „The Nicolaitans: Apoc. 2; Act 5,” *ANRW* 2/26/2 (1995): 1602–44; H. Löhr, „Die Lehre der Nikolaiten,” in *Kaum zu glauben: Von der Häresie und dem Umgang mit ihr. FS. Heiner Faulenbach* (hg. A. Lexutt & V. von Bülow; AThG 5; Rheinbach: CMZ, 1998), 34–55; H. Giesen, „Das Römische Reich im Spiegel der Johannes-Apokalypse,” in *Studien zur Johannesapokalypse* (SBAB 29; Stuttgart: Bibelwerk, 2000), 100–213, bes. 122–48; N. Walter, „Nikolaos, Proselyt aus Antiochien, und die Nikolaiten in Ephesus und Pergamon,” *ZNW* 93 (2002): 200–26, sowie P. Trebilco, *Early Christians*, 307–35.

<sup>36</sup> Die Übersetzung von ξύλον (anstatt des ebenfalls möglichen δένδρον) als „Holz“ öffnet den Text für die Interpretation des Kreuzes Christi als „Baum des Lebens“. So auch C.J. Hemer, *Letters*, 41–7, 55, sowie E.F. Lupieri, *Commentary*, 117–8, die zudem einen Überblick über frühjüdische Spekulationen zum Motiv vom „Baum des Lebens“ bieten. – Dagegen erscheinen mir die Gedanken von Hemer zur Wendung ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ (Offb 2,7b; Ibidem, 50–2, 55; ähnlich J.M. Court, *Myth and History*, 29) mit ihren möglichen Assoziationen auf das *Asylum* der Artemis der Stadt Ephesus etwas weit hergeholt.

haben, die das jetzige diesseitige Leben der Gemeinde überschreiten. Mit der Verheißung, vom „Holz“ bzw. „Baum des Lebens“ essen zu können, weist der Text natürlich auf die Paradieseserzählung im Buch Genesis zurück: Gen 2,9 erzählt, dass der Baum des Lebens wie auch der Baum der Erkenntnis von Gut und Böse in der Mitte des Paradieses stehe. Während Gott dem Menschen verbietet, vom Baum der Erkenntnis zu essen (Gen 2,16–17), ist davon im Zusammenhang mit dem Baum des Lebens zunächst nicht die Rede: Laut Gen 2,16 wäre es dem Menschen vor seiner Sünde erlaubt gewesen, von seinen Früchten zu essen. Dies wird ihm erst dann verwehrt, als er vom Baum der Erkenntnis genommen hat. Der Baum des Lebens, dessen Früchte ewiges Leben verleihen (Gen 3,22), wird daraufhin von Kerubim bewacht, die mit loderndem Flammenschwert den Menschen daran hindern, von seinen Früchten zu nehmen (Gen 3,24). Offb 2,7 verheißt damit jedem, der in seiner jetzigen irdischen Situation „siegt“, dass für ihn das seit dem Sündenfall geltende Verbot, vom Baum des Lebens zu essen (und damit ewiges Leben zu erringen), nicht mehr gültig ist. Das in Offb 2,7 verwendete biblische Bild wird in Offb 22 erneut mehrfach aufgenommen werden: In der Darstellung des himmlischen Jerusalem Offb 22,2, wo sogar von mehreren „Bäumen des Lebens“ die Rede ist, deren Blätter „zur Heilung *der Völker*“ dienen, wird diese an die Gemeinde gerichtete Verheißung konkretisiert. Gerade der scharfe Kontrast zwischen Drohung (V. 5b) und Verheißung (V. 7b) aber hängt wieder eng mit der im Text ausgedrückten „jenseitigen“ Perspektive zusammen: Aus der Sicht des erhöhten Christus, der ja „kommen wird“ (2,5b), gibt es in der Situation der letztgültigen Entscheidung vor dem Endgericht keine Zwischentöne und Ausflüchte: Endzeitliches und damit endgültiges Heil bzw. Unheil bestimmt sich vom „Jetzt“ her: Drohung und Verheißung stehen unmittelbar nebeneinander.

2.2 Am Schreiben an die *Gemeinde von Smyrna* lassen sich darüber hinaus weitere interessante Beobachtungen anstellen: Offb 2,9 bezeichnet die Gegner der Gemeinde von Smyrna nicht nur als solche, „die sich als Juden ausgeben“, sondern interpretiert sie als „Synagoge des Satans“ (vgl. auch 3,9). Der erhöhte Christus wisse auch von der βλασφημία, die von dieser Gruppe ausgehe. Erneut bereitet der Text dem Historiker Schwierigkeiten: Geht es um Verleumdungen und/oder Denunziationen der Synagoge gegen die Gemeinde, wie gerne gefolgert wird, oder schwingt hier die Idee der Lästerung Gottes durch Judaisierer bzw. die Synagoge, die den erhöhten Christus

nicht anerkennt, mit?<sup>37</sup> In einem Text, der angesprochene Gruppen ganz von ihrem Verhältnis zu Christus her beurteilt, mag die zweite Möglichkeit mindestens genauso große Plausibilität wie die erste besitzen. Die bitteren Aussagen des Sendschreibens, die sich wohl gegen die Juden Smyrnas oder judaisierende Gruppen im eigenen Lager richten, wurzeln zunächst natürlich in der Polemik zwischen gegnerischen Gruppierungen. Besonders problematisch aber werden sie, weil sie hier autoritativ als Interpretation der Situation aus der Sicht des himmlischen Christus verstanden werden:<sup>38</sup> Die Gegner werden damit nicht nur beschimpft – man geht davon aus, dass sie sich, weil sie den himmlischen Christus nicht als ihren Herrn anerkennen, tatsächlich „der Herrschaft des dämonischen Widersachers Gottes anheim“<sup>39</sup> gestellt haben.

Auch das, was von der Gemeinde von Smyrna noch erlitten werden muss, wird nicht mit Gestalten aus dem Magistrat der Stadt, kaiserlichen Erlassen oder konkreten jüdischen Gegnern in Verbin-

<sup>37</sup> Der Sinn der Stelle wird kontrovers diskutiert: Die Deutung als „Lästerung Gottes oder Jesu Christi als des Messias und Heilands der Welt“ vertritt etwa H. Lichtenberger, „Überlegungen zum Verständnis der Johannes-Apokalypse,“ in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift: Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums*. FS. O. Hofius (ed. C. Landmesser, H.-J. Eckstein & H. Lichtenberger; BZNW 86; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1997), 603–18, bes. 613, die Interpretation als Denunziation vor heidnischen Behörden findet sich z.B. bei U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 107, H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 108, oder D.E. Aune, *Revelation I* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1997), 162. Für die erste Deutung spricht vor allem, dass das Nomen βλασφημία in Offb 13,1.5.6 und 17,3 sowie das zugehörige Verbum in 13,6; 16,9.11.21 immer in theologischer Bedeutung begegnet wird, wie auch J. Lambrecht, „Jewish Slander: A Note on Revelation 2,9–10,“ in *Collected Studies on Pauline Literature and on the Book of Revelation* (ders.; AnaBib 147; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001), 329–39, bes. 330, betont, der allerdings aufgrund seiner Untersuchung des Kontextes die zweite Lösung favorisiert. – Die m.E. wenig wahrscheinliche, aber doch nicht vollkommen auszuschließende Möglichkeit, dass es sich bei den Angesprochenen nicht um Juden, sondern christliche Judaisierer, wie sie in späterer Zeit bekannt sind, gehandelt haben mag, hat H. Kraft, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT 16a; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974), 61, vorgeschlagen.

<sup>38</sup> Damit sind sie als mindestens ebenso problematisch wie Aussagen des Johannesevangeliums, die Juden seien „Söhne des Teufels“ (Joh 8,44), zu betrachten. Zumindest in der Zeit der Entstehung der Apokalypse mag man sie noch als Ausdruck eines scharfen innerjüdischen Konflikts betrachten – die Tatsache, dass sie aber über beinahe zwei Jahrtausende außerhalb dieses Konflikts gelesen wurden, eröffnete ihr anti-jüdisches Potential: Weiterführend zum Problem vgl. z.B. J. Lambrecht, „Synagogues of Satan (cf. Rev 2,9 and 3,9): Anti-Judaism in the Apocalypse,“ in *Collected Studies on Pauline Literature and on the Book of Revelation* (ders.; AnaBib 147; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001), 341–56.

<sup>39</sup> J. Roloff, *Offenbarung*, 52.

dung gebracht – der Text spricht vielmehr davon, dass „der Teufel“ einige Mitglieder der Gemeinde ins Gefängnis werfen wird (2,10).<sup>40</sup> Zu erwarten ist in diesem Zusammenhang eine zehn Tage währende θλίψις (Bedrängnis, Trübsal) – die konkrete Formulierung, mit der eine begrenzte, womöglich eine kurze Zeitspanne gemeint ist, dürfte an Dan 1,12.14 (vgl. auch Gen 24,55; Num 11,19) anspielen.<sup>41</sup> Interessant daran ist, dass sich daraus kaum konkret machen lässt, welche Art von Not nun tatsächlich auf die Gemeinde zukommen wird.<sup>42</sup> Den Text interessiert wohl eher ein anderer Bezug: Die Gemeinde hat mit ihrer Erfahrung der θλίψις am Leiden des gekreuzigten und nun erhöhten Christus Teil, was womöglich auch durch die Wendung ἄχρι θανάτου in 2,10 signalisiert ist: Schlüssel zu diesem Verständnis ist Offb 7,14, wo der Seher diejenigen sieht, die aus der „großen θλίψις“ kommen und ihre Gewänder *im Blut des Lammes* weiß gemacht haben. Dieses Schicksal wird auch denen aus Smyrna zuteil werden, die sich als „treu bis zum Tod“ erweisen: Ihnen wird Christus den Kranz des Lebens<sup>43</sup> verleihen – gerade ihnen wird der „zweite Tod“ nichts anhaben (2,11; vgl. dann 20,6.14–15; 21,8).

<sup>40</sup> Umstritten ist auch hier, welche Strafe damit konkret gemeint ist: Geht es um eine Inhaftierung, der die eigentliche Verurteilung (etwa zum Tode) folgen wird, wie etwa H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 109, vermutet? J.-W. Taeger, „Eine fulminante Streit-schrift: Bemerkungen zur Apokalypse des Johannes“, in seinem *Johanneische Perspektiven: Aufsätze zur Johannesapokalypse und zum johanneischen Kreis 1984–2003*, (hg. D.C. Bienert und D.-A. Koch; FRLANT 215; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 105–120, bes. 108, widerspricht hier: „Einer solchen Sicht widersprechen jene Stellen, an denen Johannes ausdrücklich von Todesopfern spricht...und 13,10, wo die Gefangenschaft neben der Hinrichtung als eine hinzunehmende Konsequenz unbeugsamer Glaubenstreue erwähnt wird.“

<sup>41</sup> So etwa auch U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 108; J. Roloff, *Offenbarung*, 52, oder G.K. Beale, *Revelation*, 242. H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 110, betont, dass die „10 Tage“ nur die Begrenztheit nicht die Kürze der Bedrängnis aussagen. C.H. Hemer, *Letters*, 69, dagegen sieht Bezüge zu Inschriften aus Smyrna – die Worte des Johannes hätten die christlichen Leser an die Sprache der Arena erinnert; ähnlich auch S. van Tilborg, „The Danger at Midday: Death Threats in the Apocalypse“, *Bib.* 85 (2004): 1–23, bes. 12–3 – diese Bezüge erscheinen mir aber keineswegs als zwingend.

<sup>42</sup> So auch M. Karrer, *Brief*, 189. H. Ulland, *Vision*, 76, trifft sicherlich den Kern der Sache, wenn er θλίψις als „Schwierigkeit, in der Welt Christ zu bleiben“ umschreibt: Allerdings sollte dabei nicht vergessen werden, dass der Begriff „Welt“ die das Christentum ablehnende Welt des selbst ideologisch-religiöse Ansprüche stellenden römischen Kaiserreichs meint.

<sup>43</sup> Sehr weit hergeholt erscheint mir der Bezug, den J.M. Court, *Myth*, 30, zwischen der Verheißung der Lebenskrone und der „physical appearance“ der Stadt auf dem Berg Pagos herstellt.

2.3 Wie sehr Aussagen der Sendschreiben über die Situation – gerade wegen ihrer Perspektivik – problematisch werden, wenn gefragt wird, welchen konkreten historischen Hintergrund sie nun ansprechen, zeigt sich vor allem im Sendschreiben an die *Gemeinde von Pergamon*: Immerhin bezeichnet Offb 2,13 den Wohnort der Gemeinde als „da, wo der Thron des Satans steht“ bzw. „wo der Satan wohnt“. Was damit historisch gemeint ist, wird vom Text nicht gesagt, sondern vorausgesetzt. Welche Schwierigkeiten diese Chiffre dem nach historischen Hintergründen fragenden Leser bieten, zeigt die Forschungsgeschichte zum Text: In seinem ausführlichen Überblick stellt T. Witulski insgesamt acht Deutungsversuche vor und entscheidet sich schließlich dafür, „daß der Apokalyptiker sich hier auf das dem Ζεὺς Φίλιος / *Iuppiter Amicalis* und dem *princeps* Trajan geweihte Heiligtum bezogen hat.“<sup>44</sup> Die Frage, ob man Witulski hier folgen möchte oder nicht, mag offen bleiben.<sup>45</sup> Der Grund, warum eine Entscheidung kaum möglich ist, liegt in der Chiffrierung der Aussage,<sup>46</sup> die sich wiederum aus der konsequent „jenseitigen“ Perspektive des Textes erklärt: Der erhöhte Christus beurteilt nicht nur die Situation der Gemeinde, sondern auch die der Stadt, in der diese lebt. Wo die Gemeinde wohnt, steht der „Thron Satans“ – auch wenn wir nicht mehr konkret bestimmen können, auf welche Einrichtung diese Aussage sich beziehen mag, wird ihre pragmatische Funktion dennoch klar: Die Gemeinde, für die es angesichts des baldigen Kommens (2,16) des Christi mit dem „zweischneidigen scharfen Schwert“ des Richters (2,12) auf ihre Beziehung zu Christus entscheidend ankommt (vgl. auch 2,16b), muss sich ganz klar von allem distanzieren, was mit dem Satan assoziiert

<sup>44</sup> Th. Witulski, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und Kaiser Hadrian: Studien zur Datierung der neutestamentlichen Apokalypse* (FRLANT 221; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 278. Die Darstellung der Forschungsgeschichte findet sich auf den S. 250–78. – Die Forschung scheint in dieser Frage allerdings in den vergangenen etwa 100 Jahren keine echten Fortschritte gemacht zu haben, schreibt doch schon im Jahr 1906 W. Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 211: „Der Thron des Satan hat die verschiedensten Erklärungen gefunden.“

<sup>45</sup> Zur Problematik vgl. auch J. Frey, „The Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult for the Book of Revelation: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Reflections on the Relation between the Seven Letters and the Visionary Part of the Book,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (ed. J. Fotopoulos; NovT.S 122; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2006), 231–55, bes. 242–6.

<sup>46</sup> Eine Parallele aus Qumran bietet 4Q 525 fr. 4 2,2. Vgl. auch E.F. Lupieri, *Commentary*, 120.

werden kann. An dieser Haltung entscheidet sich die in V. 17 verheißene Zukunft.<sup>47</sup>

Aus dieser Perspektive ist auch verstehbar, dass selbst die konkreteren Angaben wie der Hinweis auf den Tod des Antipas nicht an der Darlegung des Faktenmaterials, sondern an der Beurteilung des Antipas als „treuer Zeuge“ Christi (und damit Vorbild der Gemeinde) interessiert sind. Zwar ist dem Text klar zu entnehmen, dass Antipas „bei euch getötet wurde“: wer dafür verantwortlich war – außer dem Satan! –, ob es zu einer Hinrichtung aufgrund eines formalen Gerichtsverfahrens oder einem Lynchmord gekommen ist, bleibt im Hintergrund.<sup>48</sup> Nur indirekt lässt sich aus dem Fokus auf den Einzelfall entnehmen, dass es sich tatsächlich um einen solchen – wohl schon eine Zeitlang zurückliegenden – einzelnen Fall und keine allgemeine Verfolgung gehandelt haben mag.

Selbst die Lehre der Gegner der Gemeinde wird nicht direkt beschrieben, sondern indirekt: Diese hielten sich an die Lehre Bileams, „der Balak lehrte, die Söhne Israels dazu zu verführen, Götzenopfer zu essen und zu huren.“ Der erhöhte Christus beurteilt die Situation der Gemeinde somit aufgrund eines Beispiels, das aus der Geschichte Gottes mit Israel entnommen ist: Zwar wird die διδασχὴ Βαλαάμ im Folgesatz (2,15) mit der Lehre der Nikolaiten – über die sich der Text auch hier nicht näher auslässt – parallelisiert.<sup>49</sup> Die geäußerten Vorwürfe aber sollten zunächst als Chiffren verstanden und nicht zu wörtlich genommen werden. Hintergrund ist hier sicherlich über die

<sup>47</sup> Vor allem die zweite Aussage in V. 17 ist geheimnisvoll: Was mit dem „weißen Stein“ gemeint ist, auf dem ein neuer Name steht, ist in der Forschung mehr als umstritten. Zur Forschungsgeschichte vgl. T. Witulski, „Die ψῆφος λευκή Apk 2,17 – Versuch eine neueren Deutung,“ *SNTU A* 32 (2007): 5–20, der eine Analogie zur epigraphisch belegten Wendung ψῆφος νικῆς herstellt und deswegen den Stein als Siegespreis versteht (S. 18). – Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der Rede vom „himmlischen Manna“ V. 17a vgl. T. Nicklas, „The Food of Angels (Wisdom 16:20),“ in *The Book of Wisdom* (ed. G. Xeravits & J. Zsengeller; JSJ.Sup 142; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2010) [im Druck].

<sup>48</sup> So etwa auch U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 111, H. Ulland, *Vision*, 80–82, oder T. Witulski, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 239. H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 113, und H.-J. Klauck, „Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon und der Kaiserkult in der Johannesoffenbarung,“ *Bib.* 73 (1992): 153–82, bes. 162–3, halten die Hinrichtung aufgrund eines ordentlichen Verfahrens im Zusammenhang mit der Weigerung, dem Kaiser zu opfern, für wahrscheinlich, Klauck zieht seine Schlüsse über mögliche Denunziation aus der Korrespondenz Plinius d.J. mit Trajan. Antike, wohl mehr auf Legenden und Spekulationen beruhende Zeugnisse über Antipas bietet W. Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 212.

<sup>49</sup> Ob man darüber hinaus beides identifizieren soll, ist unklar. Zum Problem vgl. u.a. H. Ulland, *Vision*, 95–7.

eigentliche Bileamerzählung Num 22–24 hinaus Num 25,1–5: Über den unzüchtigen Kontakt mit Moabiterinnen fällt Israel auch zu deren Göttern, d.h. dem Baal-Pegor, ab und isst vom Fleisch, das midianitischen und bzw. moabitischen Gottheiten als Opfer dargebracht wurde (Num 25,2b LXX). Num 31,16 wiederum führt diese Katastrophe auf den Rat Bileams zurück, dessen Gestalt vor allem deswegen im Frühjudentum weithin als Prototyp des Verführers zum Götzendienst galt.<sup>50</sup> Einem derartigen Text die tatsächliche Lehre der Gegner zu entnehmen, ist m.E. kaum sicher möglich. Immerhin allerdings setzt der Text mit dem Vorwurf der πορνεία die Gegner natürlich in Bezug zur „Hure Babylon“ (17,1.5.15–16; 19,2), d.h. Rom. Ausgedrückt werden soll also offensichtlich nur, dass die Gegner, wie schon Bileam, Verführer sind, die die Gemeinde (womöglich durch ihre wie auch immer zu bestimmende Nähe zu Rom und seiner Kaiserideologie) von der wahren Verehrung Gottes und Christi abbringen.<sup>51</sup> Dass die Rede von der πορνεία vor allem im Rahmen der Logik des Gesamttextes gesehen werden möchte, zeigt aber auch das später begegnende Bild von der Braut und der Hochzeit des Lammes (21,2.9): Nur wer nicht befleckt ist, ist würdig, Braut des Lammes zu sein.

Typisch auch für diesen Text ist, dass dieser nahezu vollkommene Mangel an historisch sicher verwertbaren Informationen über die Situation der Gemeinde hier nicht Zeichen von Unwissenheit, sondern Folge der konsequent durchgehaltenen „jenseitigen“ Perspektive des Sprechers ist. Diesem geht es im Angesicht des erwarteten nahen Endgerichts keinesfalls um eine inhaltliche Auseinandersetzung mit den Gegnern, ein gegenseitiges Ringen um Kompromisse oder gegenseitige Annäherung: Er beurteilt schon jetzt, wer auf der rechten Seite steht und wer nicht, und führt das (historisch sicherlich komplexe Problem) über die Verwendung der Bileam-Chiffre auf die einfache Unterscheidung „Hinwendung zu Götzen“ (und damit verbunden „Unzucht“)

<sup>50</sup> Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Bileamerzählung vgl. weiterführend M. Rösel, „Wie einer vom Propheten zum Verführer wurde. Tradition und Rezeption der Bileamgestalt,“ *Bib.* 80 (1998): 506–24, sowie G.H. Van Kooten & J. Van Ruiten (ed.), *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam* (TBN 11; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> Ähnlich H. Ulland, *Vision*, 92, H.-J. Klauck, „Sendschreiben,“ 167 und P.B. Duff, „Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing: Literary opposition and Social Tension in the Revelation of John,“ in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students* (ed. D.L. Barr; SBL. Resources for Biblical Study 44; Atlanta: Scholars, 2003), 65–79, bes. 66–7. Insgesamt eher vorsichtig äußern sich auch C.H. Hemer, *Letters*, 87–94, und T. Witulski, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 243–5 (vgl. auch dessen Darstellung von Positionen der Forschung auf S. 245–9).

oder „Anbetung Christi“ zurück. Dazwischen gibt es – so kurz vor dem Ende – keine Alternative.

2.4 Besonders interessante Beobachtungen ergeben sich im Sendschreiben an die *Gemeinde von Thyatira*:<sup>52</sup> Nach der einleitenden Situationsbestimmung (V. 19) wird hier recht konkret auf die Gestalt der Isebel verwiesen: Diese wird als Falschprophetin bezeichnet, die die Knechte Christi „lehre und verführe, zu huren und Götzenopfer zu essen“ (2,20). Sie bewusst als „Frau“ bezeichnend, setzt der Text „Isebel“ in ein Bezugssystem zu anderen Frauengestalten der Apokalypse: Parallel ist natürlich die „Hure Babylon“ (vgl. v.a. 17,3), demgegenüber steht die in Offb 12 beschriebene Himmelsfrau, der wir etwas später als „Frau“ in der Wüste begegnen, bzw. die Braut, die „Frau“ des Lammes (21,9).<sup>53</sup> Dabei muss keineswegs davon ausgegangen werden, dass die gemeinte Prophetin tatsächlich den Namen Isebel trug. Viel wahrscheinlicher ist, dass einer konkreten, der Gemeinde bekannten Person ein biblischer Name gegeben wird, der sich bereits mit einer Wertung verbindet:<sup>54</sup> So bringt 1Kön 16,31–33 Isebel, die heidnische Tochter des Königs von Sidon und Gattin König Ahabs, zumindest indirekt mit Ahabs Unterstützung des Baalskults in Verbindung; laut 1Kön 18,4.13 ist sie an der Ermordung der Propheten Jahwes Schuld, sie verführt Ahab zu Taten, die schlimmer sind als die all seiner Vorgänger (1Kön 21,25). 2Kön 9,22 wirft ihr Unzucht und Zauberei vor – zumindest der erste Vorwurf wird drei Mal in Offb

<sup>52</sup> G. Guttenberger, „Johannes von Thyateira: Zur Perspektive des Sehers,“ in *Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung und ihrer Auslegung: Festschrift für Otto Böcher zum 70. Geburtstag* (Hg. F.W. Horn & M. Wolter; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2005), 160–88, arbeitet mit Recht die Besonderheiten dieses Sendschreibens heraus, dessen Aussagen in vielerlei Hinsicht konkreter sind als diejenigen der anderen Texte. Die Frage, ob man so weit wie die Autorin gehen sollte, anzunehmen, „dass Johannes die Sendschreiben aus der Perspektive Thyateiras verfasst – sei es, dass Thyateira seine ‚Heimatgemeinde‘ war, oder sei es, dass er sich dieser Gemeinde aus anderen, unbekannten Gründen besonders verbunden fühlte“ (S. 185), möchte ich allerdings doch eher mit Zurückhaltung beurteilen.

<sup>53</sup> Hierzu v.a. H. Ulland, *Vision*, 102.

<sup>54</sup> Zu den Hintergründen, die Johannes veranlassten, die Prophetin Isebel zu nennen, vgl. auch G. Guttenberger, „Johannes von Thyateira,“ 174–5, die betont, dass hier – anders als im Falle Bileams – hier keine antike jüdische Auslegungstradition belegt sei. – C.H. Hemer, *Letters*, 117–9, und J.M. Court, *Myth*, 34, diskutieren zudem die alte, auf Schürer zurückgehende These, bei Isebel habe es sich um die inschriftlich belegte Sibylle Sambathe gehandelt; F. Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 217, schließlich setzt sich kritisch mit der Vorstellung auseinander, dass Isebel nur als Symbol für eine Parteilung in Thyatira anzusehen sei.

2,20–22 auch gegenüber der in Thyatira wirkenden Prophetin wiederholt.<sup>55</sup> Unklar ist, inwiefern auch an den zweiten gedacht ist – insgesamt scheint auch hier ausgedrückt zu sein, dass Isebel die Gemeinde von der rechten Gottes- bzw. Christusverehrung abbringt. Gleichzeitig aber gewinnt die Prophezeiung, Isebel „aufs Bett“<sup>56</sup> zu werfen (2,22) und ihre Kinder durch Krankheit zu töten (2,23),<sup>57</sup> vor dem Hintergrund des Schicksals der alttestamentlichen Isebel bereits an Gewicht. 1Kön 21,23 heißt es: „Über Isebel verkündet der Herr: Die Hunde werden Isebel an der Mauer von Jesreel auffressen“ (vgl. auch 2Kön 9,10) – eine Prophezeiung, die sich wenig später erfüllt (2Kön 9,37). Wie schon im Sendschreiben nach Pergamon verwendet der Text also auch hier „Metaphern, die durch die Erfahrung der im Alten Testament bezeugten Gottesgeschichte“<sup>58</sup> bestimmt sind, zur Charakterisierung der Situation. Der Leser kann folgern: Wenn nun schon die alttestamentliche Isebel so für ihre Schandtaten bestraft wurde, so wird dies auch mit der Prophetin aus Thyatira geschehen. Vor allem aber soll deutlich gemacht werden, dass das prophezeite böse Schicksal der Prophetin und ihrer Anhänger nicht auf Zufall beruht: Vielmehr sollen daraus „alle Gemeinden erkennen“, dass Christus wie schon Gott im Alten Testament „Herz und Nieren prüft“ (vgl. Ps 7,10; 26,2; Jer 11,20; 17,10; 20,12) und nach den Werken<sup>59</sup> vergilt: Das Schicksal der Prophetin und ihrer Anhänger wird so zum Zeichen der schon jetzt wirksamen richterlichen Vollmacht des *erhöhten* Christus in *dieser* Welt.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Natürlich ist darüber hinaus auch noch an die wiederum an Bileam erinnernde Beschreibung ihres Wirkens in Offb 2,20 (vgl. Num 25,1–2; 31,16) zu erinnern.

<sup>56</sup> Die Wendung εἰς κλῖνην wurde im Kontext aber auch als „in den Sarg“ interpretiert, was natürlich guten Sinn macht, sich aber sprachlich nur schwer belegen lässt. Vgl. hierzu E. Corsini, *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Wilmington, Del., 1983). – Immer wieder wurde zudem auf die Doppeldeutigkeit von „Bett“ als „Ort der Hurerei und als Krankenbett“ (H. Ulland, *Vision*, 109) verwiesen.

<sup>57</sup> Die Wendung ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ mag dabei, wie immer wieder gesehen wurde, auf Ex 33,27 LXX anspielen. Vgl. z.B. H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 120.

<sup>58</sup> T. Holtz, „Sprache als Metapher: Erwägungen zur Sprache der Johannesapokalypse“, in *Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung und ihrer Auslegung: Festschrift für Otto Böcher zum 70. Geburtstag* (Hg. F.W. Horn & M. Wolter; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2005), 10–19, bes. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Wörtlich: „gemäß eurer Werke“. Die Frage, wer damit konkret angesprochen sei, ist umstritten. Weiterführend vgl. z.B. G. Guttenberger, „Johannes von Thyteira“, 179.

<sup>60</sup> U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 119–20, schreibt: „Das zeitliche Gericht an »Isebel« hat eschatologische Dimension für die Gemeinden insgesamt.“

Genauso wenig wie der tatsächliche Name der Prophetin aus Thyatira Isebel gewesen sein mag, ist davon auszugehen, dass ihre Anhänger in der Tat „Unzucht“ im Sinne sexueller Ausschweifung trieben; ja selbst der Vorwurf, „Fleisch zu essen, das den Götzen geweiht ist“ (2,20) muss nicht im konkreten Sinne zutreffen: Es dürfte sich vielmehr um – sehr offene – „gleichsinnige Metaphern für den Abfall vom wahren Glauben“<sup>61</sup> handeln, wie auch 2,21 nahe legt, wo das Fehlverhalten „Isebels“ nur noch als πορνεία bezeichnet ist.<sup>62</sup>

Doch damit ist eine Dimension der Auseinandersetzung noch nicht angesprochen: Offensichtlich erhebt Isebel ja wie Johannes selbst den Anspruch, „Prophetin“ zu sein: Hat die Heftigkeit der Auseinandersetzung damit zu tun, dass wir es hier (und vielleicht auch in der Auseinandersetzung mit den Nikolaiten) mit einem Konflikt rivalisierender frühchristlicher Propheten zu tun haben?<sup>63</sup> Dann aber lässt sich vielleicht auch die gewählte Perspektive verstehen: *Ein Urteil von höherer Autorität als das des erhöhten Christus, der den einen Propheten auswählt, um die Sendschreiben niederzuschreiben, in denen seine Gegnerin verurteilt wird, ist kaum denkbar.*

Geheimnisvoll ist auch die Aussage Offb 2,24: Was bedeutet es, „die Tiefen des Satans“ zu „erkennen“? Die Verwendung des Verbums γινώσκω mag womöglich auf eine Vorform gnostischer Lehren hinweisen – darüber hinaus lassen sich erneut nur Spekulationen anstellen:<sup>64</sup> Ist die Rede von den „Tiefen des Satans“ Parodie des Anspruchs, eine „intuitive Schau mit dem Ziel der Vereinigung mit dem göttlichen Urgrund“<sup>65</sup> zu ermöglichen, oder wird von der gegnerischen Gruppe, wie die Worte ὡς λέγουσιν (2,24) nahe legen, tatsächlich in Anspruch genommen „die Tiefen des Satans zu erkennen“?<sup>66</sup> Beides ist sicher-

<sup>61</sup> H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 103. Vgl. aber z.B. die Überlegungen bei U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 118, oder C.H. Hemer, *Letters*, 117–23.

<sup>62</sup> Auch 2,22 spricht plötzlich sehr allgemein von „ihren Werken“, wie auch R. Zimmermann, *Geschlechtermetaphorik*, 440 beobachtet.

<sup>63</sup> Vgl. hierzu auch D.E. Aune, „The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John,” in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity. Collected Essays* (ders.; WUNT 199; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 175–89, bes. 188.

<sup>64</sup> Ein „Schlagwort gnostischer Weisheit“ hat hier schon F. Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 220, sehen wollen. Vgl. allerdings auch T. Holtz, „Sprache,” 18: „Man wird sich damit abfinden müssen einzugestehen, dass wir nicht wissen, welchen Inhalt das Lehren der Nikolaiten und der Prophetin Isebel gehabt hat – mit Ausnahme des Zitats Apk 2,24.“

<sup>65</sup> J. Roloff, *Offenbarung*, 58. Vgl. auch U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 119; G. Guttenberger, „Johannes von Thyateira,” 175 [Lit.liste].

<sup>66</sup> Beide Möglichkeiten diskutiert etwa auch H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 121.

lich denkbar – entscheidend aber ist, dass der Text in jedem Falle das autoritative Urteil aus der Perspektive des erhöhten Christus fällt: Was geschaut wird, ist nicht der Urgrund der Gottheit, sondern der Satan.

Noch einmal eine neue Dimension fügt Offb 2,26–28 hinzu: Der jenseitige erhöhte Christus spricht hier denjenigen, die überwinden und bis zum Ende seine Werke bewahren (2,26) endzeitlichen Anteil an seiner eigenen Herrschaft zu.<sup>67</sup> Wie sehr dies tatsächlich als Anteil an der Herrschaft Christi, des erhöhten Gottessohnes, zu verstehen ist, wird natürlich vor allem in V. 27, dem Zitat aus Ps 2,8–9, deutlich gemacht: Das aus Ps 2 übernommene Motiv, die Völker mit eisernem Stab zu weiden, wird in der Offenbarung noch zwei Mal wiederkehren (12,5 und 19,15) – dann aber jedes Mal als Ausdruck der endzeitlichen Herrschaft des Gottessohnes selbst.<sup>68</sup> Unklar ist die Herkunft des Motivs vom „Geben des Morgensterns“, das auch in Offb 22,16 als Selbstbezeichnung Christi wieder auftaucht, sich aber auch vor dem gerne genannten Hintergrund Num 24,17 nicht ganz auflösen lässt.<sup>69</sup> In jedem Fall wird hier den Glaubenden eine endzeitliche Gabe in Aussicht gestellt, die sie in intensivste Christusbeziehung bringt – womöglich ist auch hier ein Zeichen endzeitlicher Herrschaft angesprochen.<sup>70</sup>

Konkrete Ereignisse um historische Persönlichkeiten werden so also auch hier als Zeichen der Einbettung diesseitigen Geschehens in ein Handeln, das im Jenseits seinen Ausgang nimmt, interpretiert: Dem

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<sup>67</sup> Zum Thema der endzeitlichen Mitherrschaft der Glaubenden in der Offenbarung des Johannes vgl. ausführlich H. Roose, *Eschatologische Mitherrschaft: Entwicklungslinien einer urchristlichen Erwartung* (NTOA 54; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004), 169–209; zur Rolle der „Völker“ in der Apokalypse vgl. R. Herms, *An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World: The Narrative Function of Universal Language in the Book of Revelation* (BZNW 143; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 169–256.

<sup>68</sup> Interessant ist, dass der „Sohn-Gottes-Titel“ auch hier im Kontext begegnet – in der Botenformel des Sendschreibens Offb 2,18.

<sup>69</sup> Zur Diskussion vgl. weiterführend u.a. T. Hieke & T. Nicklas, »Die Worte der Prophetie dieses Buches«: Offenbarung 22,6–21 als Schlussstein der christlichen Bibel Alten und Neuen Testaments gelesen (BThSt 62; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003), 59–60.

<sup>70</sup> So z.B. U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 121. H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 123–4, verweist auf die Venus als Herrschaftssymbol und schreibt: „Christus als der Morgenstern stünde so im direkten Gegensatz zum Kaiser. Dieser bewußt gewählte Kontrast macht deutlich, daß die scheinbare Schwäche der Christen in der Gegenwart nur vorübergehend, ja schon überwunden ist: Christus herrscht schon jetzt über die Welt; die treuen Christen können in seiner Kraft alle Barrieren überwinden und werden einmal mit ihm die Weltherrschaft ausüben.“

Text geht es dabei weniger um eine historisch auswertbare Spiegelung der Ereignisse als um eine Deutung im Licht des Christusglaubens kurz vor dem Ende, in dem es nur zwei Seiten geben wird.

2.5 Deutlich weniger konkret ist das Sendschreiben an die *Gemeinde von Sardes*. Für den Historiker relevante Angaben sind diesem Text kaum zu entnehmen: Dieser lebt vielmehr von dem bereits in der οἶδα-Formel angesprochenen Gegenüber von „Leben“ und „Tod“ bzw. – daran angeschlossen – „Schlafen“ und „Wachen“: Die nach außen lebendig wirkende Gemeinde ist aus der Sicht dessen, „der die sieben Geister und die sieben Sterne hat“, <sup>71</sup> „tot“. Geht sie selbst davon aus, bereits mehr oder weniger sicher aufgrund der Taufe im Besitz des „Lebens“ zu sein? Dies ist möglich, aber nicht zwingend zu erweisen. Diese sich aus Sicht des Christi geradezu im „Todes-schlaf“ befindlichen Gemeinde wird zwei Mal aufgerufen, „wach“ zu werden – beim zweiten Mal mit Hilfe des Bildes vom Kommen des Herrn „wie ein Dieb“, das natürlich klar auf das auf Q zurückgehende Gleichnis Lk 12,39–40 par. Mt 24,43–44 (vgl. auch 1Thess 5,2; 2Petr 3,10) anspielt. <sup>72</sup> Eine Begründung dieser durchgehenden Negativbeurteilung der Gemeinde bietet Offb 3,2b: „Ich habe deine Werke nicht erfüllt gefunden vor meinem Gott“. Konkretes lässt sich auch hier – außer dem Interesse an Werken, in denen offensichtlich der Glaube zur Erfüllung kommt – nicht entnehmen: Der Text ist erneut nicht an einer Beschreibung der konkreten Lebensumstände oder Taten der Gemeinden interessiert. Ihm kommt es auf die Zwischenbilanz an, die der Weltenrichter nun, *kurz vor dem Ende*, zieht: Diese Perspektive, in der es endzeitlich um Tod und Leben geht, lässt keine Zwischentöne, kein „Vielleicht“ oder „Ungefähr“, sondern nur ein klares „Ja“ oder das „Nein“ bzw. – im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes – „Weiß“ oder „Schwarz“ Noch ist die Möglichkeit der Umkehr gegeben (3,3b), noch ist es möglich, sich an den „wenigen Namen“ zu orientieren, von denen es heißt, sie hätten „ihre Gewänder nicht befleckt“ (3,4). Auch

<sup>71</sup> H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 126, schreibt: „Christus hält...die sieben Sterne..., d.h. die Engel als die himmlischen Repräsentanten der Gemeinden (1,16.20) und damit die Gemeinden selbst, fest in der Hand. Er hat also Macht über sie und sorgt sich um sie. In einem Schreiben, in dem der Tadel im Vordergrund steht, ist diese Aussage sehr gewichtig.“

<sup>72</sup> Wenig überzeugend erscheint mir dagegen die These von J.M. Court, *Myth*, 36, hiermit werde an die Eroberung der Stadt Sardis durch Cyrus im Jahr 546 v.Chr. sowie durch Antiochus III im Jahr 214 v.Chr. angespielt.

hier sollte m.E. nicht zu schnell auf konkrete, etwa sexuelle Verfehlungen geschlossen werden: Dies legt der Blick in Offb 14,4 nahe, wo es heißt, dass die Erlösten sich „nicht mit Frauen befleckt haben“, damit aber kaum etwas über ihre sexuelle Enthaltsamkeit, sondern eher über ihre Distanz zur als „Hure Babylon“ qualifizierten Staatsideologie ausgesagt sein dürfte.<sup>73</sup>

Der Überwinderspruch geht schließlich noch einmal auf die den Text bestimmende Grundopposition „Tod“ und „Leben“ ein: Wer jetzt nicht „die Seite wechselt“, der wird „mit weißen Kleidern bekleidet“ werden und auf der Seite des Lebens zu stehen kommen: „Seinen Namen werde ich nicht auslöschen auf dem Buch des Lebens“ (3,5). Gerade mit diesem letzten Motiv, das seine Wurzeln in verschiedenen frühjüdischen Texten findet (vgl. Dan 12,1; 1Hen 47,3; 104,1; 108,3) entsteht ein Bezug zum folgenden Visionsteil der Apokalypse. Besonders aus der Beschreibung des Endgerichts Offb 20,11–15 wird auch die Logik des Sendschreibens an die Gemeinde von Sardes deutlich: Die Hauptkritik an der Gemeinde besteht ja darin, dass ihre Werke in den Augen Gottes nicht vollwertig sind. Wenn nun am Ende davon die Rede ist, dass die Toten „nach ihren Werken“ gerichtet werden, die in den Büchern – v.a. dem „Buch des Lebens“ – aufgeschrieben sind, dann ist auch der Name desjenigen, der letztlich siegt, für immer im „Buch des Lebens“ festgehalten. Erneut also zeigt sich, wie die Zeichnung der Situation der Gemeinde von der Perspektive des nahenden Weltengerichts bestimmt ist.

