
Chapter 5

*Creation in the Gospel of John*¹

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John's gospel resounds with an affirmation of life: "I came that they may have life in its fullness" (10:10).² Where the Synoptic Gospels work from a theological framework of sin and atonement, John speaks of life and eternity life.³ This is an alternative approach to the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and rising that can speak to the heart of human desires today.

The theme of creation is established in the opening words of the gospel with the faith affirmation that all creation had its origins in God, "In the beginning." These words immediately take the reader back to the opening words of the Scriptures and the creation account in Genesis 1. Reading the prologue (John 1:1-18), with an awareness

1. This essay began life as a paper given to commemorate the Centenary of the Melbourne College of Divinity in July 2010. That paper was then published as "Theological Reflections on Creation in the Gospel of John," *Pacifica* 24 (2011): 1-12. This current essay is a substantial development of that earlier material.

2. In this chapter, English translations of the New Testament are my own.

3. The phrase *zōēn aiōnion* is usually translated as "eternal life," which can be understood in a temporal sense, as life continuing forever. I prefer to use the expression "eternity life" to emphasize that Jesus offers an entirely different *quality* of life—the life God lives in eternity. This phrase, "eternity life," occurs seventeen times in John, making this a major theme: 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3.

of Genesis 1, it is possible to see that these eighteen verses are closely modeled on the first chapter of Genesis.⁴ The theme of creation returns in the final chapters of John as the author situates the entire passion and resurrection narrative within the iconography of the Garden of Eden found in Genesis 2. The two Genesis creation accounts therefore frame the gospel's narrative and by this structural artistry confirm the gospel's proclamation: "I came that they may have *life* in its fullness" (John 10:10). In commenting on the use of *inclusio* as part of the literary design, Morna Hooker writes, "The correspondence of beginnings and endings is a feature of a great deal of literature, both ancient and modern. . . . Tidy endings often take us back to where we began: a skillful use of what the literary critics call *inclusio* reminds us that it was, after all, the writer's purpose all along to lead us to precisely this point. . . . The end which brings us back to the beginning forms a satisfying conclusion."⁵

This essay will begin by examining the beginning and ending of the Gospel of John to see how these "bookends" situate the theme of creation within the gospel; this will be followed by asking the question, "What are the theological implications of the gospel's narrative structure within our current understanding of an evolving and expanding universe?"

1. *The Prologue*

The first eighteen verses of John introduce the reader to the major theme and perspective of this gospel. Jesus, the enfleshed Word, has his origins in God (1:1), and, with God, the eternal Word brings forth all creation (1:3). Creation then becomes the dwelling place of the Word (1:14) who enters human history, where some reject him (1:11) but some receive him and through him are drawn into the life of God and become children of God (1:12). This is the basic story line of the following narrative, which begins with the gathering of disciples (1:19-51) and concludes with these disciples, now called

"my brothers and sisters" (20:17), gathered around the risen Jesus (20:24-29), who is still embodied but has passed through death and now transcends the limits of material creation.⁶

The prologue outlines this story line twice, first in reported speech, then at verse 14 the perspective changes and the report becomes a testimony spoken in the first person by those who experience it: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory" (v. 14); John cried out, "This man was the one of whom I said, 'He who comes after me, came before me, for he was before me'" (v. 15); "from his fullness we have all received a gift instead of a gift" (v. 16).

Both major parts of the prologue, the report (vv. 3-13) and the first-person testimony (vv. 14-17), can be set out showing how each part follows a similar movement in three stages with parallel themes.

In the first stage, vv. 3-5 speak of life and light shining in the darkness. When story becomes testimony, v. 14 proclaims, "we saw his glory." The Word, present as the life force within creation, has become visible; light has brought perception. The second stage moves from seeing to hearing with the witness of John, at first simply told (vv. 6-8), and then John testifies in his own voice (v. 15). The third stage recounts what happened when the Word entered human history. In this stage, we learn of two responses. Some, his own people, did not receive him (v. 11), but some came to believe in his name and these are given power to become children of God (v. 12). When this account becomes first-person testimony we hear of two gifts: the Law given through Moses and a gift called a "true gift" that we have received. The parallelism establishes that the "name" referred to in v. 12 is Jesus (v. 17), and the true gift is to become God's children (v. 12). These parallel stages clearly enunciate the pain and conflict of the following narrative. Jesus came to his own people, the children of Israel, who had received the gift of the Law. But in Jesus

4. I first proposed this in an article: Mary L. Coloe, "The Structure of the Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1," *ABR* 45 (1997): 1-11.

5. Morna Hooker, *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 3-4.

6. Along with many Johannine scholars, I consider chapter 21 a later addition to the original narrative that had its ending at 20:21. For a brief discussion on the place of chapter 21, see Francis J. Moloney, *John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 62-66 and 545-47. Moloney concludes: "There is a crucial element of discontinuity between John 1-20 and John 21 that calls