2.6 Etwas konkreter als die Sendschreiben nach Sardes ist das sehr lobende Schreiben an die *Gemeinde von Philadelphia* (3,7–13), obwohl sich auch hier aus dem Text allein nur wenige historisch auswertbare Informationen entnehmen lassen.<sup>74</sup> Diese ist offensichtlich zahlenmäßig schwach, wie sich zumindest aus der Rede von ihrer „kleinen“ bzw. „geringen Kraft“ (3,8) schließen lässt.<sup>75</sup> Wie im Zusammenhang

<sup>73</sup> Dieser Gedanke findet sich auch bei H. Ulland, *Vision*, 125, während etwa F. Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 223, schreibt: „Es ist hier speziell an die Befleckung des Leibes, an sittliche Vergehen im engeren Sinn gedacht.“

<sup>74</sup> Überlegungen wie die von H. Ulland, *Vision*, 129, zum Verhältnis der Gemeinde gegenüber dem dortigen Dionysoskult verdanken sich natürlich anderen Quellen über die Stadt.

<sup>75</sup> H. Ulland, *Vision*, 132, geht hier m.E. etwas zu weit, wenn er alleine die Tatsache, dass der Gemeinde (als einziger von allen) explizit (wenn auch geringer) δύναμις zugesprochen wird, schon als „Auszeichnung für die Gemeinde“ interpretiert.

mit der Gemeinde von Smyrna (2,9) wird hier von „Leuten aus der Synagoge des Satans“ (3,9) gesprochen, das konkrete Verhältnis dieser als Lügner bezeichneten Gruppe zur Gemeinde aber nicht näher thematisiert. Dass der Gemeinde prophezeit wird, dass sie gerade gegenüber dieser Gruppe eschatologische Herrschaft ausüben werde, mag auf eine Situation der Bedrängnis schließen lassen, die sich endzeitlich umkehren soll – weiter gehende Spekulationen über konkrete Auseinandersetzungen, auf die angespielt sei, aber scheinen mir nicht sinnvoll. Dramatisch allerdings ist, dass diese Prophezeiung in Anklang an Jes 45,14; 49,23 und 60,14 formuliert wird: Alttestamentliche Aussagen von der Unterwerfung der Heiden werden hier in geradezu radikaler Umkehrung ihrer ursprünglichen Bedeutung auf die Synagoge angewandt;<sup>76</sup> dabei geht der Text so weit, vorherzusagen, die Gegner müssten sich vor den Mitgliedern der Gemeinde „niederwerfen“ (προσκυνέω), was ja nach Offb 19,10 und 22,8 nicht einmal vor Engeln zugestanden ist – das antijüdische Potential dieser Stelle ist enorm!

Gerade dieser Gemeinde, deren Gegner als „Lügner“ bezeichnet wurden, wird Christus als der „Wahre“ vorgestellt und gleichzeitig als derjenige, „der den Schlüssel Davids hat“ (3,7; vgl. Jes 22,22), ihr wird zugesprochen, dass ihr eine Tür geöffnet sei, „die niemand mehr schließen kann“ (Offb 3,8). Der Text greift damit auf die in Jes 22 zu findende Gerichtsrede gegen Jerusalem zurück. Ab Jes 22,20 ist dort von einer Gestalt namens Eljakim die Rede, welcher der Schlüssel Davids verliehen werden wird (22,22). Die Rolle Eljakims für den Palast Davids übernimmt nun der erhöhte Christus für das himmlische Jerusalem (vgl. auch Offb 3,12; 21,25), aber auch für Tod und Hades (Offb 1,18): „Wenn er öffnet, kann niemand schließen; wenn er schließt, kann niemand öffnen“ (Jes 22,22b). Soll damit indirekt auch gesagt werden, dass den Gegnern als Lügner (und damit Anhängern des Lügners schlechthin, des Satans) die Tür verschlossen ist? Der Text ist zumindest offen für eine derartige Interpretation. Dazu würde auch V. 9b passen: Die Glieder der „Synagoge des Satans“ werden erkennen müssen, dass die Liebe Christi nun der Gemeinde gilt.

<sup>76</sup> Vgl. hierzu auch U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 131: „In Offb 3,9 geht es um die endzeitliche Unterwerfung der Juden, keinesfalls aber um ihre kommende Bekehrung zum christlichen Glauben... Nicht die Juden sind die von Gott Geliebten (Jes 43,4), vielmehr müssen sie erkennen, daß Christus diese christliche Gemeinde zu Pergamon geliebt hat.“

Die besondere, mehrfach wiederholte Eigenschaft der Gemeinde besteht in ihrem „Bewahren“ (τηρέω; 3,8: das Wort Christi; 3,10: sein Gebot zur Standhaftigkeit): Deswegen wird auch sie von Christus in der Stunde der Versuchung „bewahrt“ werden,<sup>77</sup> in 3,11 allerdings wird sie zum Festhalten (κρατέω) aufgefordert, damit sie den ihr zugesprochenen Siegeskranz nicht doch noch an einen anderen verlieren möge. Dieses Zueinander von „Standhaftigkeit“ (3,10) und „geringer Kraft“ (3,8) passt natürlich auch zur konkreten Formulierung des Überwinderspruchs (3,11): Gerade einer so charakterisierten Gemeinde kann zugesprochen werden, dass ihre Glieder „zu Säulen im Tempel Gottes“<sup>78</sup> gemacht werden.

2.7 Auch das Sendschreiben an die *Gemeinde von Laodizea* lebt von einem durch die Perspektive des kommenden Gerichts bestimmten Dualismus und bietet dabei kaum einen Anhaltspunkt, um die konkrete Gemeindesituation zu eruieren. Dieser Dualismus ist aber nicht, wie man meinen könnte, vom Gegenüber „kalt“ und „heiß“ bestimmt: In 3,15 wird ja offensichtlich beides als positiv gesehen. Es scheint vielmehr um die Frage letzter Entschiedenheit (heiß/kalt) einerseits und Unentschlossenheit bzw. Selbstzufriedenheit und fehlender Konsequenz – Lausein<sup>79</sup> – zu gehen. Wer nur „lau“ ist und damit der letzten Entschiedenheit aus dem Weg geht, der wird „ausgespien“ (3,16). Was in V. 15b noch nach einem unerfüllbaren Wunsch und in V. 16 noch wie eine unwiderrufliche Ansage des Gerichts klingt, wird im Folgenden allerdings relativiert: Der Gemeinde, die, obwohl „reich und wohlhabend“<sup>80</sup> (vgl. dagegen 2,9 zu Smyrna), als in den Augen Christi

<sup>77</sup> Was mit der „Stunde der Versuchung“ konkret gemeint ist, bleibt auch hier offen: Im Kontext und aus der Perspektive des Erzählten wird klar, dass es sich um eine endzeitliche Notsituation welcher Form auch immer handelt – der Bezug auf die in den folgenden Visionen beschriebenen Situationen – vielleicht die Prüfung in Auseinandersetzung mit den teuflischen „Tieren“ aus Offb 13 – legt sich nahe.

<sup>78</sup> Zum Hintergrund dieses Bildes vgl. u.a. C.H. Hemer, *Letters*, 166–7.

<sup>79</sup> H. Ulland, *Vision*, 145, betont, dass die Metapher vom „Lauwarm“-Sein „einen Anhalt an der tatsächlichen Situation in Laodizea“ hat. „Die Stadt liegt gegenüber den Wasserfällen der heißen Quellen von Hierapolis, deren Wasser sich bis Laodizea lauwarm abgekühlt haben.“ Ähnlich C.H. Hemer, *Letters*, 208, und J.M. Court, *Myth*, 40.

<sup>80</sup> Die Beschreibung als „reich und wohlhabend“ mag durchaus an Hos 12,9 anspielen, die Selbstbeschreibung Ephraims, der der Herr in 12,10 entgegenhält, dass er es wieder in Zelten wohnen lasse wie bei seiner ersten Begegnung. Geht es dem Text um materiellen Reichtum oder „um das stolze Pochen auf einen angeblichen geistlichen Besitz“, wie J. Roloff, *Offenbarung*, 64, vermutet? Die Bildwelt der Aussagen lässt beides zu.

„elend und erbärmlich, arm, blind und nackt“<sup>81</sup> charakterisiert wird (3,17b), wird noch einmal ein Ratschlag (3,18) gegeben, der genau auf diese Charakterisierung abgestimmt ist:

V. 17	V. 18
	συμβουλεύω σοι ἀγοράσαι παρ' ἐμοῦ
(1) πτωχός	(1') χρύσιον...
(2) τυφλός	(3') κολλούριον...
(3) γυμνός	(2') ἱμάτια λεύκα...

Aber auch dieser ist von Chiffren bestimmt, die von der Perspektive des Jenseitigen her offensichtlich die konkrete Situation aufgreifen und zur Änderung aufrufen: U.B. Müller schreibt hierzu:<sup>82</sup>

Der dreifache »Ratschlag« nimmt auf die konkreten Verhältnisse der Stadt Bezug: »Kaufe Gold« spielt auf das Bankwesen an, »kaufe weiße Kleider« auf das Textilhandwerk und »kaufe Augensalbe« auf die Heilkunst der Ärzteschule. Es geht um den Erwerb wahren Reichtums..., die Bedeckung der Schande und wirkliche Heilung.

Die ungemein scharfen Worte gegen die Gemeinde verdanken sich laut 3,19 der Liebe des Sprechers zur Gemeinde. Dieser nimmt Bezug auf Spr 3,12: „Wen der Herr liebt, den züchtigt (LXX: παιδεύω) er“<sup>83</sup> und erweitert diese Vorlage um die Dimension des Zurechtweisens (ἐλέγχω): Die Gemeinde soll wieder ein „Eifern“ (ζηλεύω) zeigen und umkehren. Damit knüpft der Text an ein alttestamentliches Glaubensideal an: Der „Eifer“ des Israeliten für den Herrn und seine Gebote soll dem Eifern Gottes nahe kommen (vgl. z.B. Gen 34,14; Num 25,6–13; Sir 48,1–2; Judit 9,2–4; 1Makk 2,23–26 als Beispiele von „Eiferern“ für Gott; Ex 20,5; 34,14; Dtn 4,24; 5,9; 6,15 für Gottes ζῆλος). An diesem „Eifer“ aber hat es die lau gewordene Gemeinde offensichtlich fehlen lassen. Wie sehr die Aufforderung zur Umkehr ernst ist, scheint V. 20 zunächst deutlich zu machen: Der Herr steht schon an der Tür und klopft an. Überraschenderweise aber wird nun nicht vom kommenden Gericht gesprochen, sondern auf die endzeitliche Mahlgemeinschaft

<sup>81</sup> Ist die Rede von der Nacktheit der Gemeinde als „Polemik gegen die griechische Sitte..., sich in den Gymnasien nackt zu bewegen“ (U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 137) zu verstehen? Ich wäre hier eher skeptisch.

<sup>82</sup> U.B. Müller, *Offenbarung*, 136. Ähnlich H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 141 und C.H. Hemer, *Letters*, 208, der zudem einen Bezug zwischen der in Laodizea hergestellten Wolle schwarzer Schafe und der Aufforderung, weiße Kleider zu kaufen, sieht.

<sup>83</sup> W. Zager, „Gericht“, 312, schreibt in diesem Zusammenhang von „einer Maßnahme göttlicher Pädagogik“.

Christi mit denen, die ihm öffnen, eingegangen.<sup>84</sup> Auch der Gemeinde von Laodizea steht also dies wie auch die in 3,21 verheißene eschatologische Mitherrschaft als Möglichkeit weiter offen.

### 3. FAZIT

Die Sendschreiben der Offenbarung an die sieben Gemeinden Asias wollen als „himmlische Korrespondenz“ gelesen werden, die gleichwohl – gerade als solche – Einfluss auf das irdische Dasein ihrer Leserinnen und Leser nehmen will. Dabei ist zwischen zwei Gruppen von Lesern zu unterscheiden: Die Texte adressieren natürlich die Glieder der angesprochenen Gemeinden, sie wurden aber offensichtlich nie als Einzelbriefe versandt, sondern dürften auch in ihrer Gesamtkomposition einen integralen Bestandteil des Buchs der Offenbarung bilden. Über diese Leser hinaus dürften die Texte von Anfang an einen weiteren Leser- bzw. Hörerkreis anvisiert haben, wie sich an verschiedenen formalen Merkmalen zeigen lässt.<sup>85</sup> Gerade dieser zweite Leserkreis aber, der in den vergangenen Jahrhunderten natürlich den entscheidenden Anteil an den Rezipientinnen und Rezipienten der Apokalypse ausmachte, scheint mir entscheidend für das Verständnis vieler Eigenarten des Textes: Die angesprochenen Gemeinden bleiben sehr wohl konkrete, unterscheidbare historische Gemeinden mit einem zumindest in groben Zügen erkennbaren historischen Standort. Gleichzeitig aber werden sie zu Typen der Situation Gläubiger vor dem entscheidenden Ereignis des als bald erwarteten Endgerichts. Hier kommt nun die jenseitige Perspektive der Texte, die den Anspruch vertreten, aus der Sicht des erhöhten Christus gesprochen zu sein, in entscheidendem Maße zum Tragen: Derjenige, der selbst in seinem Tod „Welt“ überschritten hat, fordert aus seiner nun erhöhten jenseitigen Sicht die noch in der Welt und ihren

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<sup>84</sup> Der Text ähnelt motivisch Lk 12,35–38, wie z.B. J. Roloff, *Offenbarung*, 64, oder H. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 142, angeben. Zu den Unterschieden, die sich aber bei einer näheren Analyse ergeben, vgl. aber R. Zimmermann, *Geschlechtermetaphorik*, 446–7, der eine Bezugnahme auf Hld 5,2–8 LXX plausibel macht. Sein Fazit lautet (S. 447): „Das in Apk 3,20 beschriebene Klopfen an der Tür, das Öffnen und die dann mögliche Mahlgemeinschaft zwischen Christen und Christus greift ein Motiv von Cant 5,2–8 auf und rückt damit die eschatologische Christusgemeinschaft in den Horizont einer Liebesbeziehung.“

<sup>85</sup> So auch R. Kampling, *Vision der Kirche*, 129.

Bedrängnissen verharrenden Gemeinden auf, es ihm nachzutun. In der Perspektive des kommenden Gerichts, in dem letztgültig zwischen Tod und Leben entschieden werden wird und damit keine Kompromisse mehr möglich sind, werden Texte formuliert, die von ihren Leserinnen und Lesern eine klare, kompromisslose Entscheidung verlangen. Das jenseitige Wissen des erhöhten Christus um die Situation der Gemeinden, wie auch seine Deutung reichen in die Welt hinein – von ihm her muss sich die Gemeinde bestimmen lassen, um denselben Weg gehen zu können. Die Darstellungen der Situationen der Gemeinden aber sprechen nicht nur die konkreten Glieder dieser Gemeinden an – gerade die „jenseitige“ Perspektive führt zu einer Versprachlichung von Situationsbeschreibungen und Ermahnungen, die sich so weit von historisch rekonstruierbaren Konkretionen löst, dass sie sich für Leserinnen und Leser aller Zeiten öffnet, ja zur Herausforderung an Leser und Leserinnen aller Zeiten wird, ihren Standort in dem entstehenden Bild von Kirche zu bestimmen und im Angesicht der Endgültigkeit des Gerichts entsprechend zu handeln. Gerade die jenseitige Perspektive, aus der heraus gesprochen wird, erlaubt es also, die Aussagen der Texte sich gerade so weit zwischen historischer Konkretion und exemplarischer Allgemeingültigkeit bewegen zu lassen, dass beide Lesergruppen erreicht werden können.<sup>86</sup> *Konkrete Geschichte der angesprochenen Gemeinden, aber auch der Lesenden aller Zeiten wird so in das endzeitliche auf das Gericht hin laufende kosmische Drama eingebunden.*

Von daher lassen diese Texte „zeitgeschichtliche Interpretationen“ zwar grundsätzlich zu, dies aber nur in einem sehr beschränkten Maße.<sup>87</sup> Sie wollen weniger als Spiegel konkreter innerkirchlicher oder außer-

<sup>86</sup> Vgl. ähnliche Gedanken bei R. Kampling, *Vision der Kirche*, 127–8.

<sup>87</sup> Anders dagegen B. Kowalski, „Das Verhältnis von Theologie und Zeitgeschichte in den Sendschreiben der Johannes-Offenbarung,“ in *Theologie als Vision. Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung* (ed. K. Backhaus; SBS 191; Stuttgart 2001), 54–76, bes. 65 und 74, die davon spricht, dass die Sendschreiben „sehr differenzierte Einblicke“ in das Leben der jeweiligen Gemeinden erkennen ließen. Ich denke eher, das, was wir (mit mehr oder weniger großer Wahrscheinlichkeit) aus den in den Sendschreiben verwendeten Chiffren entschlüsseln können, nur aufgrund von Eintragungen aus anderen Quellen gelingt. Dies heißt aber, dass ich mich selbst in der Frage nach Bezügen der Sendschreiben auf mögliche lokale Eigenheiten nicht nur der Gemeinden, sondern auch der Orte, an denen sie angesiedelt sind, eher der Minimumposition Prigents als der von Hemer oder Court vertretenen Maximumposition einordnen würde, ohne mögliche Bezüge vollkommen abzustreiten. Zur Forschungsgeschichte vgl. auch C.H.H. Scobie, „Local References in the Letters to the Seven Churches,“ *NTS* 39 (1993): 606–24, bes. 606, der selbst „at least a certain number of local references“ (621) für wahrscheinlich hält.

kirchlich-gesellschaftlicher Auseinandersetzungen gelesen werden, als – wie auch die Chiffrierungen mit Namen und Beispielen aus dem Alten Testament zeigen – als querschnittartige Bilanz der Situation von Kirche in der Endzeit, der Zeit vor dem Gericht, in dem es nur noch „schwarz“ und „weiß“ geben kann. Diese Bilanz orientiert sich sehr wohl an konkreten historischen Gemeinden, will aber gleichzeitig sagen, dass die hier verhandelten Probleme keine Einzelfälle sind, sondern ihre Wurzeln in Problemen der Entscheidung gegen Gott haben, wie er sich durch die Geschichte Gottes mit den Menschen immer wieder gezeigt hat – und zeigen wird.

Mit der Konstruktion „himmlischer Korrespondenz“, die Bezug auf irdische Situationen nimmt, erhebt die Offenbarung aber auch einen ungeheueren Anspruch auf Autorität. In diesem Kontext macht die These D.E. Aunes, diese Texte reagierten auf einen Konflikt zwischen frühchristlichen prophetischen Gruppen, durchaus Sinn:<sup>88</sup> Wie könnte die prophetische Beurteilung der Situation von Gemeinden, vor allem aber auch Gegnern mit anderen Meinungen, besser durchgesetzt werden als dadurch, dass man sie auf Christus selbst zurückführt und gleichzeitig den Bezug zwischen diesseitiger Situation der Gemeinde und ihrer im Jenseits gültigen Wirklichkeit stärkt? So hat W. Bousset sicherlich Recht, wenn er schreibt, dass das Neue Testament an keiner anderen Stelle „mit dieser Wucht de[n] Gedanke[n] der Verantwortlichkeit vor einem überweltlichen Richter geltend“<sup>89</sup> mache, gleichzeitig aber beendet diese Art der Autorisierung jede Auseinandersetzung mit dem Gegner, die auf gleicher Ebene stattfinden, jede Möglichkeit des Austauschs zwischen Argumenten, des Kompromisses oder gar des Perspektivenwechsels. Dieser Anspruch ist nur dann theologisch zu verantworten, wenn er tatsächlich in einer tiefen Christuserfahrung gründet, sich gleichzeitig der tiefen Sorge um die Situation der Kirche vor dem letztgültigen Gericht Gottes verdankt und die Entscheidung in diesem Gericht aber auch Gott – und seiner Gnade – überlässt. Gefahrenpotentiale enthält dieser Text, wenn seine Aussagen dazu führen, gegnerische Gruppen – z.B. Juden, die ja in 2,9 und 3,9 als „Synagoge des Satans“ diffamiert werden – zu „verteufeln“ und sich selbst zum Richter über Menschen aufzuschwingen.

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<sup>88</sup> Vgl. D.E. Aune, *Social Matrix*, 187–9. Ähnlich auch E. Schüssler Fiorenza, „Die Worte der Prophetie. Die Apokalypse des Johannes theologisch lesen,“ *JBTh* 14 (1999): 71–94, bes. 89, und P.B. Duff, *Wolves*, 66.

<sup>89</sup> W. Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 239.



## ASCETICISM AND OTHERWORLDS IN THE ACTS OF PAUL AND THECLA

Korinna Zamfir

Although at a first glance the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* may seem nothing more than naive hagiography, written to provide edification and encouragement, the work actually promotes distinctive theological views. Scholarly debate has generally focused on the historical data that can be retrieved with respect to the life of the early church, especially regarding women's social status, their reasons for embracing asceticism, as well as their involvement in ministry.<sup>1</sup> This research is highly important, even when some authors have rejected the historical reliability of the APTh for the reconstruction of ecclesial life in the apostolic times.<sup>2</sup> Again other scholars have focused on the literary

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<sup>1</sup> D.R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); M.Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches. A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 181–4; V. Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy. Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Studies in Women and Religion 23; Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 81–109 (the social world of chastity stories). See also E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 173–5, 297; L. Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (orig. *Lydias ungeduldige Schwestern. Feministische Sozialgeschichte des frühen Christentums*, [Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher, 1994]) (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 104–9, 129–31; R.S. Kraemer, "The Conversion of Women to Ascetic Forms of Christianity," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 6.21 (1980): 298–307; D. Marguerat & W. Rebell, "Les Actes de Paul. Un portrait inhabituel de l'Apôtre," in *Le mystère apocryphe. Introduction à une littérature méconnue* (ed. J.-D. Kaestli & D. Marguerat; Essais bibliques 26; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1995), 107–24, here 118–24; J.N. Bremmer, "Magic, Martyrdom and Women's Liberation in the Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (ed. J.N. Bremmer; Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles 2; Kampen: Kok, 1996), 36–59; B. Wehn, "Blessed are the Bodies of Those Who are Virgins.' Reflections on the Image of Paul in the *Acts of Thecla*," *JSNT* 79 (2000): 149–64 (a social historical approach, rightly criticising the tendency to discount the relevance of the apocryphal writings).

<sup>2</sup> L.C. Boughton, "From Pious Legend to Feminist Fantasy: Distinguishing Hagiographical License from Apostolic Practice in the *Acts of Paul* / *Acts of Thecla*," *JR* 71

genre and the similarities with the Hellenistic (love) novel.<sup>3</sup> Both the historical and the literary approaches are essential. Yet, interestingly, scholars seldom reflect on the story as dramatisation of a theological view.<sup>4</sup>

The premise of this essay is that both the discourse material and the narrative are meant to express a system of beliefs. I do not propose an extensive discussion of the whole doctrine of the APTh, even less of the entire *Acts of Paul*, but I will focus on the eschatological view of the APTh, in relation to their ascetic teaching.

Ἐγκρατεία is a central motive of the APTh, which in this writing means first and foremost sexual continence and chastity. This revered virtue is put forward not only in the speeches, but the characters of the narrative themselves are the dramatic and paradigmatic embodiment of adherence to or rejection of this teaching. I will argue that the APTh regard continence as a prerequisite of the eschatological fulfilment. Additionally I will reflect on the implicit perception of the otherworld. Heaven is prefigured in the qualities of the two main characters. There is no focus on hell as such, as “place” of damnation and punishment, but only a reference to those who will not enjoy resurrection. The APTh is one of the earliest Christian witnesses attesting to the emergence of what is to become the purgatory.

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(1991): 362–83. She claims that the popularity of the APTh “reflected the story’s appeal among uninstructed Christians who had difficulty understanding the ideas and values of apostolic writings” (363–364). Y.L. Ng tends to give a similar assessment: “Acts of Paul and Thecla. Women’s Stories and Precedent?” *JTS* 55 (2004): 1–29, here 18.

<sup>3</sup> Burrus, *Chastity*, 7–66, K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1996), esp. 45–56; A. Graham Brock, “Genre of the *Acts of Paul*. One Tradition Enhancing Another,” *Apocrypha* 5 (1994): 119–36; on the original independence of the Iconium and the Antioch-episode: M.P. Aymer, “Hailstorms and Fireballs. Redaction, World Creation, and Resistance in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*,” *Sem.* 79 (1997): 45–61; as well as E. Esch in E. Esch & A. Leinhäupl-Wilke, “Auf die Spur gekommen. Plädoyer für eine leserorientierte Literarkritik in den ActThecl,” in *Aus Liebe zu Paulus? Die Akte Thekla neu aufgerollt* (ed. M. Ebner; SBS 206; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005), 30–51. More recently and in a very detailed manner E. Esch-Wermeling, *Thekla-Paulusschülerin wider Willen? Strategien der Leserlenkung in den Theklaakten* (NTA 53), Münster: Asihendorf, 2008, esp. 71–186.

<sup>4</sup> In this essay I have opted for a synchronic reading, not only because the differences between the Iconium- and the Antioch-episode are sometimes magnified and the continuity dismissed, but especially because the story as it stands now has a specific message, in which I am interested. Nonetheless, the redactional analysis of Aymer and Esch (cf. n. 3) is an important contribution to the understanding of the APTh.

# 1. ENCRATITE BEATITUDES AS PRECONDITION OF HEAVENLY BEATITUDE

The introductory words to Paul's speech in Iconium (λόγος θεοῦ περὶ ἐγκρατείας καὶ ἀναστάσεως),<sup>5</sup> and the subsequent beatitudes (APTh 5–6) summarise the doctrine conveyed by the narrative.<sup>6</sup> Three preliminary remarks can be formulated. First, the eschatological perspective involves the expectation of a future resurrection. Second, this expectation is intimately linked to asceticism, especially in the form of sexual renunciation, as a precondition and pledge for future heavenly beatitude. Third, the life and aptitudes of the main characters anticipate the qualities of the glorified humanity that will be possessed in its fullness in the afterlife. The subsequent narrative shows how those who embrace radical asceticism can experience the transformation of their body, salvation from eschatological judgement, and a foretaste of heavenly bliss already in their earthly life.

A. Jensen rightly stated that the APTh understand sexuality as belonging to the realm of death; therefore sexual continence provides an anticipation of the resurrection in this world, by transcending and overcoming sexuality.<sup>7</sup> Sexual asceticism is able to prefigure resurrection because it grants a transfigured corporeality. The human nature

<sup>5</sup> For the text of the APTh: R.A. Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* I (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1959, repr. of the 1891 edition), 235–72; L. Vouaux, *Les Actes de Paul et ses lettres apocryphes* (Paris, 1913). For translations see E. Hennecke & W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* 2 (London: Lutterworth, 1965), 352–64; J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 364–74; B.D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures. Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2003), 113–21; W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* II (5th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 214–24.

<sup>6</sup> A. Jensen appropriately sees λόγος θεοῦ κτλ. is an encratite summary of the Christian teaching: ead., *Thekla—die Apostolin. Ein apokrypher Text neu entdeckt* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1995), 23, n.23. Moreover, M. Lau shows that APTh 5–6 function as an overture, comprising the major themes which will be developed in what follows: “Denn was den Leser der Theklaakten in den folgenden Kapiteln erwartet, ist tatsächlich ein flammendes Plädoyer für Askese und sexuelle Enthaltsamkeit, argumentativ durch den Lohn der Auferstehung fundiert” (“Enthaltsamkeit und Auferstehung. Narrative Auseinandersetzungen in der Paulusschule,” in *Aus Liebe*, 80–90 [80]).

<sup>7</sup> “Der Bereich der Geschlechtlichkeit gehört zum Bereich des Todes; wer durch die Enthaltsamkeit den Bereich des Geschlechtlichen überwindet, antizipiert bereits hier auf Erden das kommende Leben der Auferstehung.” Jensen, *Thekla*, 28, n. 35. See also K. Niederwimmer, *Askese und Mysterium. Über Ehe, Ehescheidung und Eheverzicht in den Anfängen des christlichen Glaubens* (FRLANT 113; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

receives a touch of angelism and of incorruptibility. This idea has manifold expressions in the APTh: in the beatitudes, in Paul's appearance and in the life of Thekla.

The beatitudes are strategic for the APTh.<sup>8</sup> The decision to adopt a genre typically associated with Jesus is a major step in the systematic assimilation of Paul with Jesus. Just as in Matthew Jesus introduces himself and his teaching with the beatitudes, so does Paul. The apologetic procedure is all the more successful, as the beatitudes in APTh 5–6 contain a large number of intertextual references to authentic Pauline statements.<sup>9</sup>

The series of thirteen macarisms offers a summary of "Paul's" encratite doctrine. Moreover, they function as a programmatic speech: the message will be developed in detail in the narrative. A. Jensen doubts that the APTh truly assign to Paul the absolute abstinence and radical encratism ascribed to him by his opponents (APTh 12), since he does not claim it explicitly in his defence speech (APTh 17).<sup>10</sup> Yet, the beatitudes clearly promote an ascetic teaching mainly characterised by sexual continence. The only question is whether this form of ἐγκρατεία is an absolute condition for eternal salvation, or only provides certitude with this respect. The question cannot be answered with absolute certainty. Yet, precisely in his speech before the governor, Paul states that he has been sent by the living God, so that people be saved from

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Ruprecht, 1975), 177 (with respect to the apocryphal logia-tradition, preserved, e.g., by Clement of Alexandria).

<sup>8</sup> On the beatitudes see A. Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstausslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe* (NTOA 52; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 320–33; M. Ebner, "Paulinische Seligpreisungen à la Thekla. Narrative Relecture der Makarismenreihe in ActThecl 5f.," in *Aus Liebe*, 64–79; T. Nicklas, "Christliche Apokryphen als Spiegel der Vielfalt frühchristlichen Lebens: Schlaglichter, Beispiele und methodische Probleme," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 23 (2006): 27–44; P. Herczeg, "New Testament Parallels to the Apocryphal Acta Pauli Documents," in *Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, 142–49, here 147–48. I have discussed earlier the beatitudes of the APTh as relecture of Jesus' beatitudes; K. Zamfir "Who are (the) Blessed? Reflections on the Relecture of the Beatitudes in the New Testament and the Apocrypha," *Sacra Scripta* 5.1 (2007): 74–99. Some of those reflections are continued here.

<sup>9</sup> Merz shows that the intertextual links with the Sermon on the Mount and with the Pauline epistles render the message conform to Jesus' teaching, and additionally strengthen its validity with Paul's authority (*Selbstausslegung*, 326–27, 329 n. 216). See also S.J. Davis, "A 'Pauline' Defense of Women's Right to Baptize? Intertextuality and Apostolic Authority in the Acts of Paul," in *J ECS* 8 (2000): 453–59.

<sup>10</sup> Jensen, *Thekla*, 26, n. 29, cf. also 28, n. 35: the "authentic" preaching of Paul expresses a moderate form of encratism. Therefore she regards the assertion made by Paul's adversaries a common device of polemical literature.

corruption and impurity and all pleasure and death, and that they may sin no more (17). In the light of the beatitudes ἀκαθαρσία is obviously the opposite of sexual continence, an association strengthened by the addition of πόση ἡδονή. Pleasures and rejection of chastity are clearly connected with sin, thus becoming the cause of death and corruption.<sup>11</sup> Since death and corruption are obviously contrasted with (everlasting) life, it seems that the APTh indeed regard sexual continence as precondition of eternal salvation.<sup>12</sup>

The beatitude of the pure in heart, a literal parallel of Matt 5:8, should be read in the light of the ἐγκρατεία mentioned in the introductory words and taken up again in the third beatitude.<sup>13</sup> This conception of purity is further defined by the subsequent ascetic demands. Thus ἀγνεία is a central concept that explains the καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ. In the second and the last beatitude ἀγνεία is a quality of the body (σῶμα and σῶμα, B 2 and 13, respectively), meaning virginity and/or secondary renunciation to sexuality. Thus ἀγνεία creates an interpretative frame for the beatitudes. Moreover, given the verbal and thematic context, and the multiple allusions to genuine Pauline texts promoting sexual purity, the ἐγκρατεῖς explicitly mentioned in the third beatitude are those who live a fully ascetic life, including sexual continence.<sup>14</sup> The idea of sexual renunciation is further strengthened

<sup>11</sup> A. Leinhäupl-Wilke, "Vom Einfluss des lebendigen Gottes. Zwei Bekenntnisreden gegen den Strich gelesen," in Ebner, *Aus Liebe*, 139–51, here 147–48.

<sup>12</sup> Already T.H.C. Van Eijk, "Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality," in *Epiktasis: Mélanges. patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou* (eds. J. Fontaine & Ch. Kannengiesser; Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 209–35, here 212. Cf. also P.J. Lalleman, "The Resurrection in the Acts of Paul," in *Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, 126–41, here 130–31. The link between chastity and eternal reward is no reason for denying the earlier origin of ascetic traditions, as Y.L. Ng suggests ("Acts of Paul and Thecla", 18). Paul's preference for celibacy/virginity (1Cor 7:7–8, 27–29) has certainly resulted in an early ascetic movement, as shown by the Pastoral Epistles' criticism. A similar connection may be assumed in Rev 14:4, unless one takes the παρθένοι metaphorically.

<sup>13</sup> Although Wehn is right that ἐγκρατεία can have a broader meaning, the beatitudes and their actualisation in the life of Thecla show that in the APTh the concept refers precisely to sexual asceticism. Moreover I find debatable the claim that "[t]his concept is not based on hostility to the body and to sexuality, but rather on a high esteem for the bodies which are sanctified by the relationship to Christ—they are called temples of God—and for their capacity for sexuality" ("Blessed are the bodies", 152–3). E.M. Howe rightly appreciates that this type of asceticism is motivated by the depreciation of sexuality ("Interpretations of Paul in the Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F.F. Bruce on his 70th Birthday* [ed. D.A. Hagner & M.J. Harris; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 33–49, here 36).

<sup>14</sup> Rightly Howe, who notes that "ἀγνεία means here celibacy or virginity, rather than abstention from unlawful sexual activity" ("Interpretations", 36); cf. also

by the fifth macarism (those who have a wife but live as though they had none), promoting abstinence from sexual relations even within marriage. This logion combines references to 1 Cor 7:29, 1 Cor 6:9–10 and Matt 5:5.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, even the emphasis on baptismal fidelity in the ninth beatitude (those who have kept the baptism will be given relief near the Father and the Son) is most likely referring to abstention from sexual relations after the baptism.<sup>16</sup> This association of baptism and sexual continence results from the understanding of baptism as mystical marriage with Christ.<sup>17</sup> The last beatitude, which proclaims the blessedness of the virginal bodies, again clearly places full emphasis on the idea of sexual abstinence. The context gives the

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Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* II, 213. Pace Y. Tissot, *Encratisme et Actes Apocryphes*, in *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres. Christianisme et monde païen* (eds. F. Bovon et al.; Genève, 1981), 109–19, here 116 n. 58.

<sup>15</sup> Because of this macarism and the υἱοὶ ὑψίστου in B 8, Merz argues for an exclusively male audience (*Selbstausslegung*, 323–324). Cf. also Ebner, who nonetheless notes the practical accommodation to both women and men (“Paulinische Seligpreisungen,” 65, 73–74). Yet, A. Jensen is probably right that all macarisms should be read as androcentric-inclusive (*Thekla*, 22/23, n. 20); similarly Aymer, “Hailstorms,” 48; Wehn, “Blessed are the bodies,” 156. At any rate, even on the hypothesis that the beatitudes were an independent text, incorporated in the APTh, the work as it stands now clearly refers to chaste men *and* women, since the subsequent narrative, disclosing the story of Paul and Thekla, as well as that of Onesiphorus and his family makes manifest the fulfilment of these beatitudes in the life of men and women. See also APTh 12: στερεὶ δὲ νέους γυναικῶν καὶ παρθένους ἀνδρῶν.

<sup>16</sup> The interpretation is supported by the variant readings: οἱ τὸ ἅγιον καὶ σωτήριον βάπτισμα καθαρὸν καὶ ἀρύπτων τηρήσαντες (M); or καθαρὸν τηρήσαντες (F G), cf. Vouaux, *Actes*, 157, n. 9. See also Tissot, “Encratisme,” 113, who quotes examples from Hippolytus, Tertullian and Afraat; this practice implied not only continence before baptism, but even renunciation to marriage afterwards. Niederwimmer, *Askese*, 176–86. The practice is known from other apocrypha as well. In the *Acts of Thomas* Mygdonia rejects her husband after baptism. On the association between baptism and sexual continence, see also H.-J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Apostelakten* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005), 66–67; Howe, “Interpretations,” 41–42; A.C. Rush, “Death as Spiritual Marriage: Individual and Ecclesial Eschatology,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 26 (1972): 81–101, here 91. The tenth macarism (οἱ σύνεσιν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ χωρήσαντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐν φωτὶ γενήσονται) may also refer to baptism, since Justin, e.g., connects baptism, knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and light (illumination); see C.I.K. Story, “Justin’s Apology I, 62–64: Its importance for the Author’s Treatment of Christian Baptism,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 16 (1962): 172–78. On the association between baptism and light/fire in Thekla’s baptism see H.J.W. Drijvers & G.J. Reinink, “Taufe und Licht. Tatian, Ebionäerevangelium und Thomasakten,” in *Text and Testimony. Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A.F.J. Klijn* (eds. T. Baarda et al.; Kampen: Kok, 1988), 91–110, here 94.

<sup>17</sup> Aymer, “Hailstorms,” 58. For the use of the marriage metaphor with respect to baptism in patristic literature see Rush, “Death,” 83–93; 101. On the motif of mystical marriage with Christ in relation with sexual asceticism in early Christianity, see Niederwimmer, *Askese*, 186–98.

same meaning to the fourth (οἱ ἀποταξάμενοι τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ) and the eleventh beatitude (οἱ ἐξεληθόντες τοῦ σχήματος τοῦ κοσμικοῦ), which both allude to 1 Cor 7:31.

The message of the beatitudes in APTh 5–6 is that the ascetic, the chaste will enjoy salvation from eternal judgement (B 12, 13); they will find eternal rest by God (B 9) and they will be in the light (B 10). They shall rejoice because of their special community with God: they shall see God (B 1), they shall become sons of God (B 8), the temple of God (B 2), they shall be spoken to by God (B 3). They will experience angelic life (B 6) and will acquire a privileged status: they will inherit God (B 5), they will be blessed at the right of the Father and will judge angels (B 11). This is a summary of what heavenly beatitude is imagined to be. It is striking that there is no specific and detailed depiction of heaven as such, neither here, nor in the subsequent narrative. The elements of this summary are rather metaphorical. They all appear already in the canonical gospels and epistles. The APTh has no vivid depiction of heaven to satisfy the curiosity of the reader.

The beatitudes will become visible in the lives of Paul, Thecla, Onesiphorus and his family. Other characters, such as Demas and Hermogenes, should be seen as the personification of self-indulgence.<sup>18</sup> I begin with the secondary characters, the case of Paul and Thecla being addressed separately. Onesiphorus embodies the beatitudes, since he has left behind that which belongs to this world and has followed Paul, together with his whole family (APTh 23: κατέλιπεν γὰρ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου ὁ Ὀνησιφόρος καὶ ἠκολούθει Παύλῳ πανοικί). He is fasting in the tomb together with his whole family. This scene comprises multiple references to asceticism. The tomb symbolises the radical rejection of this world. Thus Onesiphorus evokes the fourth (οἱ ἀποταξάμενοι τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ) and eleventh beatitude (οἱ δι' ἀγάπην θεοῦ ἐξεληθόντες τοῦ σχήματος τοῦ κοσμικοῦ).<sup>19</sup> He is very likely also an exponent of the fifth beatitude (those who have a wife, but live as though they had none).

<sup>18</sup> Aymer notes that the two “represent a community that disagrees with the redactor’s community on the fundamental theology of resurrection”, and they are used as a foil to Paul (“Hailstorms,” 50). I would modify this remark, since it is not the theology of resurrection itself upon which the two communities disagree, but the role of asceticism in securing resurrection.

<sup>19</sup> Rightly Merz, *Selbstauslegung*, 325, n. 204; Ebner, “Paulinische Seligpreisungen,” 74.

With their reference to Paul's opponents, the APTh allude to the Pastoral Epistles, in order to prove that they provide the right interpretation of Paul.<sup>20</sup> According to APTh 14, Demas and Hermogenes (mentioned in 2 Tim 4:10 and 1:15) embrace the realised eschatology criticised by 2 Tim 2:18 (represented by Hymenaios and Philebos in 1 Tim 1:20).<sup>21</sup> The Pastoral Epistles and the APTh agree in assigning the doctrine of the already accomplished resurrection to Paul's opponents. Yet, the APTh contradict the Pastorals with respect to asceticism. The APTh "explain" in their own way the meaning of 2 Tim 4:10 that criticises Demas for having left Paul, ἀγαπήσας τὸν νῦν αἰῶνα: APTh 14 attributes to Demas (and to Hermogenes, the other character who has abandoned Paul) the teaching on the accomplished resurrection. Furthermore, these characters claim that "the resurrection is accomplished in the children we have" (APTh 14).<sup>22</sup> Thus in the APTh those who promote sexuality and marriage (Demas and Hermogenes, who believe that they live on in their descendants) are assimilated to those who teach a realised eschatology (Hymenaios and Philebos). Through this procedure the APTh show that by advocating marriage and procreation the Pastoral Epistles are inconsequent to their own future eschatology. Moreover, marriage is presented as a form of love for this world, which on its turn is a blame stigmatising the disciples who have abandoned Paul. The same association between love for this world and rejection of asceticism is expressed in Demas' and Hermo-

<sup>20</sup> It is likely that the Pastoral Epistles have fought against a competing, ascetic interpretation of Paul, and such an early ascetic tradition was incorporated in the APTh (MacDonald, *Legend*, esp. 57–66). See also Merz, *Selbstausslegung*, 320–33; Klauck, *Apokryphe Apostelakten*, 62–3. On the other hand the polemic also works the other way round; cf. G. Häfner, "Die Gegner in den Pastoralbriefen und die Paulusakten," ZNW 92 (2001): 42–77 (even when he too easily dismisses the allusion of the PE to a tradition similar to that found in the APTh); Lau, "Enthaltsamkeit," esp. 86–90 (the strategy of the APTh to combine realised eschatology with marriage and thus to defend asceticism as orthodox practice, over against the position of the PE).

<sup>21</sup> M. Ebner shows how, through combined references to the PE, the author brings together in the figure of Demas and Hermogenes all the adversaries of Paul; they thus become the prototype of Paul's opponents: "Sein und Schein auf dem 'Königsweg'. Figurenaufstellung und „Einspurung“ des Lesers (ActThecl 1–4)," in his *Aus Liebe*, 52–63, here 52–5.

<sup>22</sup> Omitted by the Syriac mss. (Vouaux, *Actes*, 172, n. 6). On the possible background of immortality and/or resurrection through procreation see Van Eijk, "Marriage," 209–14; see also S. Burkes, *God, Self, and Death. The Shapes of Religious Transformation in the Second Temple Period* (JSJSup 79; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 110–11.

genes' manifest interest in the luxurious banquet given by Thamyris.<sup>23</sup> This satisfaction of appetites turns them into Thamyris' accomplices, in his attempt to destroy Paul and Thecla (13).

## 2. ESCHATOLOGICAL ANGELISM AND GLORIFICATION

Sharing in the nature of angels is a well-known motif defining the life to come. The promise is explicitly stated in the sixth beatitude: those who fear God are blessed, as they will become angels of God (ἄγγελοι θεοῦ γενήσονται<sup>24</sup>). The apodosis may be a conflation of Mark 12:25 (εἰσὶν ὡς ἄγγελοι, par. Matt 22:30) and Luke 20:35–36 (ἰσάγγελοι γὰρ εἰσιν καὶ υἱοὶ εἰσιν θεοῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ ὄντες). This beatitude has been regarded by L.C. Boughton as a proof for the historical and theological irrelevance of the APTh.<sup>25</sup> In fact it harmonises with the idea already present in the canonical gospels, according to which in the life to come humans become similar to angels in terms of meta-sexuality (οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται, Mark 12:25). The apodosis indicates that the beatitude does not refer to fear of God as a broadly understood quality of any believer, but specifically to the sexually continent, in view of the eschatological judgement. As (pure) angels are understood to live as intimates of God, beyond the realm of body and sexuality, the promise that humans may become (like) angels does not imply an ontological speculation on natures, but refers to this closeness to God that transcends sexuality.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The contrast with Paul's asceticism is noted by Vouaux, *Actes*, 172–3 n. 2; Jensen, *Thekla*, 24, n. 25.

<sup>24</sup> M has a more elaborated apodosis: κληρονομήσουσιν τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ γενήσονται; cf. Vouaux, 156, n. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Boughton claims that this is “a confusion of natures that would be absurd for Paul or for anyone else grounded in the Jewish intellectual context of the first-generation Christianity”, and asserts that the concept appears only in late second-century writings, such as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (“Pious Legend,” 364). Thus *Mart. Pol.* would attest “the emergence by the end of the 2nd century among less-instructed Christians of a hellenized understanding of spirits” (364, n. 6). This is an unfair treatment of the concept itself, as well as of the function and the addressees of early Christian writings. Niederwimmer understands Mark 12:25 as an allusion to a σῶμα πνευματικόν or ἀγγελικόν, which does not require yet a preliminary βίος ἀγγελικός (*Askese*, 53–54).

<sup>26</sup> It is not surprising therefore that in a large number of apocryphal texts the condition of the fallen angels is described precisely with reference to sexual transgression, i.e. as a midrashic development of Gen 6:2.

Moreover, not only do the ἐγκρατεῖς share in angelic purity, but they even are to acquire a status superior to that of the angels. Thus according to the eleventh beatitude, those who, out of love for God, leave behind them the present world with its customs<sup>27</sup> will judge over angels and shall be blessed at the right of the Father (ἀγγέλους κρινοῦσιν καὶ ἐν δεξίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς εὐλογηθήσονται).<sup>28</sup> The beatitude recalls 1 Cor 6:3, where Paul rebukes the Corinthians for appealing to a profane court for conflict resolution, while they are to judge over angels.<sup>29</sup> The statement is preceded by the closely related idea that the holy are to judge over this world (6:2). Paul's interpellation is part of a series of rhetorical questions (6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19), which go from undefined sins to a list of vices dominated by sexual misbehaviour (vv 9–10). All these transgressors will not inherit the Reign of God. The reflection on sexual (im)purity is continued in 6:15–19, concluding with a call to the Corinthians to sanctify their body. Thus the beatitude is a positive counterpart of 1 Cor 6:3–10, 15–19, understood altogether as referring to sexual behaviour. The allusion to 1 Cor 6 is confirmed by the second part of the apodosis, promising participation in the Reign of God (glorification at the right of the Father), something that is explicitly denied in 1 Cor 6:9–10 to those attached to this world. Additionally the protasis alludes to the σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου of 1 Cor 7:31, which will pass away. The angelic trait and glorification of the body which acquires superhuman features is seen in Paul. Since the very beginning he is introduced not as merely human, but as filled with grace, and appearing with the face of an angel.<sup>30</sup> His appearance as embodiment of Jesus and his ascension in Thecla's

<sup>27</sup> The logion is omitted by C. A F G read Χριστοῦ instead of θεοῦ, cf. syr<sup>c</sup>. M has a more elaborated reading, that emphasises the noise of this world (διὰ φιλίαν καὶ ἀγάπην θεοῦ ἐξελθόντες τοῦ κόσμου τούτου θορύβου καὶ σχήματος); cf. Vouaux, *Actes*, 158, n. 1. The genitive of this beatitude should be taken as expressing the human love for God, enabling one to leave the world. The v.l. Χριστοῦ might be related to the marriage-metaphor.

<sup>28</sup> F reads τοῦ θεοῦ, cf. syr<sup>c</sup> lbb; G has τοῦ Χριστοῦ, cf. lba lbc (Vouaux, *Actes*, 158, n. 3).

<sup>29</sup> P. Richardson pleads for the sexual nature of the complaint in 1Cor 6:1–11 ("Judgment in Sexual Matters in 1 Corinthians 6:1–11," *NovT* 25.1 (1983): 37–58. Whether Paul had this in mind is not certain, though not impossible. But the allusions of the eleventh beatitude to the text show that the APTh read the entire chapter as dealing with sexual matters.

<sup>30</sup> Ebner associates this image with that of Stephen: the glory of the resurrected Christ shines upon the face of Stephen, who looks like an angel ("Sein und Schein," 61).

vision is another anticipation of what the life to come reserves to the continent.

### 3. PAUL AS JESUS. TRANSFIGURATION AND GLORIFICATION OF THE CHASTE

One of the most intriguing literary and theological devices of the APTh is Paul's identification with Jesus,<sup>31</sup> a strategy meant to prove in a polemical context that the Paul of the APTh, living in and proclaiming radical asceticism, is the authentic interpreter of Jesus and of the Christian doctrine. The manner in which this identification occurs not only reminds the reader of Jesus, but also anticipates the features of the glorified body, that will be acquired by the continent in the other-world. Furthermore, the passages in which Paul is identified with Jesus suggest that the ἐγκρατεῖς also share in the deepest possible communion with Jesus, to the extent of becoming one with him.

Paul is the embodiment of Jesus because of his exemplary ἀγνεία. His assimilation to Jesus starts already with his quasi-angelic appearance (ἐφάνετο ὡς ἄνθρωπος τότε δὲ ἀγγέλου πρόσωπον εἶχεν).<sup>32</sup> He preaches beatitudes, just as Jesus did. Scholars have noted several other aspects Paul's trial and plea remind of Jesus' passion.<sup>33</sup> Brock

<sup>31</sup> See A. Graham Brock, "Genre," 122–23 (showing how Paul acquires an almost "superhuman status"), and D. Marguerat, who emphasises the hieratic character of Paul; "The Acts of Paul and the Canonical Acts. A Phenomenon of Rereading," *Sem.* 80.1 (1997): 169–84, here 179–81. Marguerat compares Thecla's vision with other instances when Christ takes human features (*Acts Thom* 151–55, *Acts And* 32, *Acts John* 87, *Acts Pet* 5, 21, 22). See also *The Acts of Peter and Andrew* 3 & 13.

<sup>32</sup> Brock argues that Paul's introduction, where "now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel" (APTh 3) echoes Jesus' transfiguration ("Genre," 122). On ancient physiognomics as interpretative key of Paul's depiction in APTh 3 see the quite contradictory conclusions of R.M. Grant, "The Description of Paul in the Acts of Paul and Thecla," *Vigiliae Christianae* 36 (1982): 1–4 (following E. Evans); A.J. Malherbe, "A Physical Description of Paul," *HTR* 79 (1986): 170–75; J. Bollók, "The Description of Paul in the Acta Pauli" and Bremmer, "Magic," in *Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, 1–15, and 38–39, respectively; Marguerat & Rebell, "Les Actes de Paul," 113–15; Ebner, "Sein und Schein," 58–62. As interesting the assessment of the evidence would be, the length of such an evaluation would not fit in this essay. I agree with a stereotypical-positive meaning of the features. The main problem with the negative meaning would not be "ugliness" as such, but the immorality implied by ugly traits.

<sup>33</sup> Jensen, *Thekla*, 27, n. 32 has accurately noted the double allusion to Jesus' trial before Pilate and to Paul's trial before Felix and Festus. See also Klauck, *Apokryphe Apostelakten*, 68.

remarks that Paul is betrayed by those who belong to his circle (Demas and Hermogenes), and he is rejected by the crowd.<sup>34</sup> All this shows how the true disciple is united to Christ in his suffering and death, in order to share his glory.

The most explicit identification of Paul with Jesus occurs in Thecla's vision (APTh 21). While on the pyre, Thecla sees the Lord sitting, under the traits of Paul (εἶδεν τὸν κύριον καθήμενον ὡς Παῦλον). Paul appears as a simile of the glorified Jesus. Thecla watches him in ecstasy, as he ascends to heaven. Paul thus re-enacts Jesus' ascension in front of the disciples.<sup>35</sup> The story about Paul's ascension could also be a reference to 2 Cor 12:2–4, according to which Paul, as ἄνθρωπος ἐν Χριστῷ, "whether in the body, or out of the body", was elevated to the third heaven.

The five loaves at the meal celebrated with Onesiphorus' family on the occasion of Thecla's safe return may be an allusion to Jesus' multiplication of the loaves (Mark 6:33,41 par.), because of the venue (a deserted place in Mark, a tomb in the APTh), the withdrawal from this world for the sake of discipleship, and the complaint about the impossibility of buying food (the disciples in Mark, Onesiphorus' children in the APTh). Finally, Paul's commissioning of Thecla to go and proclaim the word of God (APTh 41) can be compared to Jesus' sending of his disciples.

The numerous elements of identification carry out several tasks. The polemic-apologetic function was already noted. The identification also facilitates the transfer of Thecla's love from Paul to Christ. But for the present topic the most important idea is that through radical asceticism the disciple becomes one with Jesus, to the extent of sharing not only in his earthly fate, but also in his transfiguration and his heavenly glory. Paul transcends this world already in his earthly life. He is angelic, moreover, he prefigures the celestial union with Christ.

<sup>34</sup> Moreover in MP 7 a soldier glorifies God at his death. Brock, "Genre," 122–23.

<sup>35</sup> Brock, "Genre," 122 adds Paul's post-resurrection appearance (MP 6), and his hearing of a heavenly voice, unheard by others (referring to the beginning of the Ephesus-episode according to an unpublished Coptic papyrus, Schneemelcher II, 241–43). On the resemblance with Jesus see also J. Bolyki, "Events after the Martyrdom: Missionary Transformation of an Apocalyptic Metaphor in Martyrium Pauli," in *Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, 92–106, here 102.

## 4. THE CHASTE THECLA AS PROTOTYPE OF THE DISCIPLE

D. Marguerat has rightly noted the transfer of the qualities of the perfect disciple onto Thecla.<sup>36</sup> This transfer of the status of disciple from Paul to Thecla is obvious throughout the narrative. The fate of the chaste Thecla prefigures the fate of the exemplary continent disciple.

Thecla's resolution to follow Paul after the events in Iconium (APTh 25) recalls the determination of the anonymous scribe who wants to follow Jesus wherever he goes (Matt 8:19).<sup>37</sup> Her sitting at Paul's feet (APTh 18) reminds Brock of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to his teaching,<sup>38</sup> but it could also be an allusion to Paul being educated at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). The image is clearly that of the disciple learning from his/her master.

The account of Thecla's vision contains numerous allusions to disciple-narratives. The scene may evoke Paul's vision during the Damascus-episode (cf. Acts 26:14–18.)<sup>39</sup> But the ascension of Jesus-Paul also reminds of the disciples witnessing the ascension of Jesus, and of the dying Stephen seeing the glorified Lord (Acts 7:55).<sup>40</sup> Thecla seeking for Paul as the lamb in the wilderness looks for the shepherd (APTh 21) combines a reference to Paul/Jesus as the shepherd and Thecla as the martyr-disciple looking for the good shepherd. To the modern reader Paul's physical absence when Thecla is in deepest need may seem incomprehensible and scandalous, all the more so as she is condemned for having embraced Paul's teaching.<sup>41</sup> Yet, this episode,

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<sup>36</sup> Marguerat, "Acts of Paul," 180–1. The erotic undertones of Thecla's attraction to Paul, characteristic to Hellenistic love novels, noted by Ng ("Acts of Paul and Thecla", 5–6) do not contradict this transfer of qualities of the typical disciple to Thecla, as Ng suggests. The transfer is enhanced precisely because of the assimilation of Paul to Christ, and the implied mystical marriage symbolism. Aymer has rightly remarked that in the end, in spite of Thecla's attraction to Paul, her true love is Christ: "Thecla is used by the redactor as the quintessential 'lover' of Christ, who falls in love with the beautiful one, goes through many trials to be with her lover, and finally is able to consummate that love" ("Hailstorms," 58).

<sup>37</sup> Noted already by Vouaux, *Actes*, 194, n. 5. The comparison is strengthened by the fact that both are dissuaded to do so, without being radically rejected.

<sup>38</sup> Brock, "Genre," 122.

<sup>39</sup> Thus Marguerat, "Acts of Paul," 180.

<sup>40</sup> The latter is remarked by Jensen, *Thekla*, 30, n. 44. The multiple associations are probably intended by the author.

<sup>41</sup> This unexpected outcome is "corrected" by a marginal gloss to 2 Tim 3:11 in K<sup>mg</sup>, which characterises Paul's suffering in Antiochia as τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἡ διὰ Θέκλαν πέπονθεν (cf. 181<sup>mg</sup>, sy<sup>hmg</sup>, cf. NA<sup>27</sup>).

as part of a passage rite, also reflects the fact that the passion of the disciple (Thecla) happens on behalf of the Master (Jesus, embodied by Paul), as a sharing in the passion of Jesus, which occasions her witnessing of Jesus-Paul's glorification.

It has been suggested that Thecla's vision is actually a criticism directed against Paul,<sup>42</sup> but this may be a misreading of the narrative, which states that Jesus appears to Thecla under the traits of Paul, and at the end of the episode we are told that Thecla is saved precisely because of Paul's prayers and fasting (APTh 24). Thus Paul is after all very much present and actively helping, however not in a human, but in a superhuman way.

A. Leinhäupl-Wilke has rightly remarked that the topic of baptism is a central theme of the narrative.<sup>43</sup> I would add that baptism (as already seen in the beatitudes) is intimately connected to chastity. Acceding to baptism is not self-evident. The true disciple has to prove being worth of it, by demonstrating perseverance in asceticism and chastity at any cost. Although in the martyr-acts martyrdom itself would make water-baptism superfluous,<sup>44</sup> the issue in the APTh is not simply about baptism, but about chastity, which makes one worthy of receiving baptism, i.e. of truly becoming a disciple. Martyrdom in the APTh is rather a trial, and rescue from it an anticipation of the eschatological salvation. Thecla's trials—Thamyris' "romantic" advances, her delivery to the authorities and to death by her fiancé and by her very mother, her condemnation to the stake, her solitude when condemned, Paul's refusal to accept her demand to be his follower and to be baptised, her sexual assault by Alexander, her loneliness when assaulted,<sup>45</sup> the *theriomachia*—are all steps of the same initiation rite, which are meant

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<sup>42</sup> Schottroff sees in the APTh "the expression of much anger on the part of women against Christian men who preach virginity but, cowardly, allow violence against women or even condone it without critique" (*Lydia's Impatient Sisters*, 129–30). See also Wehn, "Blessed are the bodies," 155–6. Already Vouaux was disturbed by the scene and qualified Paul's facile escape and Thecla's condemnation on his behalf as "invraisemblable" (*Actes*, 185, n. 2\*). It is not my intention to "save" Paul, neither the historical, nor the literary character, and even less his patriarchal interpretations in the early Church. Yet, the story, as it stands now, attributes Thecla's salvation to Paul's intercession.

<sup>43</sup> "Das Taufmotiv durchzieht die Gesamterzählung wie ein roter Faden, über das Motiv wird textsemantisch ein übergreifender Spannungsbogen aufgebaut" (Esch/Leinhäupl-Wilke, "Auf die Spur," 36).

<sup>44</sup> As suggested by Esch (Esch/Leinhäupl-Wilke, "Auf die Spur," 35).

<sup>45</sup> On Paul's abandoning of Thecla see Wehn, "Blessed are the bodies," 157–60.

to test her faithfulness in chastity and which prepare her for baptism. Thecla stands firm throughout the testing, proving herself worthy of baptism and ready to become a disciple. The rejection and condemnation of Thecla by her own mother (APTh 20) is one of the most perplexing details of her trials. Brock has noted that “the initial legend may have preserved the way in which traditional family bonds were broken in the early Christian communities and new families were formed.”<sup>46</sup> Historically speaking this is very likely. On a different level the event may also evoke Jesus’ prophecy on division in the disciples’ family (see especially Luke 12:51–53: μήτερ ἐπὶ τὴν θυγατέρα).

Thecla’s paradigmatic discipleship is also supported by her profession of faith in front of the governor (APTh 37), which sounds very much like a baptismal *confessio*. Further, Thecla is the prototype of the disciple also because of her commissioning by Paul to teach the word of God (APTh 41). This is true even when Paul rather confirms her prior decision, because she stood the proof. Thecla’s paradigmatic character is enforced by the fact that Paul embodies Jesus himself. Thus, by listening to Paul, Thecla is actually a disciple of Jesus, *the* Christian disciple.

In this context it is worth recalling that Thecla adopts a male appearance in order to follow Paul (25) and to teach (40).<sup>47</sup> Her gesture has been interpreted as securing protection from assaults,<sup>48</sup> as giving up of attractiveness and adornment,<sup>49</sup> as assumption of a male role validating her right to teach.<sup>50</sup> Howe is right that the gesture implies “a denial of her sexual nature which might otherwise lure her into temptation.”<sup>51</sup> At any rate this change is not only a prerequisite for teaching, but for

<sup>46</sup> Brock, “Genre,” 129.

<sup>47</sup> The ascetic meaning of changing cloths was noted already by E. Peterson for Artemilla (“Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrus-Fragment der Acta Pauli,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 3.3 (1949): 142–62, here 143). Yet Thecla’s case means more than ascetic simplicity. I understand the cutting of hair and taking up of male clothing as belonging together, as both symbolise denial and transcendence of (female) sexuality.

<sup>48</sup> Jensen, *Thekla*, 32, n. 49. She actually revises her earlier position according to which taking up manly cloths was an expression of Thecla’s aspiration to equal possibilities and perspectives in life, a sign of her new freedom (113).

<sup>49</sup> Jensen rightly parallels it with the later tonsure adopted by monks and nuns (*Thekla*, 115).

<sup>50</sup> Howe, “Interpretations,” 40–41. Yet, I do not see Thecla’s offer to cut her hair as a bargain which would make her ministry, in principle reserved to men, acceptable to Paul.

<sup>51</sup> Howe, “Interpretations,” 41.

discipleship itself, as shown by Thecla's offer in APTh 25 to cut her hair and follow Paul after the persecution in Iconium, before she starts teaching herself. By cutting her hair and adopting a male attire Thecla gives up her femininity, not only in order to teach, but to become a disciple. She becomes thus an asexual or a "metasexual" being, who, by transcending sexuality, anticipates the life in the world to come. W. Meeks appropriately assimilates Thecla to the *monachos* of the *Gospel of Thomas*, "not only a celibate, but also one who must break all ties to home, city, and ordinary society, becoming a wanderer"; she is the "very model of a female 'who makes herself male'."<sup>52</sup>

##### 5. ESCHATOLOGICAL INCORRUPTIBILITY AND SALVATION OF THE PURE FROM JUDGEMENT

The APTh show a great interest in the concept of incorruptibility as *proprium* of the resurrected and transformed human body. This condition is anticipated in the fate of Thecla. Thecla is twice condemned to death, but escaping danger miraculously, she is saved. Though apparently elements of naive hagiography, in fact these episodes are a dramatised representation of the eternal salvation reserved to the chaste, and of the features of the resurrected. The fire, a typical metaphor for judgement, will be extinguished and will not harm her virginal body (APTh 22). This is an illustration of the thirteenth beatitude, that proclaims the blessedness of the body of virgins (τὰ σώματα τῶν παρθένων<sup>53</sup>), as they will be pleasing to God and will not miss the reward of their purity (ἀγνεία),<sup>54</sup> because the word of the Father shall become to them a work of salvation (σωτηρία) to the day of the Son (εἰς ἡμέραν τοῦ υἱοῦ), and they shall rest for ever. In the beatitude salvation on the day of the Son obviously refers to the eschatological

<sup>52</sup> W.A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 165–208, here 194–96. Logion 114, cf. the logia on the monachos (49, 75), which he associates with the image of unclothing in logion 21 and the transcendence of sexual differences in logion 22. It is suggestive that in the *Shepherd of Hermas* vis. 3.8.4 Ἐγκρατεία looks like a man (ἀνδρίζουμένη) (Meeks, 196, n. 137).

<sup>53</sup> B reads οἱ παρθένοι ἀσκήσαντες, F G add καὶ τὰ πνεύματα, cf. Vouaux, *Actes*, 158, n. 6.

<sup>54</sup> The variant reading παρθενίας is quite frequent (C E F I K L M; Vouaux, *Actes*, 159, n. 8), attesting that purity was clearly taken as virginity.

salvation from judgement. Thecla's salvation is staged against an apocalyptic background: the great fire, the subterranean rumbling, the cloud descending from above and overshadowing the scene, the huge amount of rain and hail that fills the amphitheatre, so that many die,<sup>55</sup> all depict and anticipate judgement. The double-entendre of σωτηρία in the context is obvious. Thecla's rescuing from the fire and from the flood-like shedding of water anticipates eschatological salvation of the chaste.

A very similar idea is conveyed by the even more dramatic story of the *theriomachia* in Antioch. A large number of fearful beasts are brought in to destroy Thecla. The episode provides an overlap of images that evoke martyrdom, deliverance from enemies<sup>56</sup> and eschatological salvation. Yet, in spite of the stereotyped image of the martyr in the arena, thrown to the wild beasts, Thecla is a less conventional martyr. She is a martyr in the sense that she professes her faith even at the cost of suffering. Yet, contrarily to most of the characters described in the martyr-acts, she does not welcome death, but cries out, praying to be rescued from death, and in the end she is saved. Her prayer before the *theriomachia* (APTh 31, recalling the tone of individual laments) and her profession of faith in front of the governor (APTh 37) place her among the poor and persecuted who have been rescued by God. Even more significant is that she asks God to hear Tryphaena's prayer on her behalf, because she has helped her to preserve her chastity (APTh 31: ὅτι με ἄγνην ἐτήρησεν).<sup>57</sup> This echoes the macarism of those who have preserved their flesh pure (οἱ ἄγνην τὴν σάρκα τηρήσαντες; B 2), connected with the beatitude on the bodies of virgins who will not miss the reward of their purity (B 13). A. Jensen rightly points out that Thecla's request alludes to the fact that women condemned to *theriomachia* became slaves and lost their right to sexual self-determination, a

<sup>55</sup> Was the inundation of the arena a reference to the flooding of amphitheatres for *naumachiae* or other aquatic spectacles? See K.M. Coleman, "Launching into History: Aquatic Displays in the Early Empire," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 48–74, here 54–7.

<sup>56</sup> The wild beasts are a classical metaphor for enemies. In the Old Testament the image appears typically (though not exclusively) in the laments. Dan 6 can also be regarded as a dramatisation of the metaphor of the lion. On the dramatisation of the lion-episode of 2 Tim 4:16–17 by the APTh, see MacDonald, *Legend*, 23, 61, and Häfner, "Gegner," 74 (yet reaching opposite conclusions).

<sup>57</sup> The motivation is omitted by E, cf. Vouaux, *Actes*, 208 n. 3.

condition that resulted in a double martyrdom.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the emphasis of the passage is not that much on martyrdom, but on salvation through sexual purity.<sup>59</sup> Thecla is rescued from death because she was able to preserve her chastity. The lioness does not attack, but submits to Thecla (APTh 28), and dies fighting for her with Alexander's lion (APTh 33). This image could refer to the elimination of the sexual "danger" represented by Alexander himself.<sup>60</sup> Authors have noted the coalition of females around Thecla, animals included, and her assault by male opponents, both humans and beasts.<sup>61</sup> This association of the female around Thecla is not absolute, and it does not necessarily situate the Acts in a world of sole women, hostile to men.<sup>62</sup>

The topic of danger, death and salvation through chastity comes back again in the baptism-scene (APTh 34). One of the most perplexing details of the episode is the presence of life-threatening seals in the water which will provide Thecla the opportunity to baptise herself. H. Schneider has analysed the ancient literary parallels, and he has accurately located the episode in the context of fights between bears and seals, typical for the circus.<sup>63</sup> This background provides a logical historical explanation for the presence of seals in the water-tank. Yet, the scene has a deeper meaning as well. The seals, even when reputedly harmless, through their association with the sea, bring in an additional symbolic element of danger and death to the classically ambivalent image of water. Baptismal water in itself symbolises the passage from death to life. This interpretation is reinforced by that of deliverance

<sup>58</sup> Jensen, *Thekla*, 33–4, n. 51, cf. p. 93; see also When, "Blessed are the bodies," 158 (based on the evidence provided in Musurillo [ed.], *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, [Oxford: Clarendon, 1972]).

<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, on the relationship between asceticism and martyrdom see M.A. Tilley, "The Ascetic Body and the (Un)Making of the World of the Martyr," *JAAR* 59.3 (1991): 467–79.

<sup>60</sup> For various symbolic interpretations of the (male and female) lion: E. Esch, "Thekla und die Tiere, oder: Die Zähmung der Widerspenstigen," in *Aus Liebe*, 159–79, here 167–74; she also remarks the sexual connotation of Alexander's bulls.

<sup>61</sup> S.L. Davies' view of an author "deeply resentful to the male sex" is exaggerated (*The Revolt of the Widows. The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* [Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1980], 107).

<sup>62</sup> The most striking is her rejection by her mother. Ng rightly remarks that the APTh has both woman hostile to Thekla and men favourable to her or changing heart, as the governor does ("Acts of Paul and Thecla," 3–4).

<sup>63</sup> H. Schneider, "Thekla und die Robben," *VigChr* 55 (2001): 45–57. Probably the closest ancient parallel is Homer, *Od.* 15.480 (the woman killed by Aptenis is thrown into the sea to be devoured by seals and fish [p. 52]). On the presence of seals in the amphitheatre see also Coleman, "Aquatic Displays," 57.

from the seals threatening Thecla's life. Yet again, her physical rescue is a prefiguration of eschatological salvation: Thecla baptises herself to the last day (APTh 34: ὑστέρᾳ ἡμέρᾳ). The double-entendre is again remarkable, as in the narrative the last day is a combined reference to the day of death and that of judgement. Confronting death, Thecla emerges safely to life. Through baptism she receives the σφραγίς of purity and implicitly preservation from final judgement. Howe has rightly noted that "baptism is not only an indication that the person is vowing to abstain from sexual activity; it is also a guarantee (or seal) that places the baptized person outside the realm of sexual temptation."<sup>64</sup> Therefore by immersing into the baptismal water, earlier denied to her by Paul who feared that she was not strong enough to face temptations, Thecla is now confirmed in her chastity and safe as to her eschatological fate. This association is attested by the enigmatic cloud of fire (νεφέλη πυρός), which, as Davis has noted, not only protects Thecla's body, but also preserves her chastity and modesty.<sup>65</sup>

The reference to eternal salvation is strengthened by Thecla's profession of faith before the governor (APTh 37), where she defines herself as the servant of the living God, who was preserved because of her faith in the Son of God. He is μόνος σωτηρίας ὁδός,<sup>66</sup> καὶ ζωῆς ἀθανάτου ὑποστάσις. The conclusion that the one who does not believe in him will not live, but will die forever confirms the eschatological interpretation of σωτηρία.<sup>67</sup>

The motif of stripping and clothing (APTh 33, 38), intimately linked to baptism, is yet another symbolic representation of Thecla's exposure to and salvation from sexual temptation, as well as of her salvation from eternal judgement.<sup>68</sup> When encouraged by the governor to dress, Thecla responds: ὁ ἐνδύσας με γυμνὴν ἐν τοῖς θηρίοις, οὗτος ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως ἐνδύσει με σωτηρίαν. This calls to mind the salvation from

<sup>64</sup> Howe, "Interpretations," 42.

<sup>65</sup> Davis, "A 'Pauline' Defense," 455–9 sees in the phrase a combined intertextual reference to Exod 13:21–22 and esp. 1 Cor 10:1–11, as specific reference to Paul's eschatological view of baptism.

<sup>66</sup> Vouaux notes the parallel with 1 Tim 6:16 (*Actes*, 218, n. 4).

<sup>67</sup> Leinhäupl-Wilke, "Einfluss," 153.

<sup>68</sup> It is remarkable that with this respect the governor performs the function of a mystagogue: he leads to death, also prefigured by the stripping, and pronounces salvation, demanding her to dress; he receives Thecla's profession of faith.

the bitter day of judgement, promised in the twelfth macarism (οὐκ ὄψονται ἡμέραν κρίσεως πικράν).<sup>69</sup>

Finally, the end of Thecla's earthly life is described in terms of dormition: after having enlightened many with the word of God, μετὰ καλοῦ ὕπνου ἐκοιμήθη (43). This is all the more remarkable, as the last part of the apodosis of B 13 states that the word of the Father shall become to them [the bodies of the virgins] a work of salvation in the day of his Son, and they shall have rest for ever and ever.

## 6. THE CHASTE AS INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE OTHERWORLD

The motif of the chaste transcending the boundaries of this world and acceding to the otherworld is developed in Paul's appearance as embodiment of Jesus and in his elevation to heaven. A specific case of overcoming these limits is Thecla's ability to intercede for the dead. Queen Tryphaena's daughter asks her in her dream to take Thecla instead of her, so that due to Thecla's prayers she may be translated to the place of the righteous (28: ἵνα εὗξεται ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ καὶ μεταθετῶ εἰς τὸν τῷ δικαίων τόπον). The text does not state the reason that impeded her reaching salvation "earlier".<sup>70</sup> Tryphaena's request equates translation to the place of the righteous with life; the thought is echoed by Thecla's prayer, which speaks of eternal life (29: ζήσεται εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας). After Thecla's miraculous rescue, Tryphaena confesses her faith in the resurrection of the dead: she now believes that her daughter lives (39).<sup>71</sup> Tryphaena's demand and profession of faith attest the belief in the existence of some sort of transitional condition of the

<sup>69</sup> B omits πικράν (Vouaux, *Actes*, 158, n. 5). The Heidelberg Papyrus lacks the protasis and the first part of the apodosis of the twelfth beatitude, but Merz is probably right to attribute the omission to a homoioteleuton (*Selbstausslegung*, 322–3, n. 199.) Is Thecla ἐλεήμωνη because she shows mercy towards Falconilla, praying for her salvation (praying for the dead as act of mercy), and towards Tryphaena, by relieving the pain of a mother and widow? APT<sup>h</sup> 31 describes Tryphaena as merciful (she shows συμπάθεια to Thecla).

<sup>70</sup> Bremmer supposes that Tryphaena's daughter was unbaptised ("Magic," 43–44), while Lalleman thinks she was an unbeliever ("Resurrection," 133).

<sup>71</sup> Lalleman, "Resurrection," 133, understands the effect of Thecla's intercession in terms of resurrection. Yet the problem is somewhat more complicated: Falconilla's communication with her mother shows that she is "out there somewhere" in the otherworld, but she has not reached heavenly beatitude.

dead, where their eternal fate is not yet decided, and can be influenced by the prayer of the living.<sup>72</sup> The text, briefly mentioned by Le Goff in relation with the “prehistory” of the purgatory, does not provide details on how this condition is to be imagined.<sup>73</sup> The representation of this transitional stage in the otherworld is undeveloped. Compared to Perpetua’s visions of her brother’s suffering,<sup>74</sup> the narrative in APTh is very simple. There is no description of Falconilla’s suffering, except of her inability to reach the place of the righteous.

The other important concept is that of the efficiency of Thecla’s prayer for the dead. The power of her intercession might be related to her readiness for martyrdom. Yet, she is not that much a martyr, at least not in the manner of Perpetua, who will actually die, but her strength lies much more in her chastity.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The narrative and the theology of the APTh are much more subtle than often thought. The large number of references to New Testament writings and the borrowing of motifs from the ancient novel, the multiple allusions to the polemics of their time, both against competing Christian teachings (such as those of the Pastoral Epistles) and against pagan religion,<sup>75</sup> show the ability of the author(s) to offer, beyond comfort and entertainment, a specific view on Christianity.

The eschatology of the APTh is future-oriented, and deeply influenced by the ascetic doctrine. The work as it stands now interprets every event from the perspective of chastity.<sup>76</sup> Compared to other

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<sup>72</sup> Jensen notes that the expression of this faith parallels that expressed in the *Passio Perpetuae* (*Thekla*, 34, n. 55, cf. p. 92). See also J. Le Goff, *La naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), 74–7, and the brief excursion in *Actes* (Vouaux), 204–205, n.1\*, who calls the prayer for a dead pagan contrary to Catholic doctrine. Vouaux compares the idea with Origen’s *apokatastasis*. A. Merkt does not mention the APTh (*Das Fegefeuer. Entstehung und Funktion einer Idee* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005]).

<sup>73</sup> Le Goff, *Purgatoire*, 76.

<sup>74</sup> Dinocrates’ suffering includes thirst, combined with the impossibility to drink from a tank full of water, too high to be accessible; his face is marked by a wound acquired during his lifetime, and he is obviously in bad shape. See the detailed analysis of Perpetua’s vision in Merkt, *Fegefeuer*, 15–33.

<sup>75</sup> On the latter aspect see Esch, “Thekla und die Tiere,” 169–74.

<sup>76</sup> This is true even when we accept the premise of a redactional recasting of the Thecla-tradition, with the integration and reinterpretation of various legends.

early Christian or Jewish (Christian) writings, the representation of the otherworld is rather undeveloped. Spatial and temporal details are quasi-inexistent. Heaven is addressed more or less explicitly, as place of glorification, of incorruptibility and eternal life, as a space of rest, as place of the righteous. Reaching heavenly bliss is a certitude for the chaste, already in this world. There is no explicit reference to hell. Only the allusions to those who will not live forever suggest that there must be a counterpart to heaven. While there are explicit statements on the resurrection of the chaste, there is no direct damnation to suffering of those who fail to choose this path. Damnation is not described in terms of pain; only non-resurrection is implied, possibly suggesting annihilation. The writing is probably one of the earliest to allude to what will later become the "purgatory". Yet the concept of purification through pain is absent. The focus is on the possibility to influence the eternal fate of the dead, which thus proves to be (at least "temporarily"?) undecided.

Several elements of the story imply the possibility to communicate with the otherworld. The borders become crossable. The chaste may accede to the otherworld in this life (Paul), or perceive something from it through visions (Thecla). Dreams are another channel of communicating with those who have left this world. In this case the deceased take the initiative; they may ask for help and give advice.

A major message of the APTh is that by transcending sexuality, the chaste anticipate heavenly beatitude, angelic life and incorruptibility, and acquire almost superhuman features. They are intimately united with Christ, up to the point of sharing his life and glorification. Because of sharing in the angelic life, heavenly fulfilment dispenses with erotic-marital love-relations, but other forms of affection, such as that between parent and child, or between companions in faith, are preserved.

It is difficult to tell to what extent the APTh imply bodily resurrection. The beatitudes on the bodies of virgins, preserving their purity, the incorruptible character of Thecla's body, as well as her vision favour the idea of a personal resurrection into a transfigured corporeality. The same is suggested by Thecla's *koimesis*. These elements reflect a somewhat unusual treatment of the body for a work permeated by encratism.<sup>77</sup> The body of the chaste is not subject to decomposition, but finds eternal heavenly rest.

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<sup>77</sup> I owe this point to Joseph Verheyden.

The representation of the otherworlds in the APTh is rather uncomplicated in terms of spatial imagery. Nonetheless, the work expresses manifold theological views in an artful manner, through a captivating narrative. In this essay I have focused on the relationship between eschatology and asceticism. Others shall possibly want to take up other aspects, such as that of the sacramental-baptismal symbolism, or shall wish to analyse in depth the intertextual aspects of the writing. The APTh is far from being fully explored.



## ORPHIC, ROMAN, JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TOURS OF HELL: OBSERVATIONS ON THE APOCALYPSE OF PETER

Jan N. Bremmer

From brief mentions in the patristic literature it was known that early Christianity not only had an *Apocalypse of John* and an *Apocalypse of Paul* (*Visio Pauli*), which survived the ravages of the Middle Ages in several manuscripts,<sup>1</sup> but also an *Apocalypse of Peter* (henceforth: *Apoc. Pet.*). But not until the end of the nineteenth century (actually, the winter of 1886–7) was a late sixth- or early seventh-century codex with substantial fragments of the *Apoc. Pet.* in Greek found in the grave of, probably, a monk in Akhmim, ancient Panopolis. The codex was published almost at once and roused great interest among the leading classical and patristic scholars of its day, as the names of Harnack and Usener in the most recent critical apparatus still attest.<sup>2</sup> In 1910, however, the French scholar S. Grébaut published an Ethiopic text that not only was more complete, but also came closer to the Greek original, as was gradually realised.<sup>3</sup> The situation became even more complicated in the years 1911 and 1924 through the separate publication of two fragments of the same, later fifth-century, miniature codex with small

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<sup>1</sup> For a description and dating of these manuscripts see now T. Silverstein and A. Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul. A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Geneva: Cramer, 1997); L. Jiroušková, L., *Die Visio Pauli. Wege und Wandlungen einer orientalischen Apokryphe im lateinischen Mittelalter unter Einschluß der alttschechischen und deutschsprachigen Textzeugen* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the codex, its date and the circumstances of its findings see P. van Minnen, “The Greek Apocalypse of Peter,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter* (eds. J. Bremmer and I. Czachesz; Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 7; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 15–39; see also his ‘The Akhmim Gospel of Peter,’ in *Das Evangelium nach Petrus* (eds. T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas; TU 158; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 53–60.

<sup>3</sup> For the Ethiopic version I follow the translations of D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened* (SBLDS 97; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 162–244, and P. Marrassini, in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens I* (ed. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain; Bibliothèque de Pléiade; Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 755–74. For the Greek version I follow the recent edition and translation by T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse* (GCS Neue Folge 11; Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 81–138.

portions of a Greek text that was closer to the Ethiopian version than the Akhmim codex and was possibly written in Alexandria.<sup>4</sup> Evidently, the text of the *Apoc. Pet.* was not painstakingly preserved but continuously adapted to changing theological insights and needs, like most apocalyptic texts, with the exception of the *Book of Revelation*. As the Ethiopic version was probably translated from an Arabic translation of a Greek original, one must conclude that older and newer versions of the *Apocalypse of Peter* continued to co-exist peacefully. The older form may well have been preserved by congregations that considered the text to be of the same value as the other canonical books of the New Testament. In fact, the mid-fifth-century church historian Sozomen (VII.19.9) relates that in the fifth century some Palestinian churches still read the *Apoc. Pet.* once a year.

In the end, the *Apoc. Pet.* did not survive because the Church considered it a heretical treatise and because of the much greater popularity of the, equally apocryphal, *Apocalypse of Paul*. Yet for the history of hell the *Apoc. Pet.* is of prime importance, as it was the first Christian treatise to describe, in great and often repulsive detail, the crimes and punishments of those suffering in hell, and thus became a great inspiration for imagined hellscape in later antiquity. It would transcend the space available here to comment here on the whole of the *Apoc. Pet.* in detail, and I will therefore limit my contribution to some observations on its date and place of origin (§1), its sins and punishments (§2) and, finally, on the origin and chronology of the tours of hell (§3).

## 1. THE DATE AND PLACE OF THE APOCALYPSE OF PETER

Unfortunately, we cannot be totally certain about its date and place of origin. The most prolific student of the *Apoc. Pet.* in recent times, Richard Bauckham, has strongly favoured a date under Bar Kokhba in Palestine, whose followers made a messianic claim on his behalf and who persecuted the Christians, both elements fitting the description in Chapter 2 of the *Apoc. Pet.* of a persecuting false Messiah.<sup>5</sup> Peter van Minnen, on the other hand, considered the case not conclusively

<sup>4</sup> See now Kraus and Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium und Petrusapokalypse*, 121–30.

<sup>5</sup> R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 187–94.

demonstrated and proposed Rome on the basis of the Roman martyrdom of Peter and the mention of the *Apoc. Pet.* at first place in the *Canon Muratori*.<sup>6</sup> Bauckham had objected that the absence of any mention of the ruler cult argued against a Roman origin, but, as Van Minnen observes, the imperial cult was not very obtrusive in Rome itself. Yet Van Minnen's arguments are not conclusive either. Moreover, although the connection of *Apoc. Pet.* with Bar Kokhba is less persuasive,<sup>7</sup> there is another argument for Palestine as well. Several indications suggest that *Apoc. Pet.* stands in a tradition that starts in *1 Enoch* and considered Mount Hermon in Upper Galilee as *the* place of revelation. As chapters 15–17 also contain references to Enochic literature, a connection with Palestine seems not unlikely.<sup>8</sup>

However, this is not the whole truth. Eibert Tigchelaar has observed that the sins in verses 9.2 and 3 are rather similar to those in verses 7.2 and 3. Moreover, in these cases the crimes do not fit the punishment, and the Ethiopic text uses here two first person singular pronouns, namely 'my righteous ones' and 'my righteousness'. He persuasively concludes that these verses must have been inserted into an already existing catalogue of sins.<sup>9</sup> In other words, it is most likely that the author of the *Apoc. Pet.*, when writing his text, made freely use of another text. It seems reasonable to assume that this other text was composed in Egypt. There are three arguments in support of this contention. First, there is a reference to the worship of cats, which we also find in other Jewish Egyptian texts.<sup>10</sup> Although the worship of cats was known outside Egypt, a reference to it in this context would make sense most in Egypt itself. Second, there is a repeated reference to *borboros*, 'mire', in the Greek version (23, 24, 31), which is lacking in the Ethiopic translation. Mire in Hades is well known from the Greek tradition and appears first in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where Heracles sees

<sup>6</sup> Van Minnen, 'The Greek Apocalypse of Peter,' 30.

<sup>7</sup> See most recently J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles. With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 132f.

<sup>8</sup> E.J.C. Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba? Considering the Date and Provenance of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter," in *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bremmer and Czachesz), 63–77 at 76f.

<sup>9</sup> Tigchelaar, 'Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?' 72.

<sup>10</sup> Wisd. 12:24; 15:18; *Letter to Aristeas* 138; *Or. Sib.* 3:30–1, Frag. 3.22, 27–30, 5.278–80; Philo, *Decal.* 76–80, *De vita contemp.* 8, *Leg.* 139, 163. It is true that we find references to such worship also in Jewish Palestinian texts, such as *T. Mos.* 2.7; Ps- Philo, *L. A. B.* 44.5, but these are less specific.

those who wronged their guests, struck their parents or committed perjury lying in the mire (145–81, 273). From its other occurrences in Plato's *Phaedo* (69C) and *Republic* (363D), it is clear that the mention of *borboros* is typical of the Orphic picture of the underworld.<sup>11</sup> Now this tradition is well attested in Jewish circles in Alexandria, where the so-called *Testament of Orpheus* is a Jewish-Egyptian revision of an Orphic poem,<sup>12</sup> whereas Orphic literature is not readily demonstrable for Palestine.

Third, when we abstract the crimes in the *Apoc. Pet.* from the punishments and turn them into commandments, we get a whole series of commandments, such as 'do not kill', 'do not commit abortion', 'do not lend money' or 'stick to heterosexual relationships'. These commandments strongly resemble other gnostic *sententiae* in Egyptian- and Jewish-Hellenistic literature. And indeed, it is precisely in Egypt that we find the instructional Demotic monostich and writings such as *Papyrus Insinger* or the *Instruction of Ankhsheshonqy*, which closely resemble the sayings of pseudo-Phocylides. It is highly instructive to see that most of the ethical 'commandments' can be paralleled in the latter.<sup>13</sup> In particular we note that the first two positive instructions to derive from the punishments in the *Apoc. Pet.* are 'do not blaspheme the road of righteousness' and 'do not deviate from righteousness'. Similarly, pseudo-Phocylides starts and closes with the mention of righteousness, even if the text of verse 1 is not totally clear. Unfortunately, the results of this discussion permit two conclusions.

First, the *Apoc. Pet.* was first written in Palestine but revised by a Jewish-Christian author who used an Egyptian source or version, clearly was well educated and at home in Greek culture. This orientation is also supported by the fact that he used the Septuagint for his quotations of the Old Testament. Alternatively, it also cannot be excluded that the *Apoc. Pet.* was written by a similarly educated author

<sup>11</sup> For more references see J.N. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 144 n. 89.

<sup>12</sup> C. Riedweg, *Jüdisch-hellenistische Imitation eines orphischen Hieros Logos* (Tübingen: Narr, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> See the review of more recent literature on the background of Pseudo-Phocylides by P.W. van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited," *JSP* 3 (1988): 3–30 at 4–14; M. Goff, "Hellenistic Instruction in Palestine and Egypt: Ben Sira and Papyrus Insinger," *JSJ* 36 (2005): 147–72.

in Egypt on the basis of a Palestinian text. We simply do not know.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the date of the *Apoc. Pet.* is much less debated. At present there is a general consensus that it must date from the last decades of the first half of the second century AD, given its mention by Clement of Alexandria.<sup>15</sup>

From Palestine it was not far to Syria, and it is here that we find the earliest references to our Apocalypse, namely the *Epistula Apostolorum* and Theophilus of Antioch.<sup>16</sup> To these regularly mentioned treatises we may now also add Lucian. After Glen Bowersock has persuasively argued that several passages from the Greek novels react to Christian rites or themes,<sup>17</sup> it is perhaps less difficult to accept that in his *True Histories* Lucian uses the *Apocalypse of John* in his picture of the City of the Blessed and the *Apoc. Pet.* in his passage on the Isle of the Damned: after all, he mentioned Christians in both *Alexander of Abounoteichos* (25, 38) and *Peregrinus* (11–13).<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Lucian's knowledge says something about the status of the *Apoc. Pet.*: evidently, it soon became known also outside its immediate milieu of origin. Unfortunately, the date and place of the *Second Sibylline Oracle*, which quotes the *Apoc. Pet.* extensively, is disputed and the most recent discussion has remained inconclusive.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

Having looked at its date and origin, let us now move on to the content. The Ethiopic version of the *Apoc. Pet.* starts with a number of questions, from the end of the world to Christ on the Mount of Olives. From the answers it is clear that the book was written in a time of

<sup>14</sup> J. van Ruiten, "The Old Testament Quotations in the *Apocalypse of Peter*," in *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bremmer and Czachesz), 158–73.

<sup>15</sup> Clem. Alex. *apud* Eusebius, *h.e.* 6.14.1, cf. Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 132.

<sup>16</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 45–50.

<sup>17</sup> G. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> P. von Möllendorff, *Auf der Suche nach der verlogenen Wahrheit. Lukians Wahre Geschichten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 318–21 (*Apocalypse of John*), 427–30 (*Apoc. Pet.*). For Lucian's interest in Christianity see now J.N. Bremmer, "Peregrinus' Christian Career," in *Flores Florentino. Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (eds. A. Hilhorst, E. Puech and E. Tigchelaar; JSJSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 729–47.

<sup>19</sup> Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 94–106.

persecution (ch. 2 E). When the last days have come, it says, we shall see a number of specific punishments of specific crimes that are listed in great detail. Subsequently, the apostles see Moses and Elijah appear, and they are shown paradise. Finally, heaven opens and Jesus is taken up with Moses and Elijah. However, in the Greek version the punishments have already taken place and the description of paradise precedes the description of hell instead of following it. In other words, the author of the Akhmim version had already edited the *Apoc. Pet.* to a considerable extent.

After this quick overview of the extant parts of the book let us take a closer look at the list of sins and punishments found in hell in the *Apoc. Pet.*, which I list here in summary manner.<sup>20</sup>

<i>Sin</i>	<i>Punishment</i>
Blaspheming the way of righteousness (7.1–2 E; 22 G).	Hung from the tongue, fire.
Denied righteousness (7.3–4 E; 23 G).	Pit of burning mud.
Women who beautified themselves for adultery (7.5–6 E; 24a G).	Hung by the hair over bubbling mud.
Men who committed adultery with those women (7.7–8 E; 24b G).	Hung by the thighs (E; 'feet' G), head in the mud, crying, 'We did not believe that we would come to this place'.
Murderers and their associates (7.9–11 E; 25 G).	Tormented by snakes and worms, their victims watching them and saying, 'O God, righteous is thy judgement'.
Women who conceived children but procured abortion (8.1–4 E; 26 G).	Sit in a pool of discharge and excrement, with eyes burned by flames coming from their children opposite them.
Infanticide (8.5–10 E).	Flesh-eating animals come forth from the mothers' rotten milk and torment the parents.
Persecuting and giving over the righteous ones (9.1–2 E; 27 G).	Sit in a dark place, burned waist-high, tortured by evil spirits, bowels eaten by worms.
Blaspheming and betraying righteousness (9.3 E; 28 G).	Chewing their tongues, eyes burnt out by fiery rods.

<sup>20</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 308–11; Bauckham, *The Fate*, 166–7. I have adapted the scheme of I. Czachesz, "The Grotesque Body in the *Apocalypse of Peter*," in *Apocalypse of Peter*, (Bremmer and Czachesz), 108–26 at 111–13.

False witnesses (9.4 E; 29 G).	Lips cut off, fire in the mouth and bowels.
Faith in wealth, but neglect of widows and orphans (9.5–7 E; 30 G).	Wearing rags, never ending pain, set on sharp and fiery stones.
Lending money and taking interest on the interest (10.1 E; 31 G).	Stand in a pool of excrement.
Those 'who cut their flesh' (not in G), homosexuals and lesbians (10.2–4 E; 32 G). <sup>21</sup>	Endlessly throwing themselves into an abyss.
Those who made idols resembling animals, such as cats and lions (10.5–6 E; 33 G, which does not specify the nature of the idols).	Makers beat themselves with chains of fire (misunderstood by G).
Men and women that abandoned the commandment (G: way) of God and followed demons (10.7 E; 34 G).	Eternally burning.
Those who did not obey their parents (11.1–3 E).	Slip down rolling into a fiery place repeatedly.
Those who did not obey their parents, who did not follow the teaching of their fathers and did not honour those who were older (11.4–5 E).	Carnivorous birds torture them.
Maidens who did not retain their virginity until marriage (11.6–7 E).	Their flesh is torn apart.
Slaves who did not obey their masters (11.8–9 E).	Chewing their tongues, eternal fire.
Those who do charity and regard themselves righteous (12.1–3 E).	Blind and deaf pushing each other onto eternally burning coal.
Sorcerers and sorceresses (12.4–7 E).	Wheel of fire.

Albrecht Dieterich has already discussed the punishments at length in his learned, original, but rather speculative *Nekyia*.<sup>22</sup> Several penalties have been imposed on the *talio* principle.<sup>23</sup> This is already clear at the beginning, where the blasphemers are hanging by their tongues, just as somewhat later the blasphemers have to chew their tongues, and false witnesses have their lips cut off.<sup>24</sup> We may compare Aristophanes' *Knights* (1362–3) where the prosecutor is thrown into a ravine with

<sup>21</sup> One of the Ethiopic manuscripts adds 'idolatry', but this is most likely a gloss.

<sup>22</sup> A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (2nd ed.; Leipzig and Berlin: Akademie, 1913 [Repr. Darmstadt: WBG, 1969]), 205–9.

<sup>23</sup> M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 75–77; J.P. Brown, *Israel and Hellas III* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2001), 27–30.

<sup>24</sup> For the Near Eastern background of this punishment see R. Rollinger, "Herodotus, Human Violence and the Ancient Near East," in *The World of Herodotus* (eds. V.

the demagogue Hyperbolus around his neck or Lucian's *Fugitives* (33) where the impostor philosopher is hung by his beard. Similarly, Lucian lets Kinyras, the kidnapper of Helen, but also the incestuous king of Cyprus, hang by his balls in his *True Histories*.<sup>25</sup> Not surprisingly, he is in this respect inspired by the *Apoc. Pet.*, even though in the latter adulterers are hung by their feet in the Greek version (24b G) and by their thighs in the Ethiopic translation (7:7–8 E).<sup>26</sup>

In other cases, the connection is much less clear, such as when those trusting their wealth are rolling on sharp pebbles or when usurers are standing in the boiling mire. In fact, in the *Apoc. Pet.* the *talio* principle is used modestly and cannot be considered the organising principle of these penalties.<sup>27</sup> The picture of hell itself is partially inspired by Aristophanes and Plato (or Pseudo-Plato), from whom the author took the mire and the bad smells, but the burning mud seems to be the author's own invention, just as the stress on blood, which Lucian also happily took over in his *True Histories* (2:30). The great transgressors of Greek mythology seem to have been another source of inspiration. The continuing throwing down of lesbians from a great precipice, who then have to climb up in order to be thrown down again reminds one of Sisyphus, and the carnivorous birds that torture those that did not honour their parents and the elderly (11:4–5 E) recall Prometheus' vulture. Naturally, the traditional pagan sinners had no place any more in the *Apoc. Pet.*, but we already find the same 'emancipation' of the traditional punishments from the original sinners in Virgil's *Aeneid* VI,<sup>28</sup> and we may at least wonder if this separation was not already part of the common source.

The crimes can be grouped into certain categories,<sup>29</sup> even though there is always something arbitrary about such categorisations. The

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Karageorghis and I. Taifacos; Nicosia: Foundation Anastasios Leventis, 2004), 121–50 at 141.

<sup>25</sup> D.B. Levine, "Lucian, *True History* 2, 26 reconsidered: lust and punishment," *Helios* 18 (1991): 31–33.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 89.

<sup>27</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 80 shows that at the most 40% of the punishments in *Apoc. Pet.* are based on the measure-for-measure principle; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 503 overstates its presence in the *Apoc. Pet.* in contrast with that of the Sibyl.

<sup>28</sup> J. Zetzel, "Romane Memento: Justice and Judgment in *Aeneid* 6," *TAPA* 119 (1989): 263–84 at 269–70.

<sup>29</sup> Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?," 71 surely goes too far: "a haphazardly assembled collection of diverse sins, without a clear systematisation or an area of special attention," even though followed by Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 505.

largest one concerns the interrelated righteousness, blasphemy, idolatry and persecution (7), then comes sexuality and the relationships between the sexes (4), then concern for parents and slaves (5),<sup>30</sup> to which category we probably also have to count the concern for unborn or new-born children, which in pseudo-Phocylides (184–85) is included among the other sexual prescriptions, and this may be valid also for the concern for widows and orphans (2); finally, we find magic (1), usury (1) and murder (1).

It is extremely interesting to note these groupings, as our author certainly did not invent this procedure by himself. In fact, such groupings also occur in two other, only slightly earlier, hellscapes, viz in the *katabasis* of Virgil's *Aeneid* VI, of which the Orphic character was established by Eduard Norden in his great commentary,<sup>31</sup> and in a third- or fourth-century papyrus from Bologna, of which the text seems to date of early imperial times and is generally accepted to be Orphic in character (fr. 717 Bernabé).<sup>32</sup> In Virgil (*Aen.* 6.608–13), we find a list of sinners against the family and *familia*, then a brief list of their punishments (614–17), and then more sinners, mythological and historical (618–24). In the Orphic papyrus, we find a list of sinners (1–24), then the Erinyes and Harpies as agents of their punishments (25–46), and subsequently again sinners (47ff.). Both Virgil and the papyrus must go back to an older Orphic source (sources?),<sup>33</sup> which we no longer have, but which seems to have contained separate catalogues of sinners and their punishments.

<sup>30</sup> These belong together, see P. Derron, *Les Sentences du Pseudo-Phocylide* (Paris: Les belles Lettres, 1986), 31.

<sup>31</sup> E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis VI* (Leipzig: Akademie, 1927 [Repr. Darmstadt: WBG, 1967]). For Norden see most recently J. Rüpke, *Römische Religion bei Eduard Norden* (Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, 1993); B. Kytzler et al. (eds), *Eduard Norden (1868–1941)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994); W.M. Calder III and B. Huss, "Sed serviendum officio..." *The Correspondence between Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Eduard Norden (1892–1931)* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1997); W.A. Schröder, *Der Altertumswissenschaftler Eduard Norden. Das Schicksal eines deutschen Gelehrten jüdischen Abkunft* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1999); A. Baumgarten, "Eduard Norden and His Students: a Contribution to a Portrait. Based on Three Archival Finds," *Scripta Class. Israel.* 25 (2006): 121–40.

<sup>32</sup> For the text see now, with extensive bibliography and commentary, A. Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta. Poetae Epici Graeci. Pars II. Fasc. 2* (Munich and Leipzig: Saur, 2006), 271–87, who notes on p. 271: 'omnia quae in papyro leguntur cum Orphica doctrina recentioris aetatis congruunt'.

<sup>33</sup> This has now been established by N. Horsfall, "P. Bonon.4 and Virgil, *Aen.* 6, yet again," *ZPE* 96 (1993): 17–18.

However this may be, we must face the question of what consequences this grouping may lead to. Let us first note what we do *not* read. We do not hear anything about specific ritual or dogmatic transgressions. Most decent Jews, Christians and, probably, even some pagans would hardly have had a problem with the great majority of these implicit commandments. This may well be another indication that the prescriptions ultimately derived from Jewish Hellenistic ethical monostichs, as these also avoided all too explicit references to Jewish practices and doctrines.<sup>34</sup>

Second, in Hellenistic Jewish precepts we often find sexuality first, closely followed by parents, the elderly and slaves.<sup>35</sup> This focus is still recognisable in our text where sexuality and the relationships between the sexes are also highly important, immediately followed by the parents and widows and orphans. In pseudo-Phocylides (4) we find wiles and murder immediately after the injunction about sexuality, and this combination must have been traditional.<sup>36</sup> That is probably why in the *Apoc. Pet.* murder immediately follows upon adultery and before the mention of abortion, which might be seen as the fruit of adulterous behaviour.

Third, the stress on blasphemy and persecution is somewhat surprising. Among Jews and Greeks we usually find the exhortation to honour both God and the parents;<sup>37</sup> one is also reminded of the exhortation of Phlegyas in Virgil's underworld: *discite iustitiam moniti et non temnere divos* (*Aen.* 6.620), on the content of which the major commentaries are remarkably silent. Here it seems that the focus on God and the threat of His denial during the persecutions has inspired our author to exalt God's position. That is why this category is represented most.

This does not necessarily mean that the persecutions mentioned were invented by our Christian author. In *1 Enoch* 108 we find not only blasphemers in the eternal fire (6), where the Ethiopic version of *1 Enoch* uses the same term as the *Apoc. Pet.*, but also a mention of those who 'were being trodden upon by evil people' (10) and who

<sup>34</sup> Van der Horst, 'Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited,' 1–12.

<sup>35</sup> P.W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 110–11.

<sup>36</sup> Van der Horst, *ad loc.*, compares Wisd. 14:25f and *Barnabas* 20:1.

<sup>37</sup> Van der Horst, *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 116–17 with many references; W. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 82–3.

will be seated 'each one by one upon the throne of honour' (12). This combination of blasphemy, persecution and recompense suggests an origin in the times from before or during the Maccabean revolt. In fact, it seems that the notion of blasphemy became more prominent in the second century BC as a qualification of non-Jews or as a means of slighting ideological or religious Jewish opponents. It now became incorporated in lists of sins, such as 'sin, oppression, blasphemy and injustice' in *1 Enoch* (91:7; note also 96:7), but also in the Dead Sea Scrolls (*IQS* 4.10–11, 4Q372 1 13). Philo repeatedly expresses his horror at blasphemy, such as when the emperor requests worship (*Leg.* 368) or when the name of God is pronounced at unsuitable occasions (*Vita Moy.* 2.206), which in his view deserves capital punishment.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, though, it is not always clear what the exact meaning of blaspheming is. It seems that Hebrew *giddef* covers the whole spectre of negatively speaking to or about God as well as denying God's care and law. In each case, it is the context that determines the precise meaning of blasphemy.

Greeks and Romans were much less concerned with blasphemy, and the Emperor Tiberius, who sometimes had a healthy view of life, tersely commented: *deorum iniuriae dis curae* (*Tac. Ann.* 1.73). Early Christianity, however, followed its Jewish roots in this respect. Blasphemers perverted God's law, and that is why pseudo-Pauline letters can say that a slave should serve his master so that God's word would not be blasphemed (1 Tim 6:1) or that women should be chaste so that the word of God should not be blasphemed (Tit 2:5). Blasphemy, then, had a strong ethical content, which seems to have been lost in its modern usage.<sup>39</sup> This ethical meaning probably also explains the words 'blaspheming the way of righteousness' (9:3 E; 28 G). The expression 'the way of righteousness' is a relative newcomer in the Old Testament and not found before the book of Job. It often occurs in Proverbs, but also in Matthew (21:32) in the New Testament, where John came in the 'road of righteousness' and demanded righteousness of life in accordance with the will of God. Elsewhere in the NT we find the expression in 2 Peter 2:21 where the libertines leave this road. Pseudo-Phocylides (229–30) even ends with: 'These are the mysteries of

<sup>38</sup> H. Merkel, "Gotteslästerung," *RAC* 11 (1981): 1185–1201.

<sup>39</sup> A. Cabantous, *Blasphemy: Impious Speech in the West From the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002); D. Nash, *Blasphemy in the Christian World: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

righteousness; living by them may you live out a good life until the threshold of old age'.

In other words, *dikaioσύνη* does not so much imply here a connection with faith and salvation, such as we find in Paul, but rather its contemporary Jewish meaning, which in itself was much influenced by a development of *dikaíos* in Hellenistic times, when the word became synonymous for an *honnête homme*. In Jewish circles this meant to be a decent person in accordance with the Law and, probably also according to our author, in obedience to God as well.<sup>40</sup> This obedience to God, precisely in times of persecution, must have made blasphemy an even more serious crime than it would have been anyway.<sup>41</sup>

My last example concerns certain sexual behaviour. The Ethiopic version states that those that hurl themselves continually from a height are those 'that cut their flesh, those that had sexual relations with men. The women who are with them are those that have defiled one another, as a woman with a man' (10:4 E). In the Greek version this has become: 'these were the ones who defiled their bodies acting as women. And the women who were with them were those who lay with one another as a man with a woman' (32b G). It is interesting to see that the recent French translation in the authoritative collection of apocryphal writings edited by Bovon and Geoltrain replaces the Ethiopic 'cut the flesh' with the less specific Greek 'those who have defiled themselves'.<sup>42</sup> Evidently, he finds the expression out of place here. My former colleague István Czachesz has suggested interpreting the expression as a reference to cultic tattooing.<sup>43</sup> What both of them did not notice is that pseudo-Phocylides (187) condemns castration in the same section as homosexuality and lesbian love. This proves once again the dependence of the *Apoc. Pet.* on Jewish texts, but also suggests that we should look to the Jewish background of Christianity for the background of the prohibition. It is noticeable that castration is not

<sup>40</sup> C. Spicq, *Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire. Supplément* (OBO 22.3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 128–39.

<sup>41</sup> Unpersuasively, Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 510 interprets the blaspheming as 'slandering'.

<sup>42</sup> P. Marrassini *apud* Bovon and Geoltrain, *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, 767.

<sup>43</sup> For cultic tattooing and cutting in antiquity, Czachesz, "Grotesque Body," 112 note 19, compares W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 81; D.E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 465–9; note also J.N. Bremmer, "Christelijke tatouages in de tijd van Jezus en nu," in *Eric Bleumink op de huid gezeten* (ed. J.N. Bremmer; Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit, 2000), 11–19.

explicitly forbidden in the *Old Testament*: apparently, it was not practised sufficiently to be a threat to society. This changes in the Roman period, when both Philo (*Hyp.* in Eus. *PE* 8:7:7) and Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 2:270–1) speak out against it—presumably because they were confronted with the practice in everyday life. Understandably, Greeks and Romans were not in favour of the practice, and Greeks usually referred to it euphemistically.<sup>44</sup> As the emperor Domitian had forbidden castration, its mention here is more a survival from the Jewish background than an up-to-date crime, and it is not surprising that later versions of the *Apoc. Pet.* dropped it.

Homosexuality must have remained more common, even though in some pagan philosophical circles it came to be viewed negatively.<sup>45</sup> It was already prohibited in the Old Testament (Lev 18:22) and became heavily criticised by Jewish intellectuals like Philo and Josephus.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, its condemnation was incorporated into the New Testament and early Christian authors, and the continued condemnation in the *Apoc. Pet.* is therefore hardly a novelty. Lesbianism is perhaps a bit more surprising, as it is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It probably did not become visible in the man-dominated world of ancient Israel. This changed only slowly, as lesbian love is not mentioned by Philo or Josephus and is alluded to rather circumspectly by Paul in Rom 1:26. Its occurrence here therefore seems once again inspired by the Jewish tradition of pseudo-Phocylides (192), who may well have read or heard about it in Egypt where lesbian love is attested in both literary texts and magical spells.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that we have to look at the penalties in the *Apoc. Pet.* not in isolation but as an appropriation of a Jewish tradition by Jewish Christians living in the 130s or 140s. We can get an even better idea of the development of such penalties and their implicit ideas when we look at the *Apocalypse of Paul*. This Apocalypse was published about 400 and of course much better adapted to the radically changed situation

<sup>44</sup> Herodotus 8:106; Pseudo-Lucian, *Amores* 21; Heraclitus, *Letters* 9:4; E. Maass, "Eunuchos und Verwandtes," *RhM* 74 (1925): 432–76 at 476; in general, R. Muth, "Kastration," in *RAC* 20 (2004): 285–342.

<sup>45</sup> See F. Buffière, *Éros adolescent: la pédérastie dans la Grèce antique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980), 485–90.

<sup>46</sup> Van der Horst, *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 237–39.

<sup>47</sup> Texts: Herondas 6 and 7; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3:14:171, 4:5:187. Spells: B. Brooten, *Love Between Women. Early Christian Responses to female Homoeroticism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 77–113.

through the victory of Christianity than the so much older *Apoc. Pet.* There is clearly a tendency to be original and thus some penalties are kept, whereas the place of punishment is changed. Whereas the *Apoc. Pet.*, like pseudo-Phocylides (184–5), still distinguished between abortion and exposure, we now only hear of abortion, and the preservation of female modesty has become more important. It is hardly surprising that the categories of the false witnesses, apostates, idolaters and persecutors no longer find a place. It is perhaps more surprising that the category of the slave has disappeared. On the other hand, we now find penalties introduced for those who break the fast too soon, for (metaphorically) blind pagans and for those who pretend to be ascetics.

### 3. THE NATURE AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE TOURS OF HELL

Where does this all leave us regarding the origin and chronology of the tours of hell? In her well-known book on the tours of hell, Martha Himmelfarb argued vigorously against Albrecht Dieterich (1866–1908) that the *Apocalypse of Peter* was not part of the Orphic-Pythagorean tradition but that ‘the various motifs in the Apocalypse of Peter, whatever their origin, have been shaped in consciousness of a Jewish and Christian literary tradition’.<sup>48</sup> However, even though Dieterich stressed the Greek background of the *Apoc. Pet.* too exclusively, he also notices, although merely in passing, that we cannot separate Greek and Jewish traditions too much and must allow for mutual influences.<sup>49</sup> This clearly is also the case with the *Apoc. Pet.* where Orphic influence is undeniable, given, for example, the occurrence of Orphic *borboros*, ‘mire’ (23, 24, 31 E).<sup>50</sup>

Now when we look at the early tours of hell that we have been discussing, viz. Virgil’s *Aeneid VI*, the Bologna papyrus and the *Apoc. Pet.*, we can identify at least three important characteristics of the genre. First, as Himmelfarb observed, there is an important formal marker in that the visionary often asks: ‘who are these?’, and is answered by the guide of the vision with ‘these are those who...’, a phenomenon

<sup>48</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 67.

<sup>49</sup> Dieterich, *Nekyia*, 222.

<sup>50</sup> See my “The Apocalypse of Peter: Greek or Jewish?” in *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bremmer and Czachesz), 1–14 at 12–13, accepted by Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 141, with additional arguments.

that Himmelfarb traces back to Enoch's cosmic tour in the *Book of the Watchers*, which can be dated to before 200 BC but is probably not older than the third century.<sup>51</sup> We may well find the demonstrative pronouns also in the *Aeneid*, as Lightfoot, following Himmelfarb, has recently noted: 'Demonstratives are formally absent from his (i.e. Aeneas') questions, but Aeneas' questions at 318–20 and 560–1 can be seen as rhetorical variations on the question 'who are these?' Of the Sibyl's replies, 322–30 contains *haec, ille, hi*; 562–627 contains three instances each of *hic* as adverb (580, 582, 608) and demonstrative pronoun (587, 621, 623), a rhetorical question answered by the Sibyl herself (574–7), and several relative clauses (583, 608, 610, 612) identifying individual sinners or groups.<sup>52</sup> Although in the *Apoc. Pet.* the description of hell is not given in a question and answer form, it does contain the demonstrative pronouns and it is not difficult to think of the questions as implicit ones.

Second, in the tours of hell the visionary often needs a guide to understand what he sees or he is told what the guide sees. This is the case in the *Apoc. Pet.*, where Christ tells Peter about the sinners and their punishments, and in Virgil, where the Sibyl tells Aeneas about the sinners and their punishments. Yet there are no certain early Greek examples of such guides, and the Bologna papyrus seems to miss one, just as it also lacks the demonstrative pronouns and the question and answer form.

Third, the description of hell contains a list of sinners and their punishments. It may seem self evident to state this, but Himmelfarb failed to note that the *Book of Watchers* 17–22 lacks such a catalogue. However, such catalogues were most popular in Orphic literature, as Dieterich and Norden extensively demonstrated.<sup>53</sup>

What conclusion can we draw from this survey? It seems that we have to do with two strands of tradition. First, there is the Enochic tour with its guide as well as questions and answers with the demonstrative pronouns. Second, there is the catalogue of sinners and punishments. Evidently, the tours of hell of the first centuries of our era could choose from those traditions and combine them in varying ways: with

<sup>51</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 41–67.

<sup>52</sup> Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 502–3, cf. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 49–50.

<sup>53</sup> Dieterich, *Nekyia*, 163–213; E. Norden, *Kleine Schriften zum klassischen Altertum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966 [1st ed.; 1893]), 229–31 and *Aeneis Buch VI*, 287f.

or without guides and with or without demonstrative pronouns. But they all contain the catalogue of sinners and punishments.

Now Virgil has the guide, the catalogue of sinners and, probably, the demonstrative pronouns. This raises the interesting question as to where he would have found these elements? The *Apoc. Pet.* clearly contains Enochic traditions,<sup>54</sup> but could Virgil have known those? Norden categorically rejected all Jewish influence on Virgil in his commentary,<sup>55</sup> but more recent discussions of Jewish-Sibylline influence on Virgil and Horace are more positive.<sup>56</sup> And indeed, Alexander Polyhistor, who worked in Rome during Virgil's lifetime, was demonstrably acquainted with Egyptian-Jewish Sibylline literature.<sup>57</sup> Now there are many points of contact between the Sibylline and Enochic traditions, and there seems to be no reason why the two traditions did not influence one another.<sup>58</sup> Thus it seems not improbable that among the Orphic literature that Virgil had read, there also were Jewish-Orphic *katabaseis* with Enochic influence. Unfortunately, however, we have so little left of that literature that all too certain conclusions would be misleading.

It is time to conclude. Inspired by the Orphic tradition, some Jews started to adapt the Greek crimes and penalties in the afterlife to their own tradition. This adaptation most likely took place in Egypt, probably in Alexandria. The early Christians, who in turn adapted the crimes to their own difficult situation in a time of persecution, appropriated this

<sup>54</sup> G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1. A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 87, 101; Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba?" 76–77; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 142.

<sup>55</sup> Norden, *Aeneis Buch VI*, 6. For Norden's attitude towards Judaism see J.E. Bauer, "Eduard Norden: Wahrheitsliebe und Judentum," in *Eduard Norden* (Kytzler), 205–23; Bremmer, "The Apocalypse of Peter: Greek or Jewish?" 3–4; R.G. Nisbet, *Collected Papers on Latin Literature* (ed. S.J. Harrison; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75.

<sup>56</sup> C.W. MacLeod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 218–99 (on Horace's *Epode* 16.2); Nisbet, *Collected Papers*, 48–52, 64–5, 73–5, 163–4; L. Watson, *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 481–2, 489, 508, 511 (on Horace's *Epode* 16).

<sup>57</sup> Alexander Polyhistor *FGrH* 273 F 79 (4) quotes *Or. Sib.* 397–104, if probably in an older form than we have now, cf. E. Schürer, *The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, (3 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973–1987), III.1, 646–7 (no Babylonian influence); R. Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and Its Social Setting* (SVTP 17; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 167–71; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 95.

<sup>58</sup> Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 70–77.

tradition. Later Christians were no longer plagued by persecutions and had developed different ideals and practices, which they also adapted once again. In the end, every Apocalypse has to be looked at as the product of a tradition that has been appropriated in a particular time and place.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> For corrections and comments I am most grateful to Ton Hilhorst, Eibert Tigchelaar and, especially, Nicholas Horsfall.



## HELL IN THE LATIN *VISION OF EZRA*

Richard Bauckham

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Latin *Vision of Ezra* belongs to the tradition of Jewish and Christian apocalypses in which a visionary (an authoritative figure of the Old or New Testament) is taken to view the punishments of the wicked in hell and the rewards of the righteous in paradise.<sup>1</sup> Like many of these works, the Latin *Vision of Ezra* focuses on the punishments and offers only a brief glimpse of paradise. Like some other apocalypses of this kind, the Latin *Vision of Ezra* also has a passage in which the seer prays for mercy for the damned and wins from God some degree of remission of their punishment.<sup>2</sup>

Two such apocalypses were translated from Greek into Latin and were read in the medieval West, where they were evidently valued for the sake of the information about the next life that they provided. Much the most popular of these two was the *Apocalypse of Paul*, in its several Latin redactions (as well as vernacular versions), in which it is known as the *Vision of Paul*.<sup>3</sup> The other was the Latin *Vision of Ezra*, which, like the *Apocalypse of Paul*, was redacted in the medieval period and is extant in four recensions of varying length (see below). Both works—especially the *Apocalypse of Paul* but also the *Vision of Ezra*<sup>4</sup>—influenced the descriptions of the otherworld that appear in the

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<sup>1</sup> See especially M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), chapters n2, 3, 8, 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> H. Brandes, "Über die Quellen der mittelenglischen Versionen der Paulus-Vision," *Englische Studien* 7 (1884): 34–65; Th. Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli* (SD 4; London: Christophers, 1935); C. Carozzi, *Eschatologie et Au-delà: Recherches sur l'Apocalypse de Paul* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1994); T. Silverstein and A. Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul: A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Cahiers d'Orientalisme 21; Geneva: Cramer, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> P. Dinzelsbacher, "Die Vision Alberichs und die Esdras-Apokryphe," *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte der Bayerischen Benediktinerakademie* 87 (1976):

many medieval visions attributed to named medieval people.<sup>5</sup> In many respects, these works are a continuation of the same genre of visionary literature, but the medievals, although they read and redacted the *Visions of Paul* and *Ezra*, did not write new apocalypses under biblical pseudonyms. In most cases, the medieval visions had a basis in the experience of the persons to whom they are attributed. Another difference is that they do not appropriate the theme of the visionary's prayers for the damned.

The Latin *Vision of Ezra* is one of three closely related Ezra apocalypses, of which the others are the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* and the (Greek) *Apocalypse of Sedrach* (where the name Sedrach is probably a corruption of Ezra).<sup>6</sup> The Latin *Vision of Ezra* and the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* both contain tours of hell, closely related to each other, while all three apocalypses feature the seer's intercession for the damned and the seer's struggle to avoid surrendering his soul to God in death (these last two features are found in the Latin *Vision of Ezra* only in the long recension).<sup>7</sup> All three apocalypses reflect to some extent the debate between Ezra and God or his angel in 4 *Ezra*, while the idea of attributing a tour of hell to Ezra may well derive from 4 *Ezra* 4:8 ("I have not yet descended into hell").<sup>8</sup>

The Latin *Vision of Ezra* is extant in nine manuscripts, whose text can be classified in four recensions:

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433–442, shows that the twelfth-century *Vision of Alberic* is dependent on the Latin *Vision of Ezra*. For other possible signs of the influence of the *Vision of Ezra* on medieval visions, see notes 26 and 32 below.

<sup>5</sup> In roughly chronological order, the best known are the Visions of Furseus, the monk of Wenlock, Drythelm, Barontus, Wetti, Adamnán, Alberic, the knight Owen (St Patrick's Purgatory), Tnugdál, Gunthelm, Gottschalk, the monk of Evesham, and Thurkill. There are translations of eight of these in E. Gardiner (ed.), *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante* (New York: Italica, 1989); C. Carozzi, *Le Voyage de l'Âme dans l'Au-delà d'après la Littérature Latine (V<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Collection de l'École Française de Rome 189; Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994), is a comprehensive study of this literature. See also A. Morgan, *Dante and the Medieval Other World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> M.E. Stone, "The Metamorphosis of Ezra: Jewish Apocalypse and Medieval Vision," *JTS* 33 (1982): 1–18, here 6; D. Ellul, "Apocalypse de Sedrach," in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (ed. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain; 2 vols.; Paris: Gallimard, 1997, 2005), 1:575–591, here 579.

<sup>7</sup> Also common to the Latin *Vision of Ezra* (long recension) and the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* is a description of the Antichrist.

<sup>8</sup> M.E. Stone, *4 Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 85.

*long* (B: ms Vatican, Barberinus lat. 2318, f. 106<sup>r</sup>–110<sup>r</sup>, end of 15th century),  
*intermediate* (L: ms Linz, Bibliothek des Priesterseminars, A I/6, f. 14<sup>r</sup>–17<sup>v</sup>, 10th–11th century),  
*short* (Cet: 12 mss, 12th–15th centuries),  
*very short* (V: ms Vatican, lat, 3838, fol. 59<sup>r</sup>–61<sup>r</sup>, 12th century).<sup>9</sup>

In 1977 Otto Wahl published a synoptic edition presenting recension L alongside a text based on manuscripts of recensions V and Cet (ms Heiligenkreuz, Stiftsbibliothek, 11, f. 272<sup>v</sup>–273<sup>r</sup>).<sup>10</sup> In James H. Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (1983), James R. Mueller and Gregory A. Robbins based their translation on the shortest text (V), judging this to be the most original,<sup>11</sup> as did R.J.H. Shutt, whose English translation appeared in H.F.D. Sparks's *Apocryphal Old Testament* (1984).<sup>12</sup> The long recension (B) was not known until Pierre-Maurice Bogaert published the *editio princeps* in 1984.<sup>13</sup> It is twice the length of the others, and, as Bogaert argued, it undoubtedly represents a more original version of the scope of the work (even though in detail the text is often corrupt). It is the basis for the French translation by Flavio Nuvolone in the collection *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (1997).<sup>14</sup> Nuvolone has also prepared the critical edition of the text for the *Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum*, not yet published. Quotations of the Latin *Vision of Ezra* in the rest of this essay are from my own English translation, made from the long recension (ms B) corrected only where the readings of the other manuscripts are clearly superior.<sup>15</sup>

The relationship between the Latin *Vision of Ezra*, on the one hand, and the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of Sedrach*, on

<sup>9</sup> This classification of manuscripts into four recensions is made by F. Nuvolone, "Vision d'Esdras," in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (ed. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain; 2 vols.; Paris: Gallimard, 1997, 2005), 1:595–632, here 601.

<sup>10</sup> O. Wahl (ed.), *Apocalypsis Esdrae; Apocalypsis Sedrach; Visio Beati Esdrae* (PVTG 4; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 49–61. This edition is supplemented by O. Wahl, "Vier neue Textzeugen der Visio Beati Esdrae," *Salesianum* 40 (1978): 583–589.

<sup>11</sup> J.R. Mueller and G.A. Robbins, "Vision of Ezra," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983, 1985), 1:581–590.

<sup>12</sup> R.J.H. Shutt, "The Vision of Esdras," in *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed. H.F.D. Sparks; Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 943–951.

<sup>13</sup> P.-M. Bogaert, "Une version longue inédite de la 'Visio Beati Esdrae' dans le légendaire de Teano, Barberini Lat. 2318," *Revue Bénédictine* 94 (1984): 50–70.

<sup>14</sup> F.G. Nuvolone, "Vision d'Esdras," in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (ed. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain; 2 vols.; Paris: Gallimard, 1997, 2005), 1:595–632.

<sup>15</sup> My translation is to appear in the new collection of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha that J.R. Davila and I are editing.

the other, shows that the long recension is the most original form. Now that the latter is available, we can see that the relationship between the recensions represents a step-by-step abbreviation of the work, rather than, as studies from 1984 and before supposed, an increasing expansion of the text. This requires a considerable re-thinking of earlier scholars' conclusions about the Latin *Vision of Ezra* (including Martha Himmelfarb's discussion of its place among the tours of hell).<sup>16</sup> A Greek *Urtext* comprising the main features of the Latin *Vision of Ezra*, the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of Sedrach* should probably be postulated and dated some time in the second, third or fourth centuries C.E. Some of the evidence for such a date is presented in the course of the discussion below.

## 2. THE TOUR OF HELL

In the first section of the *Vision of Ezra* (§§1–59) Ezra is conducted by angels on a tour of punishments in hell (Tartarus), along with just a brief glimpse of paradise. The tour resembles other tours of hell in such apocalypses as the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the Greek *Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary* in that Ezra sees a series of discrete punishments, each being inflicted on those guilty of a certain sort of sin. From time to time, between one punishment and another, the angels take Ezra deeper (§§ 2, 12, 23, 58) or further (§19) into hell, or Ezra himself walks on from one punishment to another (§§ 34, 36a, 37, 40, 45, 48, 57a, 59f).

The descriptions of the punishments follow a standard pattern (see the chart appended to this essay). Each time he views a new group of people suffering punishment, Ezra asks his angelic guide who they are and is told that they are guilty of such-and-such a sin or sins. The question and answer are formulated in the form Martha Himmelfarb called "demonstrative explanations."<sup>17</sup> The seer asks, "Who are these?," and the angel answers, "These are the ones who..." The form

<sup>16</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours*, especially 160–167.

<sup>17</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours*, chapter 2. She argues that the tours of hell inherited this form from Ezekiel, Zechariah and the Enochic Book of Watchers, where it is used more generally to explain what the seers see in their visions.

is used in almost all the tours of hell,<sup>18</sup> and serves to place the *Vision of Ezra* firmly in this generic tradition. In the *Vision of Ezra* it is entirely missing in the case of only one punishment (no. 12 in the list of 17, §§50–50a), where we should probably assume that it has dropped out in the transmission of the text. On just one occasion, the question is lacking (no. 10, §§45–47), though the explanation occurs. Again, we should probably assume an omission in the manuscript tradition. There is also one variation of the pattern (no. 11, §§48–49) in which the question is lacking and the explanation is given, not by the angel, but by the victims of the sinners being punished, who use the form as a way of identifying the crime of those they are accusing to God. Finally, as well as the demonstrative identifications of the sinners, the form is used twice to identify righteous people who pass through the punishments unharmed. We shall return to this unusual feature.

As well as the demonstrative questions and answers, there is another standard feature of the account of each judgment. After learning who the sinners are in each case, Ezra prays to God: 'Lord, spare the sinners' (on the first occasion, the wording is: 'Lord, have mercy on the sinners'). This prayer occurs after the account of eight of the punishments, and we should probably assume it was originally present on five other occasions where it has dropped out by error or the scribes' desire to abbreviate and avoid too much repetition. Just once there is a clearly intentional variation. In the case of king Herod, the only individual Ezra sees being punished, he does not pray for mercy at all but voices his approval of the punishment (§39: 'Lord, you have judged a right judgment').<sup>19</sup> Herod is, as it were, the Adolf Hitler of this hell, the man so wicked his punishment arouses no pity even in Ezra, who is otherwise represented in this work as the most sympathetic and merciful of tourists in hell. After he has seen all the punishments, Ezra's standard prayer for mercy appears again in a scene where he presents it in heaven on behalf of all the sinners (§61).

The most unusual feature of this tour of hell is that, as well as the punishments that are simply inflicted on the wicked, Ezra sees four ordeals, which hurt the sinners who try to pass through them, but through which the souls of the righteous pass unharmed (nos. 1, 4, 6,

<sup>18</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 46, where the table shows that only the *Gedulat Moshe* lacks this feature. It is not found in the medieval Latin visions.

<sup>19</sup> In *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:12, Ezra's words are 'Woe upon his soul!'

16). The first of these is the entrance to hell, through which, apparently, the righteous must pass as well as the wicked. The last is the exit from hell and entrance to paradise, through which the righteous pass to their blessed inheritance. In this last case, the wicked are not mentioned, though presumably we should understand that should they try to pass thus from hell to paradise they would be harmed and prevented. It is in the case of the first two ordeals that the demonstrative explanation form is used to explain who the righteous are as well as who the sinners are. Ordeals of this kind are very rare in the apocalypses and we must return to the question of their function in this tour of hell. But first, I shall make some comments on the forms that the punishments (other than the ordeals) take.

### 3. THE PUNISHMENTS

Following the ordeal that is the entrance to Tartarus, the first two punishments (nos. 2 & 3) are hanging punishments, a category of punishment that is both ancient and standard in the apocalyptic tours of hell.<sup>20</sup> Each punishment consists in being suspended by a part of the body. It is a form of measure-for-measure punishment in that it is by the part of the body with which the particular sin was committed that the sinner is suspended.

The first example in the Vision of Ezra is at first sight problematic in this respect. Ezra sees people hanging head downwards tied by their hands (§12), a position not easy to envisage. The angel tells him first that these are male adulterers (§16). A second explanation is that they are women who have desired adultery by adorning themselves to attract men other than their husbands (§17). In neither case is it clear why it should be by their hands that they are suspended. The explanation is probably to be found in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, where there are two punishments: male adulterers hang by their thighs, whereas the women who adorned themselves to entice men other than their husbands hang by their neck and hair (*Apoc. Pet.* 7:5–8).<sup>21</sup> The thighs of the men are doubtless a euphemistic reference to their genital organs,<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Himmelfarb, *Tours*, chapter 3; Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 215–217.

<sup>21</sup> Women are punished for adultery by hanging by their hair in *Apoc. Paul* 39.

<sup>22</sup> Hanging by the genital organ is explicitly the punishment of adulterers and pederasts in the Elijah fragment quoted in the apocryphal *Epistle of Titus* (M.E. Stone

for which we can suppose that the hands in the *Vision of Ezra* are another euphemism. This also explains how people suspended by their 'hands' could be hanging head downwards. In our text of the *Vision of Ezra*, the specific punishment of the women, hanging by their hair, has dropped out and only the angel's explanation of them is left. (A close relationship with the *Apocalypse of Peter* may also be indicated by the fact that in the latter the hanging punishments are the first punishments described and these two are the second [women] and third [men] in order.)

The next hanging punishment is unproblematic: men and women hanging by their eyelids are said to be guilty of incest with fathers or mothers, "desiring with an evil desire" (§§19–21).<sup>23</sup> Since it is with the eyes that people lust, hanging by the eyes, eyelids or eyebrows is a punishment for sins of lust in several descriptions of the hanging punishments in hell.<sup>24</sup> But a feature unique to the *Vision of Ezra's* account of both these first two hanging punishments (apart from the parallel in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:22) is that, in addition to being suspended, the sinners are being beaten by angels of Tartarus<sup>25</sup> with clubs of fire.<sup>26</sup>

There is a third hanging punishment in the *Vision of Ezra*, later in the series of punishments (no. 14). Ezra sees women hanging by their hair, while snakes around their necks are sucking from their breasts, and is told that they are women who did not offer their breasts to infants and orphans (§§53a–54; cf. the parallel in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 5:2–3). The

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and J. Strugnell [ed.], *The Books of Elijah Parts 1–2* [SBLTT 18; Missoula, Montana: Scholars, 1979], 14–15).

<sup>23</sup> That the sin is incest is confirmed by the parallel in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:22.

<sup>24</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 86–89.

<sup>25</sup> Manuscript B has *dyaboli* (§13) and *dyaboli tartaruti* (§19), but these readings assimilate the text to the medieval view that the tormentors in hell are devils. In the older apocalyptic literature tormentors are not evil beings but angels of God, put in charge of hell and its judgments by God, administering his justice in obedience to him. Other manuscripts have *angeli*. For the Greek *tartarouchos*, Latin *tartarucus*, as an adjective describing angels in charge of Tartarus, see Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, 223–224, 321–322.

<sup>26</sup> Whipping of the damned in hell occurs in *Apoc. Pet.* 9:2; *Thom. Cont.* 142:39–143:2 (also in the Greco-Roman Hades: Lucian, *Men.* 14; *Ver. hist.* 2:29; Virgil, *Aen.* 6.556–7), though not in connexion with hanging punishments, but I do not know an example of beating with clubs. In the knight Owen's visit to St Patrick's Purgatory (1153 or 1154 C.E.), those who suffer the hanging punishments are at the same time whipped by demons (Gardiner, *Visions*, 140). This might be due to the influence of the Latin *Vision of Ezra*. Note also that, as in *Vis. Ezra* §§8, 28, 36e, people being punished cry for mercy 'though there was no one there to have mercy or to spare them' (Gardiner, *Visions*, 139).

second part of the punishment is plainly a measure-for-measure punishment and occurs also elsewhere (*Apoc. Pet.* 8:5–10, where it is the punishment for infanticides, is a close parallel)<sup>27</sup> but not in connexion with hanging. Perhaps again we have a conflation of punishments and sinners, though one that lies behind our text of the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* as well as of the *Vision of Ezra*. Certainly hanging by the hair makes no sense in relation to this particular sin.

Among other punishments there is one of particular interest: that of king Herod (*Vis. Ezra* 37–39; cf. the parallel in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:9–12). This is the only example, among the tours of hell in the apocalypses, of a famous named individual seen being punished in hell,<sup>28</sup> and the earliest example of this phenomenon that would later become a major feature of Dante's *Inferno*. Even among the medieval visions there are not many examples,<sup>29</sup> Judas being the commonest.<sup>30</sup> It is more common for visitors to the otherworld to meet well-known inhabitants of paradise, such as the patriarchs and prophets. Among those Paul meets, in the *Apocalypse of Paul*, are "all the infants whom king Herod had slain for the name of Christ" (*Apoc. Paul* 26), which helps us understand the appearance of Herod in Ezra's hell. The children are considered the first Christian martyrs and therefore Herod is the first king responsible for putting Christian martyrs to death. The angel identifies him to Ezra as 'king Herod who killed many children *on account of the Lord*' (§38).<sup>31</sup> He could be seen as the representative of many later rulers who put Christians to death, and might be of

<sup>27</sup> See also *Acta Sebastiani* 4.12 (PL 17.1026), cited by J. Amat, *Songes et Visions: L'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 389. But the sinners there are described only as 'unbelieving.'

<sup>28</sup> In the medieval Jewish tours of hell there is a different phenomenon: a notorious sinner presides over the wicked, or a category of the wicked, who are undergoing punishment, while he himself is exempt from punishment: M. Gaster, "Hebrew Visions of Hell and Paradise," in *Studies and texts in folklore, magic, medieval romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology* (ed. M. Gaster; 3 vols.; London: Maggs, 1925–28), 1:148–149, 157, 158–60.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. two named bishops in Barontus's *Vision* (Carozzi, *Le Voyage*, 165); Charlemagne in Wettin's *Vision* (Gardiner, *Visions*, 70–71), though this is a purgative punishment; king Cormach in Tundale's *Vision* (Gardiner, *Visions*, 183–5).

<sup>30</sup> E.g. the *Vision of Gunthelm* (D.D.R. Owen, *The Vision of Hell: Infernal Journeys in Medieval French Literature* [Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1970], 17) and the *Voyage of St Brendan* (Gardiner, *Visions*, 117–120; Owen, *The Vision*, 23–25, 59–62).

<sup>31</sup> My italics. *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:11 ("Herod, who was king for a time, and he commanded to kill the infants two years old or under") lacks the indication that the children died as martyrs ("on account of the Lord").

special significance if the *Urtext* of these Ezra apocalypses originated before Constantine. Herod's particular punishment—sitting on a fiery throne,<sup>32</sup> surrounded by his counsellors (§37)—is a measure-for-measure one: he is punished by means of the throne that symbolizes the authority with which he decreed the massacre of the children.

#### 4. THE ORDEALS

As I have mentioned already, as well as punishments of the kind commonly found in the tours of hell, the *Vision of Ezra* also includes four ordeals.<sup>33</sup> First, there is the gate of hell, which spurts flames and is guarded by dragons, lions and black dogs that also spurt flames. The righteous pass through rejoicing, but the wicked are bitten by the beasts and burned by the flames (§§3–8).

Secondly, there is a huge fiery cauldron from which fire rises like waves of the sea. Sinners are forced into the fire by angels with fiery pitchforks, but the righteous walk “through the middle on waves of fire, praising the Lord, as if they walked on dew and frozen water” (§§23–27). (There are probably biblical allusions here to Isa 43:2; Dan 3:25; Prayer of Azariah 1:26–28.)

Thirdly, there is a bridge over a river of fire. Its breadth is such that forty pairs of oxen could cross it, and the righteous cross it rejoicing. But when the sinners reach the middle it reduces to the width of a thread and they fall into the river where snakes and scorpions await them (§§36a–36d). Notably, this is the only one of the punishments in Ezra's hell, including the first two ordeals, for which no demonstrative explanations are given, identifying the righteous as having specific virtues or the wicked specific sins. In this case, they are simply the righteous and the sinners. The *Vision of Ezra* here preserves the notion of an ordeal through which all the dead must pass, one which proves whether they are righteous or sinners.

Finally, the entry to paradise, like the entrance to hell, is guarded by lions and dogs and protected by flames. The righteous pass through

<sup>32</sup> For this punishment in the Greek *Apocalypse of Mary*, the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Mary* and the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Baruch*, see Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 125. It also appears in the Vision of Gunthelm (Owen, *The Vision*, 16) and the Vision of Thurkill (Gardiner, *Visions*, 226–8), perhaps in dependence on the Latin *Vision of Ezra*.

<sup>33</sup> None of them appear in the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra*.

these into paradise (§58). Thus the picture the whole tour of hell presents is apparently that the righteous must pass through Tartarus on their way to paradise. Perhaps readers should understand that the righteous pass unharmed through all the punishments described, not only those where their passage is mentioned. An odd feature of the whole scheme is that paradise appears located at the lowest depth in Tartarus to which Ezra descends (§58).

Ordeals are not common in accounts or visions of the otherworld. There was a tradition, apparently deriving from Iranian sources and quite widespread in the early Christian centuries, of a river of fire that served to separate the righteous from the wicked, either at the day of judgment<sup>34</sup> or at death.<sup>35</sup> The righteous pass through it unharmed, but the wicked are burned. The best example of a series of ordeals is in the *Apocalypse* (or *Apocryphon*) of the Seven Heavens, which describes the ascent of souls after death through the various heavens to the throne of God in the seventh heaven. In each heaven there is an ordeal, such as a fiery furnace, a fiery river or a fiery wheel. The souls of the righteous pass rapidly through each ordeal, but the sinners are detained and must spend twelve years suffering each punishment. When the souls of the wicked eventually reach the seventh heaven, God judges them and the angel of Tartarus plunges them into the eternal punishments of hell.<sup>36</sup>

This is a much more coherent scheme than the sequence of ordeals and punishments in Tartarus provided by the *Vision of Ezra*. In the latter, the ordeals are located in Tartarus itself, and, whereas sinners as well as righteous people apparently have to pass through ordeals, these are placed among punishments of the kind that are usually depicted as the eternal destiny of the wicked. The probative function of ordeals does not really suit their context here. We may wonder why they have been included. The answer may well be that they make possible vivid contrasts between the righteous and the sinners. In the cases of

<sup>34</sup> *Apoc. Pet.* 6:2–5; *Sib. Or.* 2:252–5; 8:411; Lactantius, *div. inst.* 7.21; cf. *Did.* 16:5.

<sup>35</sup> *Third Apocalypse of John* 5, 13 (in J.M. Court, *The Book of Revelation and the Johannine Apocalyptic Tradition* [JSNTSup 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 109–119); *T. Isaac* 5:24–25; and other Coptic apocryphal works listed in Bauckham, *The Fate*, 320. See also M.R. James, *The Lost Apocrypha of the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1920), 90–91.

<sup>36</sup> R. Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of the Seven Heavens: The Latin Version,” in *The Fate*, 304–331, especially 315–316 (text and translation), 318–320. There is a similar scheme in *Questions of Ezra* A 19–21.

the second ordeal, the demonstrative explanations of righteous and wicked form a nice contrast: the righteous give alms and charitable help to the needy, while the wicked are greedy and covetous and offer no hospitality to the stranger and the poor. In the case of the last ordeal, at the entrance to paradise, only the righteous are described, but this may be why Ezra's tour does not end with his sight of paradise but continues to the site of just one further punishment (§59f). This provides another contrast between the righteous who enter paradise—described as who gave alms and charity (§59b)—and the sinners in the last punishment, the pit, who practised usury without compassion for their debtors (59f).

The most interesting of the ordeals, because it reappears in a variety of other visions of the otherworld, is the bridge. In extant Christian sources that can be confidently dated it appears first in visions of the otherworld recounted in Gregory of Tours's *Historia Francorum* (577 C.E.) and by Gregory the Great (*Dial.* 4.36; 593–4 C.E.); then in the account of the vision of the monk of Wenlock, recounted by Boniface in 716 C.E.; then in the eleventh-century Irish Vision of Adamnán (*Fis Adamnáin*). While other versions of the *Apocalypse of Paul* do not contain the bridge, it does appear in the Latin Redaction IV, the most influential of the short Latin redactions, which originated no later than the twelfth century. The appearance of the bridge in the Vision of Alberic (1127), like a number of other features of this work, is undoubtedly derived from the Latin *Vision of Ezra*.<sup>37</sup> From the twelfth century onwards it is a common feature of visions of the otherworld in the western European tradition.<sup>38</sup>

The Latin *Vision of Ezra* was, in my view, the source for the account of the bridge in the Vision of Adamnán as well as for that in the Vision of Alberic, but we cannot trace its influence with confidence before the eleventh century (which is also the date of our earliest manuscript, L).<sup>39</sup> Gregory of Tours and the monk of Wenlock transmit an account of the bridge that differs from the *Vision of Ezra's*, while Redaction IV of the *Apocalypse of Paul* seems to combine the two traditions. It is

<sup>37</sup> Dinzelbacher, "Die Vision Alberichs."

<sup>38</sup> E.g. the *Vision of Tundale (Tnugdal)* (1147), *Patrick's Purgatory* (1153–4), the *Vision of Thirkhill* (1206) (Gardiner, *Visions*, 158, 162, 142–3, 222–3). For other late medieval occurrences, see I.P. Culiano, "Pons subtilis: Storia e Significato di un Simbolo," *Aev* 2 (1979): 301–312, here 307–8.

<sup>39</sup> Otto Wahl, *Apocalypsis Esdrae*, 15 (10th or 11th century).

interesting to note that, whereas in the *Vision of Ezra*, the Vision of Adamnán and Redaction IV of the *Apocalypse of Paul* those who fall off the bridge into the fiery river are those condemned to eternal punishment in hell, in Gregory the Great, Gregory of Tours, the monk of Wenlock, the Vision of Alberic, the Vision of Tnugdal, Owen's Vision of Patrick's Purgatory, the Vision of Thirkill and other late medieval works, the experience is purgatorial. The Vision of Alberic, undoubtedly directly dependent on the *Vision of Ezra*, turns the latter's account into a purgatorial experience for sinners by requiring sinners who fall off the bridge into the burning river then to try crossing again and again until they are sufficiently purged and able to cross the bridge without falling. Alberic is even told by St Peter that this ordeal is called Purgatory.<sup>40</sup> Thus the bridge participates in the increasing prominence of purgatorial punishment after death in the medieval visions of the otherworld. That it does not function in this way in the *Vision of Ezra*, but retains its original function of an ordeal that sorts the righteous from the damned, speaks in favour of the relative antiquity of the *Vision of Ezra*.

The bridge has usually been thought to originate in Iranian tradition, since, as the bridge Cinvat, it appears as early as the fourth century C.E. in the Avesta.<sup>41</sup> But if the *Vision of Ezra*, in broadly the form we have it in the long Latin recension, is earlier than that, it is possible that the bridge migrated in the other direction—from Jewish and/or Christian apocalyptic traditions to Iran.<sup>42</sup> There is certainly a strong case for the view that it is the Latin *Vision of Ezra*, rather than the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra*, that best preserves the content of the *Urtext* from which both derive.<sup>43</sup> The ordeals, including the bridge, are notably absent from the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra*, but it is at least as likely that the editor of the latter found them incongruous in an account of hell as that they are later additions. But that they belonged

<sup>40</sup> Carozzi, *Le Voyage*, 591–592.

<sup>41</sup> Culianu, "Pons Subtilis," 309–310. It occurs later in the Arda Viraz Namag (6th century), but this work is arguably dependent on Jewish or Christian apocalypses. The appearance of the bridge in Islamic tradition from the eighth century (Culianu, "Pons Subtilis," 307) may derive from Iranian or from Jewish or Christian sources.

<sup>42</sup> So Culianu, "Pons Subtilis," 305–306 n. 25, 311 n.54. He raises this possibility, dependent on Wahl's dating of the original version of the Latin *Vision of Ezra* in the first quarter of the second century, though Culiano prefers "for the moment" to remain with the other view.

<sup>43</sup> Wahl, *Apocalypsis Esdrae*, 8; Nuvolone, "Vision," 599.

to an original text dating from before the fourth century must for the time being remain uncertain.

## 5. SINS

On Ezra's tour of hell, he sees fifteen categories of sinner punished by appropriate punishments, though there are some cases where a category seems to cover more than one sin (perhaps through addition of sins to the text or omission of some punishments) and there is one case where the sinners are guilty of 'every kind of evil' (perhaps a scribe's substitution for an unintelligible text). The two oldest tours of hell with which we may compare Ezra's are those in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which has twenty-one categories of sinner in appropriate punishments, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which has twenty-three.

The extent of variation may be gauged initially from the fact that only in two cases does the same sin receive the same punishment in both the *Vision of Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (and even in these cases the punishment has aspects in one that are not paralleled in the other),<sup>44</sup> though there is no such case in common between the *Vision of Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*. But if we take the sins without the punishments there are more correspondences. Allowing some flexibility in the precise definition of the sin, there are seven categories of sin common to the *Vision of Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and six common to the *Vision of Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Five of these are common to all three tours: adultery (male and female), losing virginity before marriage (women), despising God's commandments, infanticide (by women leaving child to die), and usury.

If we make broader comparisons, we can observe that the *Apocalypse of Peter* gives particular prominence to sins that relate to a situation of persecution and martyrdom: apostasy, betrayal, giving false testimony that leads to martyrs' deaths, persecution. The *Vision of Ezra* has nothing of this except for the case of Herod. Also the *Apocalypse of Peter* includes the making of idols and idolatrous worship, whereas the *Vision of Ezra* makes no such references to false religious practices.

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<sup>44</sup> These are hanging by the genital organ (probably) for adulterers (*Vis. Ezra* 12–18; *Apoc. Pet.* 7:7) and a punishment involving women's milk and beasts for women who left their infants to die (*Vis. Ezra* 53a–55; *Apoc. Pet.* 8:6–7, 9).

But comparison between the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the *Vision of Ezra* reveals even more striking differences. The former gives prominence to what we might call ecclesiastical sins (sins that are the more heinous because they are committed in or after church worship [*Apoc. Paul* 31]) and sins committed by ecclesiastics (bishops, priests, deacons, readers). Like the *Apocalypse of Peter* it is concerned with false religion, but the focus has shifted from idolatry to heresy (*Apoc. Paul* 41–42). No such sins appear in the *Vision of Ezra*, with the exception of the first category of sinners, those Ezra sees entering Tartarus: “those who denied the Lord and stayed with women on the Lord’s Day” (§10). The meaning of the second offence here is that the otherwise lawful intercourse of spouses is unlawful on the Lord’s Day.<sup>45</sup> Apart from this category, there are no sins relating to religious practices in the *Vision of Ezra*, and no references to ecclesiastical persons. This distinguishes it sharply not only from the *Apocalypse of Paul*, but also from the Greek *Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary*, which became the most popular version of a tour of hell in the Greek-speaking church of the East, and from the whole tradition of visions of the otherworld in the medieval West, where sins of religious practice and the sins of clergy and monks are routinely prominent.<sup>46</sup> This is one of the strongest indications that the *Vision of Ezra* originated in the period before the *Apocalypse of Paul* (which in its present form, at least, dates from c. 400).

Another distinctive feature of the categories of sin in the *Vision of Ezra* is the extent to which they are based on the laws in the Pentateuch. Of course, this is the case with sins that appear also in one or both of the other two tours: adultery, rebellion against parents, usury, loss of a woman’s virginity before marriage. Others not explicitly specified in the law of Moses were regarded by Jews and Christians as forbidden by implication: abortion, infanticide, lack of hospitality to strangers. But it is notable that several sins unique to the *Vision of Ezra* among these three tours of hell are taken from the Mosaic laws: incest (§21), misdirecting travellers (§41), defrauding servants of their wages (§50a) and altering a boundary mark (§57b). Of these, the first is rare in the

<sup>45</sup> This is clear from the parallel in the *Vision of Alberic* (ch. 5), which is here dependent on the *Vision of Ezra* (text in A. Mirra [M. Inguañez], “La Visione de Alberico,” *MCass* 11 [1932]: 32–103, here 88).

<sup>46</sup> The *Vision of Tnugdal* is unusual in this respect, though even here there is a special category of fornication by ecclesiastical persons (ch. 9). For medieval classification of sins in general, see Morgan, *Dante*, chapter 4.

tours of hell in general,<sup>47</sup> while the other three are unique to the *Vision of Ezra* (apart from the parallel to the last in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 5:25).

The *Vision of Ezra* condemns incest, not in general, but specifically with parents,<sup>48</sup> and referring apparently not to sexual abuse of children by parents, since it is the children who are condemned. The reason is perhaps that incest with father and mother head the list of forbidden sexual relationships in Lev 18 (18:7). As such, this most heinous form of incest may, in the *Vision of Ezra*, stand representatively for all the others listed in that chapter of the law. Defrauding servants of their just wages (§50a) may well reflect Deut 24:14–15 (requiring that poor labourers be paid daily before sunset). Altering a boundary mark (§57b) certainly reflects Deut 27:17: “Cursed be anyone who moves a neighbour’s boundary mark” (cf. also Deut 19:14; Prov 23:10–11).<sup>49</sup>

The most interesting of these cases is that of directing travellers to the wrong paths (§41). This is based on Deut 27:18: “Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind person on the road.” The application has been extended from blind people to anyone who needs help in finding the way.<sup>50</sup> Just such a broadening of the scope of the commandment is found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Deuteronomy, where this curse in 27:18 has the form: “Cursed be he who misdirects the stranger on the way, who is like a blind man!”<sup>51</sup> The same interpretation is found in *Sifre Deut.* 223. Moreover, just such an extension of the commandment is already attested by Josephus, who in summarizing the requirements of the Mosaic law, writes: “People should show the roads to those who do not know them, and not, hunting for something to laugh at, hinder another person’s need by deception” (*Ant.* 4. 276; cf., more briefly, *C. Ap.* 2.219, also in a summary of the Mosaic commandments).<sup>52</sup> This correspondence between the *Vision of Ezra*

<sup>47</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 70, lists, besides the *Vision of Ezra* and the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra*, only the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Mary*, the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Baruch*, and the *Gedulat Moshe*.

<sup>48</sup> The scribe may not have realised the sin is incest, but this is clear from, the parallel in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:22–24.

<sup>49</sup> As Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 162, notes, the Greek of *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 5:25 is close to the LXX of Deut 27:18.

<sup>50</sup> I am not convinced by Nuvolone, “Vision,” 614, that the reference is to those who are figuratively blind, i.e. going astray religiously.

<sup>51</sup> The same reference to a stranger, who is like a blind man, is found in the *Fragmentary Targum* to Lev 19:14.

<sup>52</sup> See especially the discussion in L.H. Feldman, *Flavius Josephus: Judean Antiquities 1–4* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 445–446. He argues that Josephus’ statement of this

and *Jewish halakah* makes it very probable that Ezra's tour of hell is based on an originally Jewish account.

In this light we may take a fresh look at §46 in ms B: 'These are the ones who mocked the law and corrupted (or: destroyed) it' (*Isti sunt derisores et corruptores* [i.e. *corruptores*] *legis*). In other manuscripts this has been expanded: 'These are teachers of the law (*legis doctores*) who confused baptism and the law of the Lord, because they used to teach with words and not fulfil [their words] with deeds' (VH, cf. L). This expansion has created a reference to religious teachers, in line with the medieval tendency to refer to feature ecclesiastical persons in tours of hell, and has added an allusion to Matt 23:3. The probability that B preserves the more original reading is supported by *Apocalypse of Peter* 9:7, which refers to people who neglected charity to the needy 'and thus despised the commandment of God,' and by *Apocalypse of Paul* 37: "They are those who reviled (*detractant*) the Word of God in church, paying no attention to it, but counting God and his angels as nothing (*quasi pro nihilo facientes*)." This last text is evidently a more Christianized version of the category of sinners in *Vis. Ezra* 46, and suggests that we should perhaps take *corruptores* in *Vis. Ezra* 46 in the sense of "destroyers," meaning that these people count the law as nothing by not heeding it.<sup>53</sup> In any case, the B text of *Vis. Ezra* 46 refers to the Torah and is thus closely coherent with the extent to which the categories of sinners in this tour of hell reflect the commandments of the Torah, with a particular emphasis on the curses of Deut. 17:15–26. This is, after all, what we should expect in an apocalypse attributed to Ezra, especially as it elsewhere portrays him as a second Moses.<sup>54</sup>

## 6. MERCY FOR THE DAMNED

In the tours of hell, from the *Apocalypse of Peter* onwards,<sup>55</sup> an important motif is the seer's prayer to God for mercy for the damned (*Apoc. Pet.* 3:3–4; *Apoc. Paul* 33, 40, 42, 43; 3 *Bar.* [Slavonic] 16:7–8; *Gk.*

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law 'would seem to be a direct refutation of the charge of such a bitter satirist as his contemporary, Juvenal, who declares (*Sat.* 14.103) that Jews do not point out the road except to those who practise the same rites.'

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Nuvolone, "Vision," 615, referring to 4 *Ezra* 7:20–24; 2 *Bar.* 51:4–6.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Nuvolone, "Vision," 598.

<sup>55</sup> The only example which may be earlier is *Apoc. Zeph.* 2:8–9.

*Apoc. Mary* 25–28), a motif found also in two Ezra apocalypses in which Ezra does not actually tour the punishments in hell but does intercede for the damned (*Ques. Ezra* A7; *Apoc. Sedr.* 5:7; 8:10; 16:2).<sup>56</sup> This seems, in fact, to be the particular appropriateness of the figure of Ezra for apocalypses in which this theme is prominent: the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra*, the Latin *Vision of Ezra*, the *Apocalypse of Sedrach* (where the name is probably a corruption of Ezra) and the Armenian *Questions of Ezra*. All these are dependent on 4 *Ezra*, where Ezra's debate with God or the angel Uriel frequently recurs to the prospect of damnation for most of humanity, including most Jews. Ezra finds this unacceptable, appeals to God's mercy, and robustly debates the matter with God. Of course, he loses the argument in the end, as do (for the most part) his namesakes and successors in the Christian apocalypses, but he seems to have licensed, as it were, the expressions of sympathy and mercy for sinners condemned to hell that the seers in these works express. To a greater or lesser extent these works explore the tension between divine mercy for sinners and divine justice requiring punishment, sometimes, as in the Latin *Vision*, reaching a sort of resolution in the grant to the damned of a day's rest each week, which is in part God's answer to the prayers of the seer.

The Latin *Vision of Ezra* is distinguished by the way Ezra's intercession for the damned is the dominant theme throughout the work. Only in the case of Herod does he acknowledge the justice of the punishment. Throughout the rest of his tour of hell he consistently asks mercy for each category of sinner (§11 etc.), taking up the sinners' own cries for mercy which themselves had found no response (§§8, 28, 36). When the tour is finished he is taken through the heavens up to the throne of God, and on the way asks the angels and the prophets<sup>57</sup> to bow down and pray for the sinners (§60). To God himself (whose back alone, Ezra may see, like Moses) he repeats his prayer, *verbatim* ("Lord, spare the sinners") but for the last and climactic time, summing up all his prayers from Tartarus itself.

There follows some debate with God, derived from 4 *Ezra*. Compared, not only with the unparalleled theological depth of the debate in 4 *Ezra* itself, but also even with the debate, more extensively indebted

<sup>56</sup> On the theme in these and other works, see Bauckham, *The Fate*, 136–142.

<sup>57</sup> B calls them 'prophets of the churches' (*prophetarum ecclesiarum*), perhaps a corruption.

to 4 *Ezra*, in the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra* and the *Apocalypse of Sedrach*, Ezra's debate with God in the Latin Vision is slight and has clearly suffered abbreviation and corruption. Nevertheless Ezra voices the argument for mercy that is most commonly voiced in the Ezra apocalypses: 'The animals, who feed on grass, you have made better than humans, since they do not render you praise, they die and they do not have sin, whereas we are wretched when alive and tortured when dead' (§62; cf. 4 *Ezra* 7:65–69; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 1:22; *Apoc. Sedr.* 4:2; *Ques. Ezra* A5; B3). In his desire to enter into legal proceedings with God, Ezra seems to echo Job (§§81–87; cf. *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 2:4–7), but in his last argument he surely echoes the intercession of Moses (Exod 32:32), consistently with this work's portrayal of him as the second Moses. As Moses asked to be judged in place of his people, Ezra says: 'If you created both the sinners and me, then it would be better for me to perish than for the whole world to perish' (§89). Here Ezra refuses to be silenced by the assurance that he himself belongs to the elect. At this point the *Vision of Ezra* is unique among the Ezra apocalypses, and the result of this extreme of concern for the damned is a concession from God that is also unparalleled in the Ezra apocalypses, though it occurs elsewhere. This concession at last satisfies the seer: "Let it be as you desire" (§91).

The concession is that the sinners in hell should have respite from punishment one day a week: "The sinners from the ninth hour of the Sabbath until the second day of the week are at rest, but on the other days they are punished because of their sins" (§90). This is the same concession as that obtained by the intercession of Paul, joined by Michael and the angels, in the *Apocalypse of Paul* (§44), but in the extant manuscripts of the long Latin version the period is specified as one day and one night on the day Jesus rose from the dead.<sup>58</sup> In several of the later redactions, however, the period is specified in the same way as in the *Vision of Ezra*: "from the ninth hour of the Sabbath until the first hour of the second day" (Redactions III, IV, VIII).<sup>59</sup> It does not seem plausible that the respite itself is an addition to the text of the *Vision of Ezra*, taken from the one of the redactions of the *Apocalypse*

<sup>58</sup> Silverstein, *Visio*, 79, argues that this originally referred to Easter Day, though the later redactions took it to be the weekly Lord's Day.

<sup>59</sup> Redactions III and VIII in Silverstein, *Visio*, 190–1, 212; Redaction IV in Brandes, "Über die Quellen," 47. "The first hour" may have dropped out of the text of the Latin *Vision of Ezra*.

of *Paul*, since it forms the necessary conclusion to the whole theme of the work. Since we have already seen reason to date the original form of the *Vision of Ezra* earlier than the *Apocalypse of Paul*, it may well be that the former was the first Christian work to employ this motif, whence it was taken up in the *Apocalypse of Paul*.<sup>60</sup>

Ezra's Tour of the Judgments (Latin *Vision of Ezra* §§1–59)

Punishments and Rewards			Sins and Virtues	
(1) Ordeal	§§3–11	D*		<i>holy &amp; God-fearing + almsgiving, charity to needy</i>
		D	S E <sup>1</sup>	denied Lord + with women on Lord's Day
				fiery gates & beasts
(2)	§§12–18	D	E	hanging & beating
(3)	§§19–22	D	E	hanging & beating
(4) Ordeal	§§23–33	D*		incest with parent
		D S	E	<i>almsgiving, charity to needy</i>
				greedy, thieves, covetous, inhospitable to poor & strangers
(5)	§§34–36	D		every kind of evil
(6) Ordeal	§§36a–36e	S		
(7)	§§37–39	D <sup>1</sup>	E <sup>2</sup>	immortal worm bridge
				fiery throne
(8)	§§40–42	D	E	piercing eyes
(9)	§§43–44	D		fiery collars
(10)	§§45–47	D <sup>2</sup>	E	burning iron & lead
(11)	§§48–49	D <sup>3</sup> V		mocked and corrupted law
(12)	§§50–50a			rulers oppressed poor
				rebelled against parents + denied
(13)	§§51–53	D V		master, defrauded servants
				aborted children conceived in adultery
(14)	§§53a–55	D	E	denied their milk to infants & orphans
[Interlude]	§§56–57			
(15)	§§57a–57c	D	E	changed boundary stone + gave false testimony
(16) Ordeal	§58			
Paradise	§§59–59e			beasts & flames
				<i>light, joy, manna</i>
				<i>almsgiving &amp; charity + if without</i>

<sup>60</sup> For the motif as originally Jewish, see I. Lévi, "Le repos sabbatique des âmes damnées," *REJ* 25 (1892): 1–23; and see also Silverstein, *Visio*, 124 n.126; Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 17 n.31.

(cont.)

Punishments and Rewards				Sins and Virtues
				<i>means, consolatory words</i>
(17)	§59f	D	pit of burning food	usury, without compassion
[In heaven]	§60–61	E		

D = demonstrative question and answer, usually about sinners in punishments

(‘Who are these who...?’ ‘These are the ones who...’)

D\* = demonstrative question and answer about righteous unharmed by punishments

D<sup>1</sup> = ‘Who is this? This is king Herod who...’

D<sup>2</sup> = demonstrative answer, no question

D<sup>3</sup> = victims say, ‘Lord, these are the ones who...’

S = those punished cry to God for mercy but he gives no mercy

V = victims are present accusing those who wronged them

E = Ezra prays, ‘Lord, spare the sinners’

E<sup>1</sup> = Ezra prays, ‘Lord, have mercy on the sinners’

E<sup>2</sup> = Ezra prays, ‘Lord, you have judged a right judgment’

## HIMMLISCHER AUFSTIEG IM APOKRYPHON DES JAKOBUS (NHC I,2)

Boudewijn Dehandschutter

Zweifelloos hat die von Paulus in 2Kor 12,2–4 angedeutete Entrückung eingehend auf spätere frühchristliche Texte und auch auf gnostisches Schrifttum nachgewirkt.<sup>1</sup> Unter den ‚gnostischen‘ Apokalypsen im Nag-Hammadi-Codex V findet sich zum Beispiel eine mit dem Titel „Apokalypse des Paulus“ (NHC V,2),<sup>2</sup> die den Aufstieg des Paulus in Form einer Himmelsreise bis in den zehnten Himmel beschreibt. Andere Schriften aus Nag Hammadi, die den Titel „Apokalypse“ tragen, sind eher der Gattung des Offenbarungsdialogs zugehörig. Dabei spielt das Visionäre nicht selten eine Rolle, die Vorstellung der „Himmelsreise“ jedoch fehlt.<sup>3</sup>

Das heißt nicht, dass diese nicht in anderen Nag-Hammadi-Schriften begegnen würde, sie ist allerdings bislang wenig erforscht, unter anderem weil man diese Schriften vor allem in den Rahmen des

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<sup>1</sup> So z.B. die bekannte altkirchliche *Apokalypse des Paulus*, jetzt neu herausgegeben von Th. Silverstein und A. Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul. A New Critical Edition of the Three Long Latin Versions* (Cahiers d'Orientalisme; Genève: Patrick Cramer, 1997). Zur Einführung siehe auch H. Duensing und A. De Santos Otero, „Apokalypse des Paulus“, in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen II: Apostolisches, Apokalypsen und Verwandtes* (hg. von W. Schneemelcher; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 644–75; und E. Dassmann, „Paulus in der ‚Visio Sancti Pauli‘“, in *Jenseitsvorstellungen in Antike und Christentum. Gedenkschrift für Alfred Stuiber* (JAC Erg.B. 9; Münster: Aschendorff, 1982), 117–28.

<sup>2</sup> Wir folgen der Edition von W. Murdock und G.W. McRae, „The Apocalypse of Paul“, in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4* (ed. D.M. Parrott; NHS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1979); siehe jetzt auch J.M. Rosenstiehl und M. Kaler, *L'Apocalypse de Paul NH V,2* (BCNH; Québec-Louvain: Peeters, 2005). Vgl. auch die interessante Analyse von H.J. Klauck, „Die Himmelfahrt des Paulus (2 Kor 12,2–4) in der koptischen Paulusapokalypse aus Nag Hammadi (NHC VI 2)“, *SNTU* 10 (1985): 151–90.

<sup>3</sup> So die *Apokalypsen des Jakobus* in NHC V,3 und 4 und die *Apokalypse des Petrus* NHC VII,3. Die *Apokalypse des Adam* (NHC V,5), bildet in dem Sinne eine Ausnahme, dass der Text sich als eine Offenbarung Adams an Seth vorstellt, bei der im Rahmen eines sethianischen Schöpfungsmythos stark auf jüdische apokalyptische Traditionen zurückgegriffen wird.

Offenbarungsdialogs situiert hat.<sup>4</sup> So findet sich in dem – leider nur sehr fragmentarisch erhaltenen – „Dialog des Soter“<sup>5</sup> eine Passage, die möglicherweise eine Art von „Himmelsreise“ darstellt. Zudem zeigt dieser Text, dass man nicht nur Paulus die Erfahrung einer Himmelsreise zuschrieb, sondern auch anderen Jüngern, im Fall des „Dialogs“ auch Judas, Matthäus und sogar Maria(m).<sup>6</sup>

Auch das so genannte *Apokryphon des Jakobus* (NHC I,2) birgt im Rahmen seiner epistolären Form eine Art von Offenbarungsdialog.<sup>7</sup> Dieser entfaltet sich zwischen dem Erlöser einerseits sowie Jakobus und Petrus andererseits.<sup>8</sup> Der Text mündet in eine „Entrückung“ der beiden Jünger, eine Stelle, auf die der folgende Beitrag näher eingehen möchte. Bevor dies geschieht, ist es allerdings notwendig, wenigstens die wichtigsten mit dem *Apokryphon* verbundenen Probleme kurz vorzustellen.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Vgl. dazu P. Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue. The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Crossroads, 1980); K. Rudolph, „Der gnostische ‚Dialog‘ als literarisches Genus“, in *Gnosis und spätantike Religionsgeschichte. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Idem; NHMS 42; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 103–22; J. Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre. Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen als Rahmenerzählungen frühchristlicher Dialoge* (TU 146; Berlin: Akademie, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> S. Emmel, E. Pagels und H. Köster (Hg.), *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5. The Dialogue of the Savior* (NHS 26; Leiden: Brill, 1984), und die Kommentare von S. Petersen und H.G. Bethge, „Der Dialog des Erlösers (NHC III,5)“, in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch, 1. Band: NHC I,1–V,1* (eds. H.M. Schenke, H.G. Bethge und U.U. Kaiser; GCS NF 8; Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2001), 381–97.

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. NHC III, 134,24–137,3: „Apokalyptische Vision“.

<sup>7</sup> Die Schrift wurde erstmals ediert durch M. Malinine u.a. (Hg.), *Epistula Iacobi apocrypha. Codex Jung F. Ir-F.VIIIv* (Zürich: Züricher, 1968), 1–16; vgl. auch F.E. Williams, „The Apocryphon of James“, in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (Codex Jung)* (hg. H.W. Attridge; NHS 22; Leiden: Brill, 1985); D. Rouleau, *L'épître apocryphe de Jacques (NH I,2)* (BCNH; Québec: Université de Laval, 1987); D. Kirchner, *Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha. Die zweite Schrift aus Nag Hammadi-Codex I* (TU 136; Berlin: Akademie, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Zur Frage ob der Text ursprünglich nur auf Jakobus verwies oder nicht, vgl. B. Dehandschutter, „L'Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha de Nag Hammadi (CG I,2) comme apocryphe néotestamentaire“, *ANRW II* 25.6 (1988): 4529–50, hier 4543–44, sowie J. Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 217.

<sup>9</sup> Vgl. vor allem die Einleitung und den Kommentar in der oben angegebenen Edition Kirchners; darüber hinaus auch D. Kirchner, „Der Brief des Jakobus“, in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen I: Evangelien* (hg. W. Schneemelcher; Tübingen: Mohr, 1990), 234–44; und die Einleitung zur Deutschen Übersetzung von J. Hartenstein und U.K. Plisch, „Der Brief des Jakobus“ (NHC I,2), in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch I*, 11–26. Wir folgen dieser Übersetzung.

## 1. EINFÜHRENDES ZUM APOKRYPHON DES JAKOBUS

Die an sich ohne Titel überlieferte Schrift gibt sich als Brief des Jakobus an einen Adressaten, dessen Namen nicht überliefert ist.<sup>10</sup> In den brieflichen Abschnitten des Textes, die auch am Ende des Textes (vgl. 16,12–20) wieder aufgegriffen wird, soll verdeutlicht werden, warum Jakobus ein „Apokryphon“ verfasst, d.h. eine Schrift, die sich inhaltlich von den (verborgenen wie öffentlichen) Lehren der anderen Apostel absetzt.<sup>11</sup> Dann wird von einer Erscheinung Jesu erzählt, der Jakobus und Petrus von den anderen absondert. Einzig an diese beiden ist die im Dialog gegebene Offenbarung gerichtet, die den zentralen Inhalt des *Apokryphons* (p. 2,39–15,6) ausmacht. Dieser auffällige Abstand gegenüber der restlichen „apostolischen Tradition“, der vom Autor deutlich betont wird, wird auch zum Schluss der Schrift wiederaufgenommen (p. 15,29–16,11) und ist zweifelsohne ein wichtiger Bestandteil der „Botschaft“ der Schrift. Damit zeigt sich eine interessante Parallele zum *Judasevangelium*<sup>12</sup> des Codex Tchacos: In beiden Fällen wird der Mangel an „Kenntnis“ der übrigen Apostel in scharfen Kontrast zur Offenbarung an die Privilegierten, also Judas einerseits sowie Jakobus und Petrus andererseits gesetzt.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Es bleibt umstritten, ob der Name des Adressaten entsprechend einer Hypothese H.M. Schenkes, „Der Jakobusbrief aus dem Codex Jung,“ *ÖLZ* 66 (1971): 117–30, als Cerinthus gelesen werden müsste. Vgl. aber J. Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 215–6: „Die von H.M. Schenke vorgeschlagene Ergänzung (...) ist verlockend, aber nicht völlig sicher“; andere Lösungen in B. Dehandschutter, *Epistula Jacobi*, 4532 n.8.

<sup>11</sup> „(Als) aber alle zwölf Jünger zugleich beisammen saßen und als sie sich an das erinnerten, was der Erlöser einem jeden von ihnen gesagt hatte – sei es im Verborgenen, sei es öffentlich – und als sie es zu Büchern (ordneten), schrieb ich, was in (jener Geheimlehre) steht“ (2,7–16).

<sup>12</sup> Wir folgen dem Text *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos. Coptic Text edited by R. Kasser and G. Wurst...Critical edition of Codex Tchacos* (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 2006), und den kritischen Emendationen von P. Nagel, „Das Evangelium des Judas,“ *ZNW* 98 (2007): 213–76.

<sup>13</sup> Weiterhin bestehen auffällige Unterschiede zwischen den beiden Schriften; eine der wichtigsten Fragen diesbezüglich ist, ob die Position des Judas im *Judasevangelium* überhaupt so positiv einzuschätzen ist, wie man anfänglich hat annehmen wollen. Offensichtlich ist, dass auch hier die visionäre Erfahrung des Judas, der in eine Wolke eintritt, die entscheidende Rolle spielt. Vgl. 57,20–25: „Judas aber blickte empor, sah die Wolke und das Licht und ging in sie ein. Die (aber), die am Boden standen, hörten eine Stimme, die aus der Wolke kam und rief (...) (Text zerstört)“ (Übersetzung Nagel). – In jeder Hinsicht verhält es sich so, dass in anderen Offenbarungsdialogen die Rolle der anderen Jünger nicht so negativ eingeschätzt wird wie im *Apokryphon Jacobi* und dem *Judasevangelium*.

Die Einordnung der Schrift ist besonders problematisch: So ist die Forschungsmeinung hinsichtlich des gnostischen Charakters des *Apokryphons* geteilt, da ein deutlicher Verweis auf „den“ gnostischen Mythos fehlt. Auch die allgemeine Beschreibung des Inhaltes ist schwierig, man kann lediglich auf einige thematische Akzente hinweisen.<sup>14</sup> Einen ersten Schwerpunkt bildet zweifellos die Thematik des freiwilligen Todes. Das Martyrium wird vorhergesagt und das Leiden Christi als Beispiel hingestellt. Es bleibt jedoch unsicher, ob mit Martyrium gemeint ist, dass man – in eher gnostischem Sinne – vor allem Abstand von seiner Körperlichkeit nehmen muss, um das Heil zu erreichen, da dem wahren Menschen – dem geistigen – dieses Leiden fremd bleibt,<sup>15</sup> oder ob der Text das Heil des Menschen in der freiwilligen Annahme von Leid und Tod in der Nachfolge Jesu erwartet. Im letzteren Falle ginge es eher um die allgemeine Problematik des „noble death“,<sup>16</sup> ohne dass damit ein explizit gnostischer Ursprung oder Kontext impliziert werden müsste.<sup>17</sup> Es scheint, dass der Autor durch all die Widersprüche, die er bei der Behandlung dieser Thematik aufwirft, selbst keine eindeutige Antwort auf die dargebotene Problematik zu geben vermag. Ja, er scheint sogar der Meinung zu sein, dass auch die bekannte Evangelienüberlieferung, an die er sich sprachlich wie formal sehr eng anschließt,<sup>18</sup> keine Antwort auf die Frage, wie das Heil

<sup>14</sup> So vermeidet die Übersetzung von Hartenstein-Plisch jegliche Gliederung des *Apocryphons*; vgl. dagegen die detaillierte Gliederung in der oben genannten Edition von Williams, 24–25.

<sup>15</sup> Vgl. z.B. den Jesus im *Brief des Petrus an Philippus* (NHC VIII,2; ed. H.G. Bethge, *Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus. Ein neutestamentliches Apokryphon aus dem Fund von Nag Hammadi* (NHC VIII,2) [TU 142; Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1997]). Vgl. darüber hinaus A. Marjanen, „The Suffering of One who is a Stranger to Suffering: the Crucifixion of Jesus in the Letter of Peter to Philip,“ in *Fair Play. Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity. Essays in Honor of H. Räisänen* (NovTSupp 103; Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2002), 487–98, oder D. Voorgang, *Die Passion Jesu Christi in der Gnosis* (Frankfurt, Main: Peter Lang, 1991); K.W. Tröger, *Die Passion Jesu Christi in der Gnosis nach den Schriften von Nag Hammadi* (Diss. Berlin, 1978).

<sup>16</sup> Vgl. A.J. Droge und J.D. Tabor, *A Noble Death. Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992); B. Dehandschutter, „Martyrdom as a Gift in Early Christianity,“ in *Polycarpiana. Studies on Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity. Collected Essays* (hg. B. Dehandschutter; BETL 205; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 229–35.

<sup>17</sup> Vgl. B. Dehandschutter, „Salvation in the Apocryphon of James,“ in *Pagani e cristiani alla ricerca della salvezza (secoli I–III). XXXIV incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana. Roma, 5–7 maggio 2005*, (Rome, 2006), 357–66.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. B. Dehandschutter, „Epistula Jacobi,“ 4547–50; J. Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 242–5; es ist leider nicht möglich im Rahmen dieses Beitrags der interessanten Thesen Hartensteins über das Verhältnis des *Apokryphons* zur *Epistula Apostolorum*

zu erlangen sei, zu geben vermag – und dies sogar definitiv, denn der Heiland schließt mit diesem Dialog die Phase der Offenbarung (nach der Auferstehung, cf. p. 2,23–25) ab und geht hinfort (p. 15,5).

Ein zweiter thematischer Akzent liegt auf dem „Erfüllt“-Werden; er begegnet bereits vor der Einführung der Thematik des „Martyriums“ (p. 2,39–4,22), der Text kommt jedoch auch danach noch regelmäßig auf ihn zurück. Es geht anscheinend darum, dass man einzig noch vom Geist erfüllt sein darf, und dass dies nicht nur die anderen Jünger entbehren, sondern auch Jakobus und Petrus.

Eine dritte thematische Einheit beschäftigt sich mit der Interpretation der Überlieferung, d.h. der Bedeutung der Prophetie, der Parabeln, des Wirkens des Heilands. Dieser Abschnitt endet in einer Abschiedsrede und einem Dialog, gefolgt von der Himmelfahrt.

Auch die Beschreibung der Himmelfahrt ist hochinteressant: Der Text spricht hier von der Rückkehr an den Ort, von dem Er gekommen ist, vom Einnehmen der Position zur Rechten des Vaters, vom sich Entkleiden und erneut Bekleiden. Die Himmelfahrt selbst wird als ein Aufgenommen-Werden durch einen „Geist-Wagen“ angedeutet. Selbstverständlich sind diese Themen auch sonst nicht unbekannt, ja finden sich auch in der kanonischen Literatur, v.a. der Apostelgeschichte. Der Verfasser des *Apokryphons* geht allerdings auch hier seinen eigenen Weg, er scheint offensichtlich den in der Apostelgeschichte überlieferten Bericht der Himmelfahrt Jesu im Blick zu haben und kritisieren zu wollen: Die im *Apokryphon* erzählte Himmelfahrt kann nicht wie in Apg 1,10 mit den Augen verfolgt werden; vor allem aber erfahren nicht alle Jünger von ihr, sondern nur Jakobus und Petrus. Erstere haben an ihr nicht Teil und kehren nicht nach Jerusalem zurück, dies tut einzig Jakobus (p. 15,29–16,11). Insgesamt scheint der Verfasser also eine Kritik oder Neuinterpretation desjenigen, was man über die Himmelfahrt weiß, zu formulieren und dabei eindeutig Stellung zur Person des Heilands zu nehmen.<sup>19</sup> Er fügt jedoch noch

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und zur 1. *Apokalypse des Jakobus* (NHC V,3) gerecht zu werden, siehe *ibid.*, 224–32. Zumindest im Falle der *Epistula Apostolorum* könnte man sich auf die Möglichkeit einer gemeinsamen Tradition einigen. Die Beziehungen des *Apokryphons* zur 1. *Jakobusapokalypse*, so wie Hartenstein sie sieht, bauen jedoch darauf, dass beide Schriften als gnostische Texte anzusehen sind, eine Tatsache, die weiterhin zweifelsohne angenommen werden kann (s.u.).

<sup>19</sup> Das *Apokryphon* wirft durchlaufend die Frage nach der Christologie des Verfassers auf, welche keineswegs ‘rein’ gnostisch zu nennen ist, ja nicht einmal doketisch. Der Herr (das Wort ‘Christus’ fehlt) ist ‘soter’. Darin unterscheidet sich das *Apokryphon*

eine Passage über die Erfahrung der beiden Auserwählten hinzu, die zu untersuchen es im Weiteren gilt.

## 2. DIE HIMMELFAHRT IM *APOKRYPHON DES JAKOBUS*

Für das Verständnis des Folgenden ist es wichtig, die entscheidende Passage in ihrer Gesamtheit zu zitieren:

Nachdem er dies gesagt hatte, ging er weg. Wir aber knieten nieder; ich und Petrus, und wir dankten. Und wir sandten unser Herz hinauf zu den Himmeln und hörten mit unseren Ohren und sahen mit unseren Augen das Geschrei von Kriegen und Trompetenklang und große Unruhe. Und als wir [...] von jenem Ort weg hinauf gelangten, sandten wir unseren Verstand (*Nous*) noch weiter hinauf. Und wir sahen mit unseren Augen und hörten mit unseren Ohren Lobgesänge und Preislieder der Engel und Jubel von Engeln und himmlischen Größen. Sie lobsang und auch wir jubelten. Danach wollten wir auch unseren Geist nach oben senden, hinauf zur Größe. Und als wir uns hinaufbegaben, ließ man uns weder etwas sehen noch hören. Denn die übrigen Jünger riefen nach uns.

Beachtenswert ist bereits die „Gebetshaltung“ der Apostel: sie knien nieder und danken, und „senden ihr Herz“ hinauf zum Himmel. Dabei ist zu beachten, dass dieses „Aufsteigen“ trotz des Versprechens, dass sie, wenn sie ihr „Herz geöffnet haben werden, die Lobessänge hören werden, die den Heiland im Himmel erwarten“ (vgl. p. 14,27–28), zunächst zu einem ziemlich chaotischen auditiven und visionären Resultat führt. So ist ein zweiter Schritt nötig: Sie senden ihren Verstand (*voûς*) noch weiter nach oben, und dann erst kommt die Erfahrung des „himmlischen Lobessangs“, der Lieder der Engel und des Jubels der Himmlischen. Darüber hinaus jedoch ist noch ein dritter Schritt möglich – die Sendung des Geistes. Dieses Aufsteigen bis hin zur „Größe“ selbst wird zwar nicht unterbrochen,<sup>20</sup> führt gleichwohl aber nicht zum „Sehen oder Hören“, da die sonstigen Jünger „rufen“.

Kommentierungen zu dieser Passage sind in der Literatur bislang recht karg geblieben. Man spricht vor allem von der Erfahrung der

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hier in einem weiteren Punkt vom Judasevangelium, welches zweifellos nicht anders als auf der Basis einer gnostischen Christologie gelesen werden kann; dazu auch P. Nagel, *Das Evangelium des Judas*, 265–70.

<sup>20</sup> Auch die Bemerkung der *editio princeps*, dass die beiden nicht weiter als zu einem bestimmten Punkt gehen dürfen, wirkt übertrieben, siehe die *Editio Princeps Epistula Iacobi apocrypha*, 81.

beiden Jünger im Zusammenhang mit der Himmelfahrt des Heilands, von einer Teilnahme an ihr<sup>21</sup> oder auch vom Gegenteil davon: Für Kirchner steht die Himmelfahrt des Heilands für sich; dasjenige, was die Jünger erfahren, dagegen sei eine Art von Bewusstwerdung dessen, was diese Himmelfahrt in „höheren Sphären“ bewirkt.<sup>22</sup> Es lohnt sich also, diese Passage neu zu interpretieren – und dies sowohl für sich betrachtet, als auch eingebettet im Kontext. Beginnen wir mit dem Letzteren. Der Text des *Apokryphons* als Ganzer steht im Zeichen der Himmelfahrt: diese naht nach einer langen Zwischenperiode – in immer deutlicheren Formulierungen wird auf sie voraus verwiesen: So stellt der Heiland auf die Frage des Jüngers auf p. 2 hin klar: „...ich werde weggehen zu dem Ort, von dem ich gekommen bin.“. Einer Szene, die zur Absonderung von Jakobus und Petrus führt, folgt auch gegenüber den beiden Privilegierten ein Zeichen des nahenden Aufbruchs (Ende p. 7); auf p. 10,22–24 heißt es kurz: „Ich werde mich von euch entfernen,“ die ausführliche Ankündigung des Aufstiegs folgt p. 14 sowie die Aufforderung, die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Herrlichkeit, die den Heiland erwartet, zu richten. In all diesen Passagen geht es um die *Himmelfahrt des Heilands*. Auch dort, wo schließlich die beiden Jünger eingeladen werden, „ihr Herz zu öffnen“, damit sie die Hymnen, die den Heiland erwarten, hören können, kann man nicht von einer *Teilnahme* an der Himmelfahrt sprechen. Die Himmelfahrt an sich wiederum wird ziemlich abrupt beschrieben: „Er ging weg“ (p. 15,5–6). Dabei ist es zunächst bedeutsam, dass einzig Jakobus und Petrus bei der Himmelfahrt des Heilands beteiligt sind bzw. von ihr erfahren; die anderen Jünger aber auch hier nicht im Spiel sind. Dadurch sind beide, einzig und allein Jakobus und Petrus, zu besonderen Offenbarungsträgern geworden. Auf dieser Tatsache baut der Anspruch des *Apokryphons* auf.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Rouleau, 135: „La vision exstatique à la faveur de la quelle ils accompagneront le Sauveur dans sa remontée (...)“.

<sup>22</sup> So die bereits genannte Edition von Kirchner, 139–40; dieser Autor ist übrigens der Meinung, dass der Visionsbericht Jacobi und Petri ursprünglich unabhängig vom heutigen Kontext entstanden ist.

<sup>23</sup> Diese Situation ist grundlegend unterschiedlich von den Schlusszenen des *Apokryphon Johannis* oder der *Sophia Jesu Christi*: Im ersten Fall wird Johannes alles, was ihm in einem „Mysterium“ gesagt wurde, seinen Jüngern verkünden, im zweiten Fall ist die Offenbarung von Anfang an sowohl den Zwölf als auch sieben Frauen gegeben worden.

Der Inhalt der Passage selbst ist jedoch nicht ohne Schwierigkeiten. Man möchte dazu neigen, das hier Erzählte in den letzten Worten des Heilands „vorhergesagt“ zu sehen:<sup>24</sup> „Richtet aber eure Aufmerksamkeit auf die Herrlichkeit, die mich erwartet! Und wenn ihr euer Herz geöffnet habt, so hört die Lobgesänge, die mich oben in den Himmeln erwarten!“ (p. 14,26–29). Als nun aber die Jünger ihr Herz „nach oben“ senden, hören sie lediglich die chaotischen Klänge des Krieges und der Unruhe. Erst wenn sie in der „nous“ weitergehen, vernehmen sie Lobgesänge und Jubel und *nehmen daran teil*.

Diese Beschreibungen werden in den Kommentaren zum Text gewöhnlich mit anderen frühjüdischen und antik-christlichen eschatologischen Vorstellungen verglichen.<sup>25</sup> In unserem Text jedoch sind diese Motive mit den Möglichkeiten der Wahrnehmungen des „Herzens“, des „Verstandes“ (und des „Geistes“) in Verbindung gesetzt. Wie ist dies zu verstehen? Meistens sieht man darin einen Verweis auf das Durchlaufen unterschiedlicher Himmelsphären, in Kombination mit einer bestimmten Anthropologie, die bereits am Beginn des Textes, p. 4,18–22, angedeutet sei:<sup>26</sup> Die Jünger müssen sich mit dem Geist erfüllen und sich vom Logos befreien, denn dieser ist die Seele.<sup>27</sup> Nun ist in unserem Abschnitt allerdings nirgendwo von der Seele die Rede, nur vom Herzen, dem Verstand (νοῦς) und dem Geist (πνεῦμα). Dies deutet darauf hin, dass der hier besprochene Text nicht mit der Vorstellung, die man gewöhnlich als „Himmelreise der Seele“ bezeichnet,<sup>28</sup> in Verbindung zu bringen ist, aber auch nicht mit einer

<sup>24</sup> Vgl. z.B. die oben genannte Edition von Rouleau, 133.

<sup>25</sup> Siehe die Texte in der editio princeps, 83 usw. Es bleibt jedoch dabei, dass diese Parallelen auf sehr verschiedene literarische Quellen aufgeteilt sind, dass also keiner dieser Texte eine direkte Quelle des *Apokryphons* sein kann.

<sup>26</sup> So die oben genannte Editio princeps, *Epistula Iacobi apocrypha*, 82.

<sup>27</sup> Obwohl der Kontext dieser Passage nicht ganz deutlich ist, geht es doch darum, sich das Heil zu erwerben, und dieses durch die Erfüllung mit dem Geist zu erreichen, welche die zwei Jünger bereits glauben erreicht zu haben, weshalb sie kritisiert werden.

<sup>28</sup> Sicherlich nicht in dem Sinne in dem es z.B. in der 'Erzählung über die Seele' (NHC II,6) oder anderswo in den Nag-Hammadi-Texten zur Sprache kommt, vgl. C. Kulawik, *Die Erzählung über die Seele (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II,6)* (TU 155; Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2006). Allerdings ist es die Frage, ob die Schrift über die 'Exegese über die Seele' (II,6) wirklich als gnostisch einzustufen ist nicht vielmehr ohne jeglichen „gnostischen“ Mythos vom „Fall der Seele“ in einem christlichen Kontext platonische Gedanken rezipiert; hierzu vgl. B. Dehandschutter, „The Discussion on the Soul in some Nag Hammadi Treatises (NHC II,6; VI,3; VII,4),“ in *„And became Man“*. *Christian Foundations of European Anthropology. Papers of the IVth Meeting of the Hungarian Patristic Society 24–26 June 2004* [im Druck]; vgl. allgemein zudem

Entrückung wie der des Paulus, die diesen im Geist bis in den Zehnten Himmel führt.<sup>29</sup> Außerdem zeigt sich, dass es dem Text nicht um eine bestimmte Anthropologie geht,<sup>30</sup> welche dann mit den unterschiedlichen Himmelssphären verbunden ist.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. ZUR INTERPRETATION

So ist es unseres Erachtens für die Interpretation des Textes notwendig, gerade dessen *Gebetskontext* besondere Aufmerksamkeit zu verleihen: „Wir aber knieten nieder, ich und Petrus, und wir dankten“ (p. 15, 6–7). Alles Folgende findet also in der Situation des Gebetes statt! Im Gebet senden sie die beiden Jünger ihr Herz und ihren „nous“ nach oben. Dies erinnert stark an einen anderen Text der Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Die Schrift „Über die Achtheit und die Neunheit“, ein hermetischer Dialog zwischen einem Lehrer (dem „Vater“) und einem Schüler (dem „Sohn“). Letzterer wird durch das Gebet in eine ekstatische Erfahrung des Achten und Neunten Himmels geführt. Die theoretische Instruktion, mit der dieser vor den Funden von Nag Hammadi unbekannte Text<sup>32</sup> einsetzt, verweist darauf, wie bedeutsam das Gebet sei, um diese Erfahrung erleben zu können. Darauf wird die eigentliche Handlung durch die folgenden Worte eingeleitet: „... es ziemt sich, zu Gott zu beten mit der Ganzheit unseres Herzens und der Ganzheit unserer Seele (...).“ Ferner heißt es im Gebet: „(...) empfangen von uns diese geistigen Opfergaben, die wir zu Dir schicken mit unserem ganzen Herzen und unserer Seele und unserer Kraft (...).“<sup>33</sup>

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A.F. Segal, „Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment“, *ANRW II* 23.2 (1980): 1333–94, bes. 1376–83.

<sup>29</sup> Dabei ist nicht unwichtig, dass Paulus in gleicher Weise wie die anderen Apostel in die gleiche 'Höhe' gehoben wird.

<sup>30</sup> In dieser fehlen dann sowohl Konzepte von *ψυχή* und *λόγος*. F.E. Williams allerdings hält die Anthropologie des *Apocryphons* für inkonsistent (35).

<sup>31</sup> So auch der Kommentar der editio princeps; vgl. Rouleau, 135–6.

<sup>32</sup> NHC VI,6 war in der Tat über andere Informationsquellen zu den *Hermetica* nicht bekannt. Nach Meinung vieler Autoren muss der Text zusammen mit dem darauf folgenden NHC VI,7 gelesen werden, einem Dankgebet, welches in der griechischen (Louvre Papyrus) und der lateinischen (Asclepius 41) Überlieferung Parallelen findet; vgl. die in Anm. 2 oben genannte Edition der codices V und VI; ferner J.P. Mahé, „La prière d'actions de grâces du codex VI de Nag Hammadi et le Discours parfait“, *ZPE* 13 (1974): 40–60.

<sup>33</sup> Vgl. *Corpus Hermeticum* I, 30.

Alles mündet schließlich in das Singen von Hymnen in ehrfürchtiger Stille.

Nun verweist die Literatur nur im Vorbeigehen auf diesen Text, vor allem im Zusammenhang mit dem Singen von Hymnen.<sup>34</sup> D. Kirchner hat eindringlich auf einen anderen hermetischen Text (CH VII) verwiesen, der ebenfalls von Herz und *nous* spricht, die beide nach oben gesandt werden können, um das Licht zu sehen.<sup>35</sup> Dieser Text ist wichtig als Bestätigung dafür, dass es um eine *spirituelle* Erfahrung geht, für deren Verständnis in unserer Passage die Gebetsgeste nicht vernachlässigt werden darf. So bietet der genannte hermetische Text ‚Über die Achtheit und Neunheit‘ (NHC VI, 6) die nächste Parallele unserer Passage. Genau wie in jenem Text Trismegistos und sein „Sohn“, senden Jakobus und Petrus ihr Herz und ihren Verstand im Gebet nach oben, und sind so in der Lage, an einer „Himmelsreise“ und einer „himmlischen Liturgie“ zur Verherrlichung des Heilands teilzuhaben, die sich eigentlich in ihrem Inneren, d.h. in ihrem Geist, abspielt.<sup>36</sup>

Im Geiste könnten sie schließlich noch weiter kommen – und nichts weist darauf hin, dass ihnen dies nicht gestattet sei; allein die Intervention der anderen Jünger bildet ein Hindernis.

Wichtig daran ist, dass diese Beschreibung eng an eine hermetische Vorstellung anschließt und nicht aus gnostischen Kontexten heraus zu erklären ist, auch nicht aus der *Apokalypse des Paulus* (NHC V,2). Noch wichtiger ist es, dass diese „himmlische Schau“<sup>37</sup> als Abschluss des *Apokryphons* dessen Bedeutung zum Ausdruck bringt: Nicht durch die Interpretation der Worte Jesu kommen die Jünger zur Erkenntnis, sondern nur durch ihre im Gebet ermöglichte „innere Reise“. Es ist zugleich auch deutlich, dass dies nur einigen wenigen Privilegierten (Jakobus und Petrus als Vertretern einer begrenzten Gruppe, vgl. auch das Ende des Briefes) vorbehalten ist. Und diese wenigen müssen sich selbst retten (p. 8,30–36)!

<sup>34</sup> Williams, 35: „This is a common motif“.

<sup>35</sup> Kirchner, 138; zum Text an sich vgl. B.P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992); vgl. B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 460–2.

<sup>36</sup> Daher auch die Betonung der Stille in den hermetischen Texten: es macht keinen Sinn, diese Erfahrung und die eigene Teilnahme daran (das Singen) durch Worte zu veräußern, es handelt sich um einen inneren Prozess.

<sup>37</sup> Hartenstein-Plisch, 25.

## 4. FAZIT

Wir haben bereits darauf hingewiesen, dass das *Apokryphon* für eine Botschaft von Rettung und Heil steht, die nicht ohne weiteres aus gnostischem Gedankengut abgeleitet werden kann.<sup>38</sup> Die hier behandelte, an hermetische Texte erinnernde Gebetsszene kann dies bestätigen: Durch die „himmlische Schau“ wird bewirkt, dass auch Jakobus und Petrus sagen können: „und auch wir jubelten“. Wir können damit an einen Punkt zurückkehren, auf den wir bereits im Zusammenhang mit Heilsauffassung und Erlösung, genauer in Bezug auf den freiwilligen Tod, im *Apokryphon des Jakobus* hingewiesen haben. Das *Apokryphon* scheint eine Diskussion wiederzugeben zwischen Schultraditionen, deren einer Gedanken bei Clemens von Alexandrien sehr nahe kommt. In seinen Auseinandersetzungen über die Stadien der inneren Erleuchtung oder der Prüfung kommt Clemens in die Nähe unseres *Apokryphons*: die Erleuchtung beginnt beim reinen Herzen und wird im Geiste vollendet. Und obwohl es sich herausgestellt hat, dass Clemens' Ideen oft der valentinianischen Gnosis sehr nahe kommen, sind sie mit dieser doch nicht identisch.<sup>39</sup> Vielmehr zeigen sich auch bei Clemens – wie bei unserem Apokryphon – Bezüge zu hermetischem Gedankengut. So lässt sich das *Apokryphon* vielleicht am besten als Teil der Diskussion über den Erwerb des Heils aufgrund der Worte des Heilands verstehen. Dabei verweist der Autor in seiner Version der himmlischen Schau darauf, was seiner Meinung nach die Essenz der Diskussion ist: Dass „Gott *durch den Geist* offenbart, was das Auge nicht gesehen, und das Ohr nicht gehört, und was im Herzen des Menschen nicht aufgekommen ist,“ eine Art Neuinterpretation einer Tradition, die wir bereits bei Paulus (1 Kor 2,9–10)<sup>40</sup> finden.

<sup>38</sup> B. Dehandschutter, „Salvation in the Apocryphon of James“; mit anderen Worten gibt es im *Apokryphon* keinen Hinweis auf eine typisch gnostische Soteriologie, auch wenn u.a. Tröger in seiner Auseinandersetzung mit dem hermetischen Text NHC VI,6 dezidiert dessen gnostischen Inhalt hervorhebt. Vgl. K.W. Tröger, „Die Bedeutung der Nag-Hammadi-Schriften für die Hermetik,“ in *Studia coptica* (ed. P. Nagel; Berlin: Akademie, 1974), 175–200.

<sup>39</sup> Ähnlich die „Unterweisungen des Silvanus“ aus Nag Hammadi (NHC VII,4), welche ebenfalls alexandrinisches Denken repräsentiert; vgl. J. Zandee, „*The Teachings of Silvanus*“ and *Clement of Alexandria. A New Document of Alexandrian Theology* (Leiden: Brill 1977), 75.

<sup>40</sup> Man könnte hier selbstverständlich auch an Logion 17 des *Thomasevangeliums* denken, und vor allem an A.D. De Conicks Aussagen über 'Vision Mysticism' im *Thomasevangelium*; vgl. A.D. De Conick, *Seek to See Him. Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (VigChr.S 33; Leiden & Boston: Brill, 1996), worauf an dieser Stelle jedoch leider nicht weiter eingegangen werden kann.



PURGATORY:  
WORLDLY FUNCTIONS OF AN OTHERWORLDLY NOTION

Andreas Merkt

If you search Google for “purgatory”, you will be provided with colourful and sometimes bizarre results. Apparently, “purgatory” is the name of a climbing tour at the North pillar of Acopan Tepui in Venezuela, there is a German roller girl whose alias is “Polly Purgatory” and a Saxon death metal band called “Purgatory”, as well as a gay and lesbian disco in Augsburg.

The term purgatory seems to call forth manifold associations, which obscure the real meaning of the underlying term. Therefore, I would like to clarify what I mean by purgatory before coming back to the functions of this notion. To make things simpler, I will avail myself of the Catholic dogmatic theology, not because I am a Catholic theologian myself, but because the term *purgatorium* traditionally has its place in the Roman Catholic Church.

According to Catholic belief, the souls of the deceased who are destined for heaven, but who have not yet rendered complete satisfaction for their sins, will go to purgatory. Between death and the vision of God these souls have to undergo purification, which can be described by the image of ‘fire’. The souls of the deceased have to endure this fire, since they cannot do anything about it themselves, but rather depend on the living. First and foremost, it is by the celebration of Mass and prayers that believers can help the souls of the deceased in the other-world.

Thus, the idea consists of several components: an intermediate state or place between death and the vision of God, a satisfactory and at the same time cathartic punishment, and the possibility that the punishment might be mitigated by the help of the living. This basic idea is realised in different contexts, in which it develops specific functions. Jacques LeGoff, as is well known, observed the social and economic functions of purgatory in the High Middle Ages. His masterly book, although open to criticism in some respects, starts off with many details, but then leads the reader directly to the heyday of purgatory.

Here, as the 12th century came to an end, he sees the birth of this idea.<sup>1</sup> Even though LeGoff has opened a wide horizon, his focus on the Middle Ages has had one adverse consequence: That the idea of purgatory had emerged in antiquity. Therefore, I would now like to concentrate on the question: What function does the idea fulfil in the contexts in which it first appeared?

The basic idea of purgatory first occurred in North Africa and Alexandria at the turning-point of the second to the third century. In Alexandria, with the works of Clement and Origen this is clear.<sup>2</sup> For the North African literature, I myself proved this in a short study myself.<sup>3</sup> In this historical context, three functions of this concept of the nether-world can be observed. The first one may be termed ecclesiological or sociological. It is pertinent to the church as a comprehensive community of solidarity (1). The second one, the (controversial-)theological function, is aimed at the view of God (and the corresponding world picture) (2). The third one, connecting the other ones, is concerned with the cultural significance of purgatory (3).

# 1. THE INTEGRATIVE POWER OF PURGATORY: ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS

Purgatory primarily fulfils an integrative function, wherein its ecclesiological and sociological significance lies. It unites saints and sinners, the living and the dead, clergy and laymen, devout souls and sharp brains.

<sup>1</sup> J. LeGoff, *La naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).—I am grateful to Dr Michaela Hallermayer and Stefanie Braunschläger for preparing and Dr Mark Elliott for amending the English version.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. Anrich, "Clemens und Origenes als Begründer der Lehre vom Fegefeuer," in *Theologische Abhandlungen* (eds. W. Nowack et al.; Festschrift Holtzmann; Tübingen: Mohr, 1902), 95–120; then: W.C. van Unnick, "The Wise Fire in Gnostic Eschatological Vision," in *Kyriakon I* (eds. P. Granfield/J.A. Jungmann; Festschrift Quasten; Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 277–88; K. Schmöle, *Läuterung nach dem Tode als pneumatische Auferstehung bei Klemens von Alexandrien* (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 38; Münster: Aschendorff, 1974); H. Crouzel, *Les fins dernières selon Origène* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. Merkt, *Das Fegefeuer. Entstehung und Funktion einer Idee* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2005).

1.1. *Saints and Sinners*

Around 250, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage got some disquieting news. Antonianus, Cyprian's Numidian colleague, showed sympathies for Novatian, the Roman presbyter who had founded a counter church. The members of Novatian's church regarded themselves as the community of the pure, *katharoi*, and categorically denied the *lapsi* (those Christians who had become weak under torture and mortal danger) any return to the community of the church.

Cyprian rushed to send a letter to Numidia, in which he disproves the arguments of Novatian's followers at length. He also discusses the following argument of Novatian in his letter: If the *lapsi* were, after doing penance, allowed to return to the church, soon no one would be ready to be steadfast for the sake of Christ and suffer martyrdom. Cyprian proves that—even if there is the possibility of penance and returning to the church—it is still worthwhile suffering martyrdom. The martyr goes directly to paradise and his sins are immediately washed away by his suffering. The *lapsus*, however, has to be purified from his sins beforehand. This involves suffering corresponding to the pain of crucifixion. These pains last until Judgement Day. The penitent has to be purified by long lasting fire: *purgari diu igne*.<sup>4</sup>

The logic is obvious: martyrdom is definitely more attractive than apostasy. In contrast to the martyr, who is rewarded very soon, the *lapsus* has to put up with severe discomfort, not just penance in church, which is rather insignificant, but appalling suffering after death, purification through fire, "purgatory".

Thus, Cyprian seems to regard purgatory as some aggravated continuation of penance in church. Penance, therefore, provides the model for purgatory. From this point, also the ecclesiological relevance of purgatory unfolds. The arguments about penance were, first and foremost, all about the church's self-image. The question was how to combine the reality of sinful Christians and the idealized self-image of a community of saints? Novatian was in favour of exclusion (as Tertullian, the montanists and Hippolyt of Rome had been and the Donatists, as well as the Melitians and various penitential movements

<sup>4</sup> *Ep. Cyr.* 55 (CCL 3B, 256–287 Diercks), esp. 55,20 (279, 339–345). Cf. Merkt, *Fegefeuer*, 43–8.

later, in the Middle Ages, would be): in order to keep the church pure, sinners are to be excluded from the church forever.

Through argument against this rigorist position, there prevailed the idea of an act of penance in church, which entitled the remorseful sinner to full church community after a more or less long duration of penance. This position was at once strict and broad-minded, and bishops like Calixtus of Rome and Cyprian of Carthage substantiated it by a biblically inspired image of the church: Noah's Ark accommodated pure and impure animals, just as the church comprises saints and sinners.<sup>5</sup> In church, weeds grow together with wheat, and people like Novatian, who believed themselves to be able to distinguish between the two of them, obviously lack humility and clemency, because they presume to do something the Lord did not even concede to the Apostles.<sup>6</sup> Here, we can spot the beginnings of an ecclesiology of a *Volkskirche*, a church of the people, an idea which is later elaborated by Augustine: the church is a *corpus permixtum*, which inseparably consists of holiness and sinfulness.<sup>7</sup>

Affirming the practice of penance, the dualism between saints and sinners was abolished. There are saints that are saved, and sinners that are condemned, and in between there is a vast amount of those who are not complete saints, but repentant sinners willing to do penance. In the otherworld there is now a new category that correlates with this idea: apart from the saints, who reach paradise immediately, and the condemned, who suffer in the netherworld, there are people who are chosen, but nevertheless have to be purified through suffering. Whereas only an elite, the martyrs, are destined for paradise, purgatory seems to be the otherworld for the majority of Christians. The ecclesiological decision for the church of the people results in purgatory as the eschatological consequence. Purgatory is, in a way, the otherworld of a *Volkskirche*, of Christianity understood as a popular religion. Like penance, purgatory combines saints and sinners without negating the significance of holiness and the seriousness of sin.

<sup>5</sup> So Calixt as critically referred to in *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 9, 12, 22s (GCS 26/3, 250, 2–7 Wendland), which is generally attributed to Hippolyt.

<sup>6</sup> Cyprian, *Ep. Cyr.* 55, 25 (287, 452–288, 462). Cf. also 54, 3–5 (253–255).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. T. Baumeister, "Kirche der Heiligen—Kirche der Sünder. Die Umbruchsituation im dritten Jahrhundert," in *Licht aus dem Ursprung. Kirchliche Gemeinschaft auf dem Weg ins 3. Jahrtausend*, (ed. P. Reifenberg et al.; Würzburg: Echter, 1998), 66–79.

### 1.2. *The Living and the Dead*

One consequence of the idea of penance is the interaction between the living and the dead. The practice of penance was, among other things, based on the idea of solidarity. Tertullian tells us how the penitents, literally clad in sackcloth and ashes, threw themselves at the feet of the churchgoers and begged them for their intercession.<sup>8</sup> The solidarity of the praying community did not only extend to the penitents, but also to the souls in the otherworld. One had to pray for these souls: As Tertullian proves, the prayers were aimed at a preliminary refreshment of the souls (*refrigerium interim*) and their first resurrection, which means the transition from the otherworld to paradise.<sup>9</sup> Connecting the living with the dead, this prayer, at the same time, served to tighten the bonds within the community of the living. In contrast to the pagan world, the remembrance of the dead was no longer merely the family members' private concern. It now was the responsibility of the community as a whole: the dead were remembered in the priest's prayer during the Eucharist ceremony. There their names were mentioned. In that way the community acted as a comprehensive mutually supportive group. Purgatory made the dead part of the church. Conversely, it set the living into a broad context, which even exceeds the borders of death. The same function is also fulfilled by the veneration of the saints, which can be observed from the second century onwards: the living ask certain dead people, the saints, for their intercession.

As for the communal memory of the dead, another integrative aspect of purgatory has to be mentioned.

### 1.3. *Clergy and the People*

Sometime in the first half of the third century—we do not exactly know when—there was a synod in Carthage, which made the following decision: no one is allowed to appoint a priest to be executor of his last will. The synod reasoned that, if someone holds off the priest from his ministry at the altar by charging him with the bothersome duties of executing his last will, he would not profit from the priest's ministry at the altar. What concerns our topic here is the punishment that the synod advocates for this misdemeanour, since the wrongdoer

<sup>8</sup> Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 9.

<sup>9</sup> *De monogamia* 10, 4 (5) (SC 343, 176, 24–27 Mattei), cf. Merkt, *Fegefeuer*, 57–8.

is already dead. For this dead person, the synod states, neither sacrifices nor Mass were allowed: “non offeretur pro eo nec sacrificium pro dormitione eius celebratur”.<sup>10</sup> Cyprian, citing the synod’s decision, speaks in this context of “apud altare Dei (...) nominari in sacerdotum prece”, that means to be mentioned in the priests’ prayer at the altar.<sup>11</sup>

This example shows the importance of the clergy in respect to the remembrance of the dead already at the beginning of the third century. It is the priest who decides if the community helps the deceased through prayers and offerings in Mass or not. The remembrance of the dead, which used to be a family’s private affair, is now the duty of the whole community. This function, which goes beyond the family, is being institutionalised in the ministry of the priest. Laymen who want to help their deceased family members require the priest and thus, the remembrance of the dead binds laity to clergy.

#### 1.4. *Devout Souls and Sharp Brains*

The idea of purgatory also connects the belief of common people with the philosophical and theological reflections of intellectuals.

Sometimes it can be read that purgatory was invented, so to speak, in order to justify the practice of praying for the dead. In his handbook of patristic eschatology, Brian Daley, for example, writes: speculations about a “temporally limited experience of hell”, i.e. purgatory, mainly seem “to try to explain the ancient custom of praying for the dead”.<sup>12</sup> Thus, at the beginning there was a rite lacking reflection. Later, this custom was substantiated by the theory of purgatory. However, this logic cannot be proven from the early sources. Initially, the idea of purgatory does not occur in connection with reflections about praying

<sup>10</sup> Cyprian, *Ep. Cypr.* 1,1 (CCL 3B, 1, 10-12; cf. 3, 27-33 Diercks).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 1,2 (4,38-40). Saxer dates this letter to Easter 257: V. Saxer, “La date de la lettre 1 (66) de Cyprien au clergé et au peuple de Furni,” *REA* 23 (1977): 56-62. The date of the synod results from the phrase „episcopi antecessores nostri“ (*Ep. Cypr.* 1,2 3,34).

<sup>12</sup> B.E. Daley, *Eschatologie in der Schrift und Patristik* (Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte IV, 7a; Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1985), 213 (with respect to Augustin and Petrus Chrysologus); cf. idem, *The Hope of the Early Church. A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

for the dead. Even Augustine still deals with both fields separately.<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, Gregory the Great was the first to connect the idea of purgatory with practical care for the dead, which was not without consequences.<sup>14</sup> I think that this connection was crucial for the long-term success of purgatory. Especially the tales of appearances of dead people contributed decisively to the firm position purgatory took up in the collective consciousness of the west.

Already the *Passio Perpetuae* contains a vision with a didactic significance: Perpetua sees her dead brother Dinocrates in a very poor condition in a bleak place. She realizes she has to pray for him. A second vision proves the success of her prayer: Dinocrates appears refreshed in a blessed condition: he begins to play as children do.<sup>15</sup>

The basic scenario reappears in stories that, above all, Gregory and Bede tell: One sees the suffering of a dead person and realizes the necessity to pray for him or her. Finally, one can see that he or she has left the place of suffering.

These popular tales mainly pursue two didactic aims, which correspond to the two persons one identifies with. On the one hand, the suffering person in the otherworld conveys awareness of the consequences of one's actions. This shows that moral misconduct, even if it seems to pay off in this world, will take its toll in the otherworld. On the other hand, the person who helps in our world is meant to serve as a shining example. The success of his or her intervention is supposed to motivate the living to care for the deceased.

In my opinion, it is a decisive fact that intellectuals like Gregory the Great and Bede the Venerable propagated these popular practices and beliefs. Thus, purgatory seems to be accounted for in intellectual terms. Reflecting on the popular practice, one can certainly come to the idea of purgatory. Theologians from the time of Tertullian onwards have come to this idea by a different way, too, not by the practical-theological, but by the systematic-theological way through reflecting on the question of God's justice.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. Ntedika, *L'évolution de la doctrine du purgatoire chez S. Augustin* (Publication de l'Université Lovanium de Léopoldville 20; Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966), esp. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. R.R. Atwell, "From Augustine to Gregory the Great. An Evaluation of the Emergence of the Doctrine of Purgatory," *JEH* 38 (1987): 173–96.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Merkt, *Fegefeuer*, 15–32 and 53–6.

Thus, purgatory proves to be the prime example of the integrative power Christianity had developed from the beginning concerning educated and uneducated people, sharp brains and devout souls. Christianity came up with some innovation, which we overlook all too easily from our modern perspective: In antiquity, apart from a small branch of Judaism, there was no such thing as a cult, a *religio* that was at the same time *philosophia*. Religion was simply all about cultic behaviour. Questions on ethics or truth were not considered to be part of religion, but of philosophy.

The bond between cult and philosophy also holds well in the case of purgatory. On the one hand, there is behaviour in terms of cult: prayer and offerings for the dead, customs appealing to broad masses of the population, but which, at the same time, can be interpreted in a way that intellectuals can approve of, too. The reason is that, on the other hand, the idea of purgatory arises from the philosophical term of justice based on the principle of proportionality and therefore demanding a penalty for moral misconduct even after death. Thus, tradition and intellectual reflection correspond to one another. The idea of purgatory can be understood as the theoretical interpretation of a popular custom. Conversely, this custom has immensely increased people's awareness of the theoretical postulate of right behaviour and just penalties. Philosophical discourse and popular practice, high and popular culture converge and intensify one another.

Mentioning the term 'justice' we have come to the theological functions of purgatory.

## 2. NOTIONS OF GOD AND VIEW OF THE WORLD IMPLIED IN THE IDEA OF PURGATORY—(CONTROVERSIAL) THEOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS

For medieval purgatory, LeGoff states that it was partly "a product of the battle against heretical enemies that had become noticeable since the year 1000."<sup>16</sup> Even for the first traces of this idea within Tertullian's work, we can prove an illuminating theologically controversial context that illustrates a theological function of purgatory. The idea transports a certain image of God as well as a certain view of the world.

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<sup>16</sup> LeGoff, *Geburt*, 133.

### 2.1. *God's Benevolence and Justice: Against Marcion*

I think it is significant for the theological understanding of purgatory that Tertullian develops his theory of temporal suffering in the otherworld in his dispute with Marcion. In the fourth book of *Adversus Marcionem* he grapples with Marcion's two-Gods-doctrine. To prove that God, the judge, and God, the father of Jesus Christ, are one and the same he cites a verse of the Gospel of Luke (12:58–59), which it is presumed Marcion also accepted: "the judge delivers you to the officer, and the officer throws you into prison....you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."<sup>17</sup> Tertullian interprets the prison as the otherworld and the very last mite as even the smallest misconduct a person has to atone for in the otherworld.<sup>18</sup> Here we see Tertullian's version of purgatory.

This anti-marcionite context illustrates the theological function of the idea of postmortal suffering for one's sins. The judge who throws into prison, for Tertullian, is the father of Jesus Christ, who is at the same time good and just. Marcion had divided benevolence and justice between two Gods. Tertullian, in contrast, clings to his opinion, that both are qualities of one and the same God. Not only is God benign, he is also just. His justice demands an adequate satisfaction for sins. He may forgive guilt out of mercy, but he does not free mankind from the punishment for their sins. Penitents cannot escape this punishment. Yet, it can be mitigated by the living's intercessions and offerings of the Mass.

Tertullian and the Latin tradition as such seem to regard purgatory as a place of punishment mainly. Jacques LeGoff calls this the "infernalisierung" of purgatory (and locates its beginnings in Augustine's work).<sup>19</sup> Purgatory is some kind of hellish third place in the otherworld. This one-sided description of purgatory certainly results, in some respects, from the target of the dispute: Tertullian emphasizes justice in his argument against Marcion. Augustine argues in a similar way about 200 years later. He turns against the *miseriordes*, the

<sup>17</sup> *Marc.* 4, 29, 16 (CCL 1, 627, 13s Kroymann).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g. *De anima* 58, 8 (79, 26–29 Waszink).

<sup>19</sup> LeGoff, *Geburt*, 106.

merciful, i.e. against those Christians who, in one way or another, view fate in the otherworld optimistically because of God's mercifulness.<sup>20</sup>

However, taking away this accentuation of purgatory from its original dialectical context, the carefully developed balance between God's mercy and justice is destroyed and the image of God gets one-sided. In order to avoid this one-sided emphasis of retributivity modern dogmatic theology since Hans Urs von Balthasar has stressed the healing and purifying function of the Alexandrian version of purgatory. We can state that in the Latin tradition purgatory mainly serves to stress God's justice, which, if seen not only retributive but also purgative, is, at last, identical with God's mercifulness. That way, the philosophical term of justice is Christianised. The deceased have to suffer in equivalence to their sins, whereas the living are asked to help by their solidarity. The principle of strict proportionality is counterbalanced by the mercy the church can achieve through prayers and the celebration of Mass.

## 2.2. *Meaning and Relativity of History: Between Gnosticism and Apocalypticism*

Purgatory also stands for a certain world picture that can be located between gnosis and apocalyptic. Of course, these two terms are meant to simplify. By the term 'gnostic' I want to characterise a certain devaluation of the world and history, whereas 'apocalyptic' means an exaggeration of the meaning of history.

In *De anima*, Tertullian deals with Carpocrates. Carpocrates interpreted the "prison" from which "you shall not depart... till you have paid the very last mite" in Matthew 5:25f. par. Luke 12:58 as the human body, the *physis*, and self-awareness, the *psyche*, in which the godly nucleus of a human being, the *pneuma*, is imprisoned.<sup>21</sup> In a similar way, Irenaeus reproduces the gnostic interpretation of this bible verse:

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 110 and 112 (BAug 9, 304 and 308 Rivière), to this J. Ntedika, *L'évolution and L'évocation de l'au-delà dans la prière pour les morts. Étude de patristique et liturgies latines (IV<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Recherches africaines de théologie 2; Paris/Louvain : Nauwelaerts, 1971), 93-96; *De civitate Dei* 21,18s (CCL 48,784-786 Dombart/Kalb); H. de Lavalette, "L'interprétation du Ps 1,5 chez les Pères 'misericordieux' latins," *RechSR* 48 (1960): 544-63.

<sup>21</sup> Tertullian, *De anima* 35,3 (51 Waszink). For this interpretation especially cf. W.A. Löhr, "Karpokratianisches," *Vigiliae Christianae* 49 (1995): 23-48.

According to him, the gnostics claim that “the netherworld is nothing but our world”<sup>22</sup>.

Carpocrates combines this concept with the idea of the transmigration of the soul.<sup>23</sup> In his concept our world serves as purgatory, which the *pneuma* has to go through. Tertullian shares with Carpocrates the conviction that just punishment is necessary. However, as he rejects transmigration because of his idea of Christ and man, he has to put the place of God’s punishment, at least partly, into the otherworld. Compared to the gnostic devaluation of the world and history, here the significance of history is intensified: Death is the decisive deadline, after which the consequences can no longer be influenced.

On the other hand, purgatory also serves as a counterbalance to a concept of life stressing history too much, like it is to be found in many apocalyptic movements. Here, an end of world is expected that does not annihilate history, but rather fulfils it at the end of time. As the second century drew to its close, a lot of Christians in the Roman Empire, even whole communities, were waiting for such an end of the world. In the New Prophecy, the imminent descending of the heavenly Jerusalem was also awaited. However, from 202/203 onwards, the apocalyptic sentiment died away.<sup>24</sup>

The idea of purgatory can be interpreted as the conceptual attempt to keep up the apocalyptic impulse in post-apocalyptic times: Even if the world is not to perish in the next future, the end is nevertheless near—for everybody. His or her deeds become obvious by punishment directly after death. You—Tertullian speaks to everyone—must go to prison and you will not be released until you have paid for even the smallest misconduct. Purgatory, therefore, is some kind of individual apocalypse. Closing the gap between death of the individual and end of history, it mediates between individual and collective eschatology. It, thus, marks a middle course between gnostic devaluation and apocalyptic overvaluation of world and history.

<sup>22</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5, 31, 2 (FC 8/5, 234, 12s Rousseau) (German translation ibid. 235 Brox).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. C. Scholten, “Karpokrates (Karpokratianer),” *RAC* 20 (2005): 173–86; W.A. Löhr, “Karpokratianisches.”

<sup>24</sup> Cf. G. Schöllgen, “Tempus in collecto est. Tertullian, der frühe Montanismus und die Naherwartung ihrer Zeit,” *JAC* 27 (1984/85): 74–96, esp. 75–80.

To draw a conclusion, I would like to come to a third function of purgatory, which, to some extent, combines the integrative and theological-philosophical functions.

### 3. "CONNECTIVE" JUSTICE: A CULTURAL FUNCTION

#### 3.1. *Iustitia connectiva*

Jan Assmann introduced a new key term into cultural studies, which we can also make use of to interpret purgatory: *iustitia connectiva*. Every culture has a connective structure that guarantees its internal connection. This structure joins, combines, links the elements and moments of culture. Assmann distinguishes between two dimensions of this connection. On the one hand, the social dimension: culture connects people to one social community. On the other side, the dimension of time: culture connects the present with past.

According to Assmann, the basic texts of the early high cultures explain this connecting structure with the term justice. Justice "connects people, provides a basis for social cohesion and solidarity."<sup>25</sup> At the same time, justice connects in another way: It ties "success to deed, punishment to misdeed."<sup>26</sup>

We may now understand purgatory as a concrete function of this *iustitia connectiva*. Purgatory also connects—as we have seen—people in manifold ways and strengthens their connection. At the same time, it serves the *Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang* that ties punishment to misdeed.

Accordingly, purgatory is suitable to perform a cultural function in the sense of connective justice. Purgatory gradually grew into this cultural function between the second and the seventh centuries in the course of a creeping transformation setting off at a pace that was barely discernible like a glacier, an image used by Peter Brown.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Beck'sche Reihe 1307; 3rd ed.; München: Beck, 2000), 232.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. P. Brown, "Vers la naissance du purgatoire. Amnistie et penitence dans le christianisme occidentale de l'antiquité tardive au Haut Moyen Age," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 52 (1997): 1247–61.

### 3.2. *Purgatory and the Christian West*

This development is primarily characterised by the increasing influence of the church on life. The church as an institution increasingly accompanies a person's whole life from the cradle to the grave. The church's claim to competence reaches beyond death: its jurisdiction even applies to the otherworld, more precisely to purgatory. This had already been stressed by the African Synod at the beginning of the third century: The church can also punish the dead by withholding its intercessions and offerings. When Christendom was more and more shaping culture, the idea of purgatory also gained importance as an instrument to make people's life an ecclesiastical one. Purgatory served the church's claim on full control, education and disciplining people according to the church's rules.

This idea of disciplining, which is to be found in the penitential books mainly, combines with another basic tendency that Peter Brown called "peccatisation". This term is meant to signify the reduction of human behaviour to two aspects: sin and penance.<sup>28</sup> In this respect, purgatory also gains importance. The visionary literature of the early Middle Ages presents purgatory as a cruel, hellish place and, in this way, illustrates the consequences of sins. Thus, it increases the awareness of sins and shows the necessity of change and penitence.

At last, purgatory functions in the sense of what Mazzarino labels the democratization of culture.<sup>29</sup> The visionary literature from Gregory the Great to Dante mainly presents distinguished people in purgatory, the rich and the mighty. Here, a motif from the Gospels is expanded, the motif of the rich spendthrift and the poor Lazarus. It is no coincidence that, from the fourth century onwards, on epitaphs as well as in funeral speeches one characteristic of the deceased is stressed: it is repeatedly stated that he was an "amicus pauperum".<sup>30</sup> This is not an empty phrase that is part of the standardised repertoire of the catalogue of

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 1260.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. S. Mazzarino, "La democratizzazione della cultura nel Basso Impero," in *Antico, tardoantico ed età constantiniana 1* (idem; Rome, 1984), 74–98; further: "La 'démocratisation de la culture' dans l'antiquité tardive, Mise à l'épreuve du paradigme (Atti del Convegno di Vercelli, 14–15 giugno 2000)," *Antiquité Tardive* 9 (2001).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. e.g. Ambrose, *De excessu Satyri* 1, 29 (CSEL 73, 225); for the inscriptions on tombs e.g. Ch. Pietri, "Epigraphie et culture. L'évolution de l'éloge funéraire dans les textes de l'Occident chrétien (III<sup>e</sup>–IV<sup>e</sup> siècles)," *Christiana res publica. Éléments d'une enquête sur le christianisme antique* 3 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio, 1997): 1583–1602, esp. 1508s.

merits read at the funeral. A person's kindness towards the poor had special relevance for his or her postmortal fate. The deceased, as rich and mighty they might have been when still alive, after death depend on the poor and seemingly powerless and their intercessions with God on behalf of them. Eschatology and especially purgatory represent a counterfactual social theory. The hierarchy in the otherworld is no mere prolongation of the social hierarchy in this life, as we find it in most death cults. In the Christian otherworld the hierarchy is rather turned upside down.

“THE HOLY CONTEST”: COMPETITION FOR THE BEST  
AFTERLIFE IN THE *APOCALYPSE OF PAUL* AND LATE  
ANTIQUAE EGYPT<sup>1</sup>

Kirsti Barrett Copeland

In describing the future hierarchy of the saved, Augustine Bishop of Hippo (d. 430) writes the following in the *City of God*:

But what will be the grades of honour and glory here, appropriate to degrees of merit? Who is capable of imagining them, not to speak of describing them? But there will be such distinctions; of that there can be no doubt. And here also that blessed City will find in itself a great blessing, in that no inferior will feel envy of his superior, any more than the other angels are envious of the archangels. No one will wish to be what it has not been granted him to be... (22:30).<sup>2</sup>

A Marxist would certainly have a field day with Augustine's description of the afterlife, which not only states that inequalities will continue to exist in the world to come, but also suggests that everyone will be amenable to their position in that hierarchy. Such a scholar might see Augustine's vision as the typical 'illusion' which offers hope to those in 'distress' that their anxiety caused by this worldly inequity can and will be eradicated.<sup>3</sup> A Foucauldian may well have classified this heavenly society as unjust, based counter-intuitively, on the generalized satisfaction of its inhabitants with their place in the hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> What intrigues me, however, about Augustine and the late antique Egyptian visions that are the primary focus of this article, is why there is an emphasis on hierarchy at all among the saved. Why is not a simple distinction between reward and punishment sufficient?

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Martha Himmelfarb for her sage advice on this article.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *City of God* (trans. Henry Bettenson; New York: Penguin Group, 1972), 1088.

<sup>3</sup> See K. Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. R.C. Tucker; 2nd ed.; New York: W.W. Norton, 1978 [1972]), 54.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995) cited after R. Gould, *Collision of Wills* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 30, n. 3.

Augustine's description of the City of God is, in his opinion, free from the poison that plagues this world, namely, the *libido dominandi* or 'lust of domination,' with which he begins the preface to the *City of God*.<sup>5</sup> Yet, surely there is some lust to dominate echoed in the insistence on a continued hierarchy, in the use of the words "superior" and "inferior." Merit and glory replace money and power, to be sure, but this is more an exchange in what constitutes currency and commodity rather than a completely new system. Augustine has merely found a different way to appeal to the *libido dominandi* within all human beings. Yet when Augustine comments that 'no inferior will feel envy of his superior,' presumably one can also imagine the inverse to be true, namely that no one higher up in the ranks will revel in his or her exaltedness over the lesser among the saved. Thus, any joy one can imagine coming from the superior nature of one's reward is only limited to the imagining of it on the earthly plane—it is not part of the promise of eternity. However, the case is different when we turn to the *Apocalypse of Paul* (a.k.a. *Visio Pauli*; late 4th c. CE).<sup>6</sup> The twinge of regret associated with seeing one's own failings represented in someone else's success pricks at the reader throughout this apocalypse. And according to the text, it is a regret that continues in the afterlife, not merely one that can be felt in anticipation of life to come. In a universal sense, *Apoc. Paul* uses the human desire to not be lesser than another, indeed, even the desire to be superior to another, as part of the arsenal it employs to persuade its audience into preferred modes of behavior. In a historical sense, the *Apoc. Paul* does so at the end of the fourth century, whereas earlier apocalyptic visions do not, because a monk's place in the growing hierarchy of the monastic movement is established through the paradoxical competition of out-practicing others in asceticism, kindness and humility.

<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, I, preface, 5.

<sup>6</sup> The preface of *Apoc. Paul* dates its own "discovery" to the co-consulship of Theodosius I and Cynegius in the year 388 and the first secure reference to *Apoc. Paul* is Augustine, 98 *Tract. Ev. Jo.*, in 416.—See further P. Piovaneli, "Les origines de l'*Apocalypse de Paul* reconsidérées," in *Apocrypha* 4 (1993): 25–64 and K. Copeland, *Mapping the Apocalypse of Paul: Geography, Genre and History* (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2001), 21–35.

1. THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE PETTY: COMPETITION IN THE  
APOCALYPSE OF PAUL

Extant in roughly a dozen languages and in over 300 different manuscripts and manuscript fragments, *Apoc. Paul* experienced extraordinary success, at the very least with the monks who copied and translated it.<sup>7</sup> A tour apocalypse that details rewards and punishments after death, *Apoc. Paul* follows Paul as he ascends into heaven to watch souls judged by God and then descends to the outer edges of the river ocean, outside of the inhabited world, to witness the souls' reward in the East and punishment in the West. Of course, experiencing reward far exceeds suffering torment in desirability, but not all reward is created equal. At issue here are the distinctions that *Apoc. Paul* makes between various levels of the righteous and how these distinctions might impact the audience's behavior.

My argument is not particularly concerned with "the special dead," those whom the audience of *Apoc. Paul*, whether monks or lay folk, cannot hope to become. Namely, I mean Enoch and Elijah, whom Paul meets the first time he travels to the heavenly paradise (20) and the other biblical heroes he meets in his final trip to the Paradise "where Adam and Eve sinned": Mary, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lot, Job, Noah, Elijah, Elisha (45–51), Enoch, Zechariah, John, Abel and Adam (52–54, Coptic

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<sup>7</sup> For more on the extensive manuscript tradition, see Piovanelli, "Les origines," 25–64, and R.P. Casey, "The Apocalypse of Paul," *JTS* 34 (1933): 1–33. The text was originally composed in Greek, but only late Greek abbreviations survive. The most important manuscripts for the earliest recoverable version of the apocalypse are the long Latin and the Coptic. For an edition of the Latin manuscripts (Paris, Bibliothèque, Nouv. Acquis. lat. 1631; St. Gallen, Vadianus 317; Madrid, Escorial a. II. 30; and Codex 6, Stichting Arnhemse Openbare en Gelders Wetenschappelijke Bibliotheek), see now T. Silverstein and A. Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul: A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1997), 66–167; for translation and edition of the single extant Coptic manuscript (British Museum Oriental #7023), see Copeland, "Mapping the Apocalypse of Paul," 189–309; for an edition of the late Greek abbreviations (Monacensis Gr. 276 and Ambrosianus Gr. 895), see C. Tischendorf, *Apocalypsis Pauli in Apocalypses Apocryphae* (Leipzig: Herm. Mendelssohn, 1866), 34–69. For an English translation based primarily on the long Latin, see J.K. Elliott, "The Apocalypse of Paul (Visio Pauli)" in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation based on M.R. James* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; revised reprint 1999), 616–644. Unless otherwise stated, English translations of *Apoc. Paul* in this article come from Elliott.

only).<sup>8</sup> The audience meets these figures through Paul in order to hear their stories, not because the reader hopes or expects to achieve their reward. On the other hand, the audience might aspire to the rewards of the unnamed righteous found elsewhere in *Apoc. Paul* and these rewards vary in desirability.

*Apoc. Paul* divides the unnamed righteous between two main geographical regions: the land of promise, a paradisaical location adorned with abundant fruit trees (21–22), and the city of Christ, a golden walled enclosure containing rivers of honey, milk, wine and oil (23–30). While still in the land of promise, Paul's angelic guide reveals to him that, "These particular promises belong to the secular ones (Η.ΚΟΣΜΙΚΟΣ) who kept their marriage holy, but those who hunger and the virgins (Μ.ΠΑΡΘΗΝΟΣ) will receive things seven times more excellent than these. I will also show you all of those things."<sup>9</sup> Then the angelic guide leads Paul towards the city of Christ, whose value greatly exceeds that of the land of promise. The stated partition in *Apoc. Paul* between "secular ones" and "virgins" implies that married people occupy the land of promise whereas monks occupy the monastery-like enclosure of the city.<sup>10</sup> This hierarchy of monks over married folks reflects a growing understanding in late antique Egypt of the superiority of the celibate orders' post-mortem reward over that

<sup>8</sup> The Greek and Latin end rather abruptly at 51. The Coptic continues with these biblical heroes and then takes Paul to yet another Paradise. The inclusion of Enoch and Elijah in the heavenly paradise is due, no doubt, to their reputation in both Jewish and Christian literature as having been lifted bodily to heaven, based on Gen 5:22 and 2 Kings 2:1.

<sup>9</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 22; translation mine from the Coptic. The long Latin (P; StG, Esc, Arn are similar) contrasts "*nuptiorum... et seruancium castitatem nuptiorum et continencium*" with "*virginibus... et esurientibus et sicientibus ius[t]iciam et adfligentibus se [pro]pter nomen domini*;" Silverstein and Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul*, 118–19.

<sup>10</sup> At each of the rivers in the city of Christ, the text presents a gathering of souls with virtues well known from monastic literature. The river of honey rewards "every one who shall have afflicted his soul and not done his own will because of God" (*Apoc. Paul* 25; compare to Poemen 36). At the river of milk are "all who keep their chastity and purity" (*Apoc. Paul* 26; compare to Hors. Frag., CSCO 159, 81–2). The river of wine represents the monastic virtue of hospitality (*Apoc. Paul* 27; contrast with the failed monastic "renouncers" [trans. mine from the Coptic ρΗ.ΑΠΟΤΑΚΤΙΚΟΣ; Latin: *abrenunciauerunt*] of *Apoc. Paul* 24). The river of oil provides the backdrop for humble men who come forth singing psalms (*Apoc. Paul* 28; compare to *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 8.48). I make this argument more completely in K.B. Copeland, "The Earthly Monastery and the Transformation of the Heavenly City in Late Antique Egypt," in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Ra'anan S. Boustani and Annette Yoshiko Reed; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 142–158.

of the laity. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, provides another fourth century Egyptian example when he interprets the gospels' parable of the sower (Matt 13:3–23; Mark 4:2–20; Luke 8:4–15) as referring to the difference in merit between the celibate and the married. As David Brakke writes:

[Athanasius] described a hierarchy, in which the married person yields fruit 'thirtyfold', but the celibate person yields 'hundredfold'...monks will receive 'more wonderful gifts' since they bear 'the perfect fruit', but the married person still receives 'wonderful gifts'. To be sure, in this picture the ascetic enjoys moral and heavenly superiority...<sup>11</sup>

As in *Apoc. Paul*, Athanasius' hierarchy of the saved awards desirable afterlives to both the married and the celibate, with the latter's reward being by far the more enviable. This hierarchy reflects a social distinction present in late Antique Egypt. It is not aimed at controlling the daily behavior of individuals, but rather at praising the celibate orders. However, other statements in *Apoc. Paul* suggest that the broad social distinction among the righteous does not adequately account for distinction in reward; the impact of hierarchy within social strata reaches even further. The text implies that the souls who occupy the land of promise could have improved their afterlife through better behavior, not only through changing their status from married to monk. Paul is informed that the promises which are "seven times greater" belong to the "virgins" the *second* time he asks his angelic guide if the land of promise represents the only recompense God offers his righteous. The first time he asks whether there is another reward, he is told that after the "righteous" who are in the land of promise see "the promises of God" which are seven times greater than the ones they are to receive, "they groan and they weep, 'But why did a (single) word leave our mouths? Or why was I angry at my neighbor for a single day?'"<sup>12</sup> Here are righteous individuals, who are receiving quite

<sup>11</sup> D. Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 96–7; *Ep Amun*. 69:6–14 J, 69:3 J.

<sup>12</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 22; translation mine from the Coptic. The jealousy is not clearly present in the main Latin manuscript, P. Instead, the souls utter these questions before they receive their reward because they are concerned that they will not be deemed righteous: "Ego autem dico tibi quia cum iusti exierint de corpore, uidebunt repromissiones et bona quae preparauit eis deus. Adhuc iterum suspirabunt et plorabunt dicentes: Vt quid uerbum emisimus de ore nostro ad irritandum proximum uel una die?" (Silverstein and Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul*, 118). In my reading, the copyist of P was uncomfortable with the implication of righteous souls complaining when they see the

a lovely reward, groaning and weeping in paradise because there is a better afterlife available than the one that they earned. Furthermore, they regret having missed the opportunity to improve their afterlife when they could have. Unlike those in Augustine's *City of God*, these dwellers in paradise are not content with their inferior position, they are pained by it.

Similarly, celibate individuals linger just outside of the city of Christ, close enough to almost touch the very gateway, but unable to enter due to personal flaws. When Paul asks about these souls, he is told, "These are they who zealously abstained day and night in fasts, but they had a proud heart compared with other men (*pre ceteros homines*), glorifying and praising themselves and doing nothing for their neighbours."<sup>13</sup> These men are imperfect monks, referred to in the Coptic literally as "renouncers" (ⲉⲛⲁⲡⲟⲩⲁⲕⲧⲕⲟⲥ; Latin: *abrenunciauerunt*).<sup>14</sup> Their pride in their ascetic achievements keeps them from entering the city. *Apoc. Paul* very subtly plays on the emotions of those zealous monks who might hear echoes of themselves in these proud souls. The text appeals to the glory-seeking nature of such individuals and instructs them that they will lose the very honor they seek unless they modify their behavior. "*Pre ceteros homines*" implies that they put themselves *before* (*prae*) others in this life; the irony is that in so doing, they will come *after* others in the next life. The text explicitly states that even when Christ comes and they are at long last allowed to enter the city where others have entered before them, they will not "have the same confidence as those who humbled themselves, serving the Lord God all their lives."<sup>15</sup> They will continue to feel their lower rank in glory

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rewards, and hence he made the necessary changes. The other long Latin manuscripts are closer to the Coptic in presenting the complaints as simultaneous with viewing the afterlife; e.g. Arn: "Ego autem dico tibi quoniam iusti, quando exeunt de corpore ex seculo et uident promissiones quas preparauit deus illis, iterum atque iterum flent dicentes: Vt quid aliquem sermonem facimus de ore nostro ut contristemur inuicem per unam diem?" (Silverstein and Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul*, 119). Like these other Latin manuscripts and the Coptic, the English translation of the Syriac witness, an independent translation of the original Greek, has the souls express the concern after seeing the various promises (Tischendorf, "Apocalypsis Pauli," 50). The late Greek abbreviations lack the exchange entirely.

<sup>13</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 24; trans. Elliott, 630, modified slightly; Silverstein and Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul*, 122.

<sup>14</sup> Since the Coptic uses the Greek loan word ἀποτακτικός, it is possible that it gives us a window into the original Greek.

<sup>15</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 24; trans. Elliott, 631.

eternally. Thus, although they achieve a good afterlife, they will always be below, lesser than those who were more humble. The distinctions in rank in *Apoc. Paul* are not limited to the difference between the celibate and married, but also seek to further control the behavior of those already counted among the celibate by showing them that they can achieve higher and lower levels of reward.

Even the very walls of the city of Christ reflect different ranks of honor present within the city. The second wall is higher in honor than the first, and the third wall is higher than the second, all the way up to the twelfth wall. When Paul asks why each wall exceeds the last "in glory," the angel responds, "All who have in themselves even a little slander or jealousy (*zelum*) or pride, something of his glory will be made void even if they were in the city of Christ."<sup>16</sup> Not only is some amount of glory lost, but eternity is spent gazing up to those with slightly more glory, those who had less slander or jealousy or pride. There is a certain amount of "measure-for measure" punishment imported from hell here.<sup>17</sup> If one is jealous of others during life, one will have to gaze eternally upon the greater success of others in death.

The ultimate reward is a set of thrones "in another rank" entirely, "which appeared to be of greater glory."<sup>18</sup> These are innocent, humble individuals who were truly diligent for God. They are also held up over everyone else in the city. The other righteous in the city of Christ look up at them and say, one can almost imagine in surprised tones, "Look and see these uneducated ones who do not know the scriptures. On account of their simplicity, they have received this great honor from God."<sup>19</sup> Everyone in the city is forced to look up at someone else, a potent warning to the proud and petty among the still living that if such an eternal fate is unbearable to them, then they must watch their smallest move and thought.

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<sup>16</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 29; trans. Elliott, 632, modified slightly.

<sup>17</sup> For more on measure-for-measure punishments, see M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983; paperback ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 75–105, and J. Bremmer's essay in the present volume.

<sup>18</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 29; trans. Elliott, 632.

<sup>19</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 29; trans. mine from the Coptic.

## 2. COMPETITION AND CONTROL: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

But, is it fair to argue that *Apoc. Paul* uses the human drive for competition in order to produce a desired mode of behavior? In René Girard's words, "we are mimetic, or acquisitively imitational creatures. Our objects of desire and our ideas are based on the desires and ideas of others who are our models."<sup>20</sup> For Girard, we want what we want because others want it or have it. It is easy to say that in the case of *Apoc. Paul*, the lay audience who identifies with the souls weeping in paradise over the superior afterlife of others grieves because of "mimetic desire," because they want what others have. However, Girard notes that competition must be over something: "If the appropriate gesture of an individual named A is rooted in the imitation of an individual named B, it means that A and B must reach together for one and the same object. They become rivals for that object."<sup>21</sup> In order for two people to be in competition for an object, that object must be perceived as unique or at least limited. Presumably, however, reward in the afterlife does not need to be limited; in principle, at least, it should expand to accommodate all of the righteous. In the case of *Apoc. Paul*, the limited commodity in question must be the superiority of the reward itself. In order for there to be superiority, a greater reward, there must also be a lesser reward. The promise of rewards of different values drives the desire for the greater reward. Sociologist Roger Gould makes this point even more directly. He writes, "Awards...are useful incentives with which to promote productivity. In educational and professional institutions, the promise of distinction for a select few is a way to elicit the greatest effort from everyone, thereby enhancing the aggregate performance of students or association members. But this explanation operates at the level of organizations that impose distinctions of rank, not at the level of the individuals who compete for those distinctions. It therefore *presupposes* a generalized desire among these individuals to attain superior positions of some kind..."<sup>22</sup> *Apoc. Paul* is analogous to the institution,

<sup>20</sup> R. Girard, *The Girard Reader* (ed. J.G. Williams; New York: Crossroad, 1996), viii. Beyond his starting point, I find Girard's theories less supportable and not really pertinent to this discussion.

<sup>21</sup> Girard, "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism," *Berkshire Review* 14 (1979): 9–19, repr. in *The Girard Reader*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Gould, *Collision of Wills*, 21.

using distinctions in righteousness to improve the behavior of all; and it does so on the *presupposition* that its readers or auditors desire not just glory and merit, but greater glory and superior merit.

Anna Gade has demonstrated that actual competitions revitalized Qur'an recitation in Indonesia in the 1990s.<sup>23</sup> In describing the competitions, Gade unintentionally echoes both Girard's "mimetic desire" and Gould's presupposition of desire for "superior positions": "Competitions, especially the national tournament, were understood to encourage Indonesians to study Qur'an recitation through the draws of inspiration (such as admiring the abilities of others and desiring to emulate them), aspiration (such as wanting to win for personal or group prestige, or perhaps for the prizes that are offered), and participation (often valued as an end in itself)."<sup>24</sup> But ultimately, for Gade these competitions "in goodness," as it is understood by the Qur'an, provided in Geertzian terms the "motivation" for "sustained practices of piety." Thus, these competitions in Qur'anic recitation seek to produce and reproduce certain behaviors. Additionally, Gade's competitors had to balance the nature of their competition with downplaying "any self-interest that was not consistent with the ideals of the recited Qur'an itself."<sup>25</sup> As one recitation coach counseled his students, "When you're competing, don't be too ambitious [*berambisi*]" for getting a prize, *yah*, [because while] hoping a prize will come your way is permissible [*boleh saja*"], don't be too ambitious—are there any asking [who need to ask] why? Because if you are too ambitious then most of you will end up losing your feeling of *ikhlas* ["sincerity"] to Allah SWT."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, through *Apoc. Paul*, zealous monks are warned to manage their own pride and jealousy, even if it is the very emotion that makes them desire the greater reward in the afterlife. They are comparable to those Qur'anic competitors who strive so hard to win the prize that they lose their "sincerity." Thus, competition plays a rather paradoxical role in religious systems which deny the desire for personal gain, but nonetheless, it is a powerful force that can be tapped into to control a population.

<sup>23</sup> A.M. Gade, "Motivating Qur'anic Practice in Indonesia by 'Competing in Goodness,'" *Journal of Ritual Studies* 18.2 (2004): 24–42.

<sup>24</sup> Gade, "Motivating Qur'anic Practice," 24–5.

<sup>25</sup> Gade, "Motivating Qur'anic Practice," 33.

<sup>26</sup> Syawir Dahlan in Gade, "Motivating Qur'anic Practice," 33.

### 3. THE LACK OF COMPETITION IN EARLIER JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Girard, Gould and Gade provide insight into how and why *Apoc. Paul* uses competition to sway its audience, even within a system which fears the pride that might result from successful competitive behavior. The universal quality to their arguments suggests that competition for the best afterlife would hardly be a phenomenon limited to *Apoc. Paul*. Although I have no doubt that competition for the best afterlife must arise cross-culturally, there are competing paradigms even within early Judaism and Christianity. In fact, the predominant ethos of the apocalyptic tradition of the first few centuries of the Common Era opposes the idea of hierarchy of salvation found in *Apoc. Paul*.<sup>27</sup>

The *Ascension of Isaiah* (1st–2nd c. CE) initially appears to allow for hierarchy in the afterlife since the latter half of the text (6–11), known independently as the *Vision of Isaiah*, chronicles Isaiah's ascension through seven heavens, each one filled with beings whose glory surpasses that of the previous heaven.<sup>28</sup> However, in each of the first six heavens, there are only angels of increasing glory, not a stratification of the righteous dead. It is not until Isaiah reaches the seventh heaven that he sees "all the righteous," whose glory surpasses even that of the angels of the seventh heaven.<sup>29</sup> There is no differentiation here among the righteous dead. Martha Himmelfarb rightly suggests that,

Membership in the community defines righteousness, and there is no continuity between righteousness and unrighteousness. The view of the world of most apocalypses is not unlike that of the community at Qumran, with a strong distinction between those inside the community

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<sup>27</sup> I am grateful to the scholars gathered at the "Otherworlds" conference in Nijmegen for confirming my research that none of the early Jewish or Christian texts have the sort of hierarchy that is present in *Apoc. Paul*. John J. Collins expressed his surprise that the idea of competition in the afterlife did not arise sooner, but could not think of a Jewish example.

<sup>28</sup> For a review of scholarly opinions on the date of *Asc. Is.* and an argument for a late first or early second century date, see R.G. Hall, "The *Ascension of Isaiah*: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity," *JBL* 109 (1990): 289–306 (300–306). Although *Asc. Is.* in its final form is a Christian text, scholars disagree as to whether the *Vision of Isaiah* was originally a Jewish or Christian vision. Hall argues for the latter, as does Sparks, *Apocryphal Old Testament*, 779. For the former, see Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 137; I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 62, n. 119.

<sup>29</sup> *Asc. Is.* 9:28–42; R.H. Charles, trans., rev. by J.M.T. Barton, "The Ascension of Isaiah," in *Apocryphal Old Testament*, 775–812 (805).

and those outside. The *Ascension of Isaiah* seems to manifest just such a view.<sup>30</sup>

She contrasts the uniformity of righteousness in *Asc. Is.* with the “degrees of righteousness” in *Apoc. Paul*, noting that “its church includes both righteous and sinner living side by side. Membership in the community does not determine moral status...”<sup>31</sup> Thus, Himmelfarb provides one reason why the earlier apocalypses do not allow for the competitive and hierarchical nature of the afterlife in *Apoc. Paul*; these texts derive from communities for whom membership establishes righteousness, whereas *Apoc. Paul* does not.

In the most straightforward exemplar of this lack of hierarchy among the saved in the early apocalyptic tradition, the second century *Apocalypse of Peter* explicitly states that “the glory of those who dwelt [in paradise] was equal (ἴση).”<sup>32</sup> Hence, the righteous in *Apoc. Pet.* do not experience different rewards based on degrees of merit; they are simply all equal. The Rainer fragment of *Apoc. Pet.* (P. Vindob.G 39756) further suggests that *Apoc. Pet.*’s insistence on equal reward may extend even to those members of the community who do not even satisfy God’s criteria to escape punishment.<sup>33</sup> Following M.R. James’ reconstruction, the fragment reads, “I will give to my called and my chosen whomsoever they will ask me for, out of punishment, and I will give them a fine baptism in the salvation of what is called the Acherusian Lake, in the Elysian Field, a part (μέρος) of the justice with my holy ones.”<sup>34</sup> The text allows for the righteous to remove anyone they like from torment, but it is ambiguous as to whether those

<sup>30</sup> M. Himmelfarb, “The Experience of the Visionary and Genre in the Ascension of Isaiah 6–11 and the Apocalypse of Paul,” *Sem.* 36.1 (1986) 97–111 (105).

<sup>31</sup> Himmelfarb, “The Experience of the Visionary,” 106.

<sup>32</sup> Greek *Apoc. Pet.* 19, trans. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 593–612 (611). See also T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse: Die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englischer Übersetzung* (GCS NF 11; Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 101–130 (108). The second century date of *Apoc. Pet.* is secure; the text is quoted as scripture by Clement of Alexandria, *Ecl.* 41.1–2, 48.1.

<sup>33</sup> M.R. James, “The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter,” *JTS* 32 (1931): 270–9, demonstrated that reading this fragment alongside *Sibylline Oracles* 2:331–339 (2nd c. CE), a poetic reworking of *Apoc. Pet.*, clarifies an obscure and likely corrupt portion of the fuller Ethiopic manuscript. To compare the Greek and the Ethiopic texts, see D.D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (SBL DS 97; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 227–32. For *Sib. Or.*, see C. Alexandre, ed., *Oracula Sybillina* (Paris: Didot Freres, 1869), 72.

<sup>34</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 126–8.

saved from punishment share equal reward with their saviors. A “part (μέρος) of the justice” could mean that they have a “share” of the justice or it might mean that they only have a “portion” of the justice; the former implies equality, the latter a lesser reward. The continuation of the text, “And I will depart, I and my rejoicing chosen together with the patriarchs to my eternal kingdom,” does suggest that perhaps the Elysian Field is the lesser allotment of those saved by the righteous, whereas the righteous themselves inherit the eternal kingdom.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, the very fact that *Apoc. Pet.* does not insist on hierarchical reward, perhaps even in comparison with those sinners favored by the righteous as members of the community, stands in sharp contrast with *Apoc. Paul.*

*Apoc. Paul* and *Apoc. Pet.* overlap so much in their descriptions of hell that James believed that *Apoc. Pet.* was a source of *Apoc. Paul.*<sup>36</sup> Himmelfarb has argued extensively and persuasively against this position, but there is no doubt that the two texts belong to the same tradition and are likely to share common sources.<sup>37</sup> However, in their descriptions of more pleasant climes, *Apoc. Pet.* and *Apoc. Paul* bear little particular resemblance to one another, aside from the fact that they both mention the Acherusian Lake by name. The Acherusian Lake is a common feature of the afterlife in both Greco-Roman sources, perhaps most famously Plato’s *Dialogue of the Soul* (*Phaedo* 111e–114c), and early Jewish and Christian apocalypses, such as the *Apocalypse of Moses* (1st–3rd c. CE).<sup>38</sup> In fact, Erik Petersen suggested that *Apoc. Mos.* 37 in which Adam’s body is washed in the Acherusian Lake at the time of his death may well be the common source of the Acherusian Lake in *Apoc. Pet.* and *Apoc. Paul.*<sup>39</sup> Insofar as *Apoc. Mos.* comments

<sup>35</sup> Kraus and Nicklas, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 128.

<sup>36</sup> *Apocryphal New Testament*, 525, n. 2; J.A. Robinson and M.R. James, *The Gospel According to Peter and the Revelation of Peter* (London: C.J. Clay & Sons, 1892) 66–7.

<sup>37</sup> Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 140–7.

<sup>38</sup> I follow M. de Jonge and J. Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997) in taking the *Apoc. Mos.* to be a Christian text. However, others scholars have believed it to be Jewish, see E. Petersen, “Die ‘Taufe’ im Acherusischen See,” in his *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis. Studien und Untersuchungen* (Rome: Herder, 1959), 310–32 (320–2); L.S.A. Wells, “The Books of Adam and Eve,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (ed. R.H. Charles; Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 123–30; D.A. Bertrand, *La vie grecque d’Adam et d’Eve* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1987), 36.

<sup>39</sup> Petersen, “Die ‘Taufe,’” 320. For more on the differences between *Apoc. Pet.* and *Apoc. Paul* on their use of the Acherusian Lake, see K.B. Copeland, “Sinners and Post-

on the future prospects of anyone besides Adam, it also suggests that their reward will be equal, when God says to Adam, “I promise to you the Resurrection; I will raise you up in the Resurrection with every man, who is of your seed.”<sup>40</sup> Adam and those of his seed receive the same reward, just as those in *Apoc. Pet.* are equal in paradise. Whether the common source of the two texts is *Apoc. Mos.* or some non-extant apocalypse, the hierarchy of salvation present in *Apoc. Paul* likely does not provide a direct answer to the equality found in *Apoc. Pet.*, but it does seem to be in conflict with most of our examples of the early apocalyptic tradition.

The *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 *Baruch*, 1–2nd c. CE?) does contain hints of the different levels of reward found in the *Apoc. Paul*, despite the fact that the text does not so much distinguish between different levels of righteousness as between the righteous, the wicked, and those who are neither fully righteous nor fully wicked.<sup>41</sup> In 3 *Bar.* 12–13, angels present the archangel Michael with baskets of flowers that are equal to the merits of those people to whom they attend. The angels of the righteous fill the bowl that Michael is holding. Other angels, who carry baskets that are neither empty nor full, have to be cajoled by Michael into approaching; Michael shares their sadness when their offerings do not fill the bowl. A third group, those assigned to the truly wicked, have nothing at all to offer. After Michael brings these various offerings to God, the righteous are rewarded “a hundred times over,” and despite Michael’s initial sadness over the intermediate group’s inability to fill the bowls, these angels are given “the reward that is due (καθώς) for what [they] brought” and told to “distribute it among the race of men.”<sup>42</sup> *Third Baruch* 15:4 even has

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Mortem ‘Baptism’ in the Acherusian Lake,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter* (eds. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 91–107, esp. 98–104.

<sup>40</sup> *Apoc. Mos.* 41:3; G.A. Andersen and M.E. Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve* (SBL Early Judaism and its Literature 17; 2nd ed.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 90–90E.

<sup>41</sup> D.C. Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch [3 Baruch] in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (SVTP 12; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 77–108, argues in favor of the current scholarly consensus that 3 *Bar.* is a Jewish work from the end of the first or beginning of the second century. Harlow (163–205) also demonstrates how 3 *Bar.* subsequently had a substantial life as a Christian text.

<sup>42</sup> 3 *Bar.* 15:2–3; H.M. Hughes, trans., rev. by A.W. Argyle, “The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch,” in *Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed. H.F.D. Sparks; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 897–914 (913); J.-C. Picard, ed., *Apocalypsis Baruchi Graece* (PVTG 2; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 95.

Michael addressing these two groups as one and referring to them as "our friends."<sup>43</sup>

Some scholars such as H.M. Hughes have viewed much of this final section of *3 Bar.*, particularly 15:4, as a Byzantine Christian interpolation, and thus it would have no bearing on the early apocalyptic tradition.<sup>44</sup> Other scholars, such as J.-C. Picard, and more recently Daniel Harlow, have defended this section primarily as early and Jewish, with only minimal Christian redaction.<sup>45</sup> Even if we are to accept it as such, *3 Bar.* is not sufficient to establish a foothold for different levels of post-mortem reward in the early apocalyptic tradition, for these rewards are distributed to the living. The only indication of post-mortem reward comes in *3 Bar.* 10 and it is a rather bare description of a plain and a lake, reminiscent of the Elysian Fields and Acherusian Lake found in other early apocalypses.<sup>46</sup> The plain and the lake operate simply as the place, "where the souls of the righteous come whenever they meet in groups to talk to one another."<sup>47</sup> Once again, there is no differentiation among the post-mortem righteous.

All of the particular elements of *3 Bar.* mentioned above find parallels in *Apoc. Paul*. Of course, the Acherusian Lake plays a role in *Apoc. Paul*, although it is one of purification rather than the post-mortem gathering place of *3 Bar.* More intriguing is the parallel between the angels who come bearing the merit of people in *3 Bar.* 12–13 and the angels who come from watching the righteous and the wicked in *Apoc. Paul* 7–10.<sup>48</sup> What is particularly instructive here is not the similarity, but the difference between the two texts in their reaction to the angels of wicked who would like to be released from their charges. Namely, when Michael comes back from God in *3 Bar.* 16, he tells the angels

<sup>43</sup> Hughes, "The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch," 913.

<sup>44</sup> H.M. Hughes, "The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch or III Baruch," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament 2* (ed. R.H. Charles; Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 527–41, esp. 540 n., 541 n.; Hughes, "The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch," 913.

<sup>45</sup> Picard, *Apocalypsis Baruchi Graece*, 77–8; Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, 109–162, esp. 146–156.

<sup>46</sup> Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, 144–5.

<sup>47</sup> Hughes, "The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch," 911.

<sup>48</sup> See Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, 152–3. Harlow points out that it is only the Greek version of *Apoc. Paul* which describes angels coming from three different groups of humanity; the other versions only have the righteous ascetics and the wicked. However, what Harlow glosses over is that none of the three different groups of angels comes from an intermediate group in *Apoc. Paul*, instead the Greek has doubled the number of righteous groups.

of the wicked that they cannot be released because they should torment their charges as follows: "afflict them with caterpillar and maggot, and rust and locust, and hail with flashes of lightening and wrath, and smite them with sword and with death, and their children with demons."<sup>49</sup> However, in *Apoc. Paul* 10, the angels are not allowed to be released because, "It is necessary that [the angels] should minister to [the wicked] until they be converted and repent. . . . Know therefore, sons of men, that whatever things are wrought by you, these angels report it to God, whether it is good or evil."<sup>50</sup> This insistence on allowing for repentance ties into the elements of *Apoc. Paul* that are about the competition for the best place in the hierarchy of salvation. The competition in *Apoc. Paul* is about tiny distinctions, small improvements, and this passage promises a panopticon in which those tiny moments—both good and bad—will not be overlooked or forgotten. Thus, the very fact that 3 *Bar.* 16 does not allow for repentance may be linked to lack of differentiation among the post-mortem righteous in the text. Awakening the competitive spirit in the auditor of the text is only effective when joined with the possibility of continued improvement in this lifetime.

Although the early apocalypses surveyed thus far have admitted no real hierarchy among the righteous dead, the Book of Revelation does allow for one special category with particular rewards, namely those who were "slaughtered for the word of God" (NRSV, Rev 6:9). Some of their additional rewards seem minor. For example, they are found under the altar in 6:9 and they are capable of learning a special song in 14:3.<sup>51</sup> However, knowing a special song hardly competes with the reward offered to the "souls of those who have been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus. . . . They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended)" (NRSV, Rev. 4–5). No doubt, special rewards are being held out to those willing to die for Jesus in an attempt to sway the behavior of the audience of the text toward martyrdom. Thus, Rev. does provide an early example of the hierarchical element found in *Apoc. Paul*. However, the element of competition

<sup>49</sup> Hughes, "The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch," 914.

<sup>50</sup> Elliott, trans., 636.

<sup>51</sup> If one understands, "They have been redeemed from humankind as the first fruits for God and the Lamb" (14:4), as a reference to these individuals as sacrificed as martyrs.

is not as well developed. There does not seem to be jealousy directed towards the martyrs for their greater rewards, only gratitude for their greater sacrifice. The distinction is more akin to the accepted distinction between the lay people and the monks in *Apoc. Paul* and not the petty jealousy which fuels the admonitions to improve smaller, less obvious behaviors.

#### 4. COMPETITION IN THE MONASTERY

The early apocalyptic tradition largely eschews the competitive model because these apocalypses operated on the premise that membership in the community is sufficient for salvation. However, this presupposition is not shared by *Apoc. Paul* or other texts of monastic Egypt. *Apoc. Paul* condemns to a gruesome fate of “pitch,” “sulphur” and “coiled dragons,” those “who seemed to renounce the world,” but who failed regarding proper treatment of widows, orphans, strangers, and neighbors.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, the vision of hell contained within the Bohairic Life of the fourth century monastic leader Pachomius reports on monks who have been cast into hell for slander.<sup>53</sup> Thus, not only is membership in the Christian community insufficient for salvation, membership in the monastic community is as well. Because of this and because of its own hierarchical structure, the monastic community encourages certain elements of competition, elements which spill over into visions of the afterlife.

Egyptian monks are aware that rivalry both motivates practice and endangers the monk in falling prey to the sin of pride. The preface of Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* (mid-4th c. CE) states, “It is a good contest-for-superiority [ἄμιλλα] in which you have engaged with the monks of Egypt, setting out either to equal or to surpass them in your ascetic quest for virtue.”<sup>54</sup> The competition is ostensibly with oneself; however, J. Wortley has gathered a number of monastic stories that take the comparison with others literally. In Wortley’s words, “in spite of constant insistence on humility as the great and most essential of

<sup>52</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 40; Elliott, trans., 636.

<sup>53</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 88.

<sup>54</sup> *Vit. Ant., prooem.*, PG XXVI 838A, cited after J. Wortley, “The Spirit of Rivalry in Early Christian Monasticism,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 33 (1992): 383–404, here 383.

monastic virtues, we encounter these alleged attempts, even on the part of some eminent professors of the ascetic life, to discover how near the top of the ratings they stand."<sup>55</sup> One of the earliest monastic comparison stories is a near contemporary of *Apoc. Paul*, namely the "Paphnutius cycle" found in *The History of the Monks of Egypt* (394–5). In this story, Paphnutius asks God, "which of the saints who had lived a virtuous life he most resembled."<sup>56</sup> Paphnutius is sent to a flute player, who despite being "a sinner, a drunkard and a fornicator," has done two acts of kindness that exceeded what Paphnutius himself had done. However, Paphnutius tells the man, "as regards *ascesis*, you have no doubt heard that I am famous."<sup>57</sup> Paphnutius encourages the flute player to take up the ascetic life and he joins the saints. The story repeats itself twice more with Paphnutius meeting righteous lay individuals and encouraging them to become monks. Having watched each of these men join the monastic life and then go on to heaven, "Paphnutius himself lost the will to live, for he was no longer able to practice *ascesis*."<sup>58</sup> Paphnutius clearly wonders how—if he is famous in *ascesis*—so many others have surpassed him in this life. Finally an angel reveals to Paphnutius that he too is destined for the "eternal tabernacles of God," a revelation that was postponed so that Paphnutius would not "become proud" and "forfeit [his] reward."<sup>59</sup> Thus, Paphnutius, like the monks who read *Apoc. Paul*, found himself both motivated through competition, through a desire to be "famous" in his ascetic deeds, and in danger of becoming too proud of successfully out-practicing others. It is never clear if Paphnutius' reward exceeded those to whom he was compared or merely equaled them.

In the numerous visions of the afterlife in the Pachomian literature, the different levels of merit achieved by the righteous dead are even more marked.<sup>60</sup> In one of Pachomius' visions, he sees a soul led to its appropriate reward, "according to the measure (ἡ ἔκδοσις) of the works he accomplished."<sup>61</sup> The merits of the soul determine how close to the

<sup>55</sup> Wortley, "The Spirit of Rivalry," 386.

<sup>56</sup> HME 14.3; N. Russell, trans., *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Oxford: OUP, 1981), 95.

<sup>57</sup> HME 14.8; Russell, trans., *Lives*, 95.

<sup>58</sup> HME 14.23; Russell, trans., *Lives*, 98.

<sup>59</sup> HME 14.23; Russell, trans., *Lives*, 98.

<sup>60</sup> Wortley's material on rivalry does not include the Pachomian visions.

<sup>61</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 82; A. Veilleux, trans., *The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (vol. 1 of *Pachomian Koinonia*; Cistercian Studies Series 45; Kalamazoo, MI:

saints it may get. For some of the dead, “the saints come toward those who have done God’s good pleasure to meet them solemnly,” “others have not enough merit to be embraced by the saints; they merely inherit life in the measure of their littleness.”<sup>62</sup> Likewise, based on its works, the soul may either come near the Lord, or it must remain at a distance; it may either “see God in the glory of his godhead,” or be only allowed to “see [...] the flesh of the Son of God.”<sup>63</sup> Surely the reader understands that it is much better to see the former than the latter. The distinction is underscored elsewhere in the *Life of Pachomius*, when Pachomius finds Theodore, his future successor, weeping. When Pachomius asks him why he is weeping, Theodore replies, “I would like you, father, to declare to me that I shall see God; if not, what is the profit for me to have been brought into this world?” Pachomius tells him “if an impure thought enters your mind, be it hatred or wickedness, jealousy, envy, contempt for your brother, or human vainglory, remember at once and say, ‘If I consent to any one of those things, I shall not see the Lord.’”<sup>64</sup> Hence for Theodore, or anyone like him, seeing only the “flesh of the Son of God” would be excruciating and eternal torture. Once again, a good afterlife which is not the best afterlife is painful, in this case, worse than having never been born.

Competition also appears in the visions of the afterlife in the *Life of Pachomius*, although it is not explicitly the competition between the souls for the best afterlife. Instead, the reader is told, “the just wear crowns brighter than those which the person they come out to meet has won in combats on earth in which he fought against the devil...”<sup>65</sup> Competition plays into this in two ways: the competition with the devil and the brightness of the crowns. Those who are just arriving in heaven, having earned crowns through battling the devil, are met by others with brighter crowns than their own. Hence they are met only by someone who has engaged in more valiant struggles than they have. From the moment they enter heaven, they must look upon someone who was more successful than they were. Hence, even though the

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Cistercian Publications, 1980), 107; L.Th. Lefort, ed., *S. Pachomii Vita bohairice scripta* (CSCO; Scriptorum Coptici 3/7; Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1953), 89.

<sup>62</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 82; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:107–108.

<sup>63</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 82; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:107.

<sup>64</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 33; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:58.

<sup>65</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 82; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:108.

explicit competition is with the devil, a battle to get a crown of righteousness at all, the secondary competition is for the brightest crown.

Furthermore, the dead in the Pachomian visions are encouraged to compare their lot to others. After dying, the righteous soul is shown the entire universe, so that "he may realize what torments he has escaped."<sup>66</sup> Hence, his reward is made better by knowing the torments of others that he does not have to endure. The deceased also feel pride and shame in the relative rank of their post-mortem dwelling places. In another Pachomian vision, the reader meets a young man who spent four months as a monk and then died. When Pachomius visits "the other age," the young monk sees him and "rushe[s] toward him." He is so eager to show Pachomius what he has earned in heaven, that he actually "tug[s]" at him to get him to come see his "spiritual gardens" and his "mansion."<sup>67</sup> He literally cannot wait to show his former mentor the splendor of his new home. Juxtaposed with the pride of the young monk is the shame felt by an old, spiteful ascetic who was "fastened like a dog to a tree laden with fruit." The ascetic survives by eating the fruit, but he "bow[s] his head in shame until [Pachomius and the young monk] pass[] him."<sup>68</sup> In life, this ascetic was like those proud monks kept outside of the city of Christ in *Apoc. Paul*; he was meticulous in his fasting but was unkind to his fellow monks. And like those monks, he lives "a little way outside of the delightful paradise,"<sup>69</sup> he is close enough to see the rewards of others and to experience eternal shame and regret over his failings, the thwarting of his desire to have what the young man has only increases his suffering.

The competitive spirit engaged by these visions of the afterlife parallels the competitive nature of ever increasing *ascesis* practiced by the monks of the Pachomian order. Pachomius is described as giving "himself up more and more to important exercises, to a great and intensive *ascesis*, and to lengthy recitations of the books of the Holy Scripture."<sup>70</sup> Although the competition was ostensibly with oneself, the very order of the Pachomian monasteries with a father over each monastery and a housemaster over each house in the monastery suggests

<sup>66</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 82; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:106.

<sup>67</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 116; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:170.

<sup>68</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 116; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:171.

<sup>69</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 116; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:171.

<sup>70</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 15; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:38.

a hierarchical structure which could lead to competition for limited advancement to a higher rank.

Likewise, Theodore, Pachomius' successor who so desperately wanted to see God, "gave himself up to *ascesis*, to fasts, and to vigils, and he was second to no other brother (ΗΝΕΥΩΠΗ ΕΥΧΟΧΕΒ ΕΝΙ-ΧΗΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ)."<sup>71</sup> The very language itself betrays that competition drives the behavior in the monastery no less than in the institutions described earlier by Gould. Literally, Theodore was "not inferior to all the other brothers." In other words, he was superior to them all, out-competing them in *ascesis*, fasts and vigils. Ironically, the phrase used in the Coptic could also mean that Theodore was not "humble" in comparison with the other brothers. Yet, Theodore also "made up his mind to walk with humility (ΟΥ.ΘΕΒΙΟ) and purity."<sup>72</sup> Theodore moves one step beyond Gade's Qur'anic competitors who must balance their desire to win the competition with the Qur'an's own insistence on humility. In order to achieve the highest reward, to look upon God, Theodore actually has to achieve the paradox of winning the competition of being the most humble.

## 5. CONCLUSION

On a general level, the power of apocalypses to affect behavior rests in the depiction of glorious rewards and brutal punishments, the rather banal carrot and the stick. However, in late antique Egyptian visions of otherworldly rewards, such as those found in *Apoc. Paul* and the *Life of Pachomius*, the texture of these broad brush strokes is enriched by a more subtle plea to the competitive nature of human beings. These visions present an afterlife that does not merely reward the righteous, but that consists of multiple layers of reward, one better than the last. Thus, the audiences of these texts have to be concerned not only with whether or not they will avoid the torments of hell, but also with how close the saints will be, whether they can live in the city of Christ or only in the land of promise, how high their thrones will be, and how bright their crowns will shine. By appealing to the competitive nature

<sup>71</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 32; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:57; Lefort, *S. Pachomii Vita*, 35.

<sup>72</sup> *Vit. Pach.* SBo 33; Veilleux, trans. *PK*, 1:58; Lefort, *S. Pachomii Vita*, 36. A different word for humility is used in this phrase, so there is no intentional play on words here in the Coptic.

of human beings, these texts provide additional motivation for even more punctilious behavior and control of inward thought, whether one is competing in *ascesis* with one's fellow monks or only attempting to be the best neighbor one can be. To successfully compete for the best afterlife, one must compete in humility. These paradoxical competitions in humility appear in the fourth century and later because of the hierarchical nature of the fourth century institutions such as the monastery which no longer accept mere membership in the community to be sufficient for salvation. The slightest amount of envy or pride can lessen one's honor in the afterlife, condemning one to an eternal reminder of that failing in the form of a higher throne occupied by someone else. No matter how pleasant the deserved afterlife seems; the realization by the righteous but imperfect soul that eternity could have been more delightful is torture. Thus, these texts seek to control their audiences by appealing not only to the animal instinct of pleasure over pain, but also to the all too human ambition to have the very best.



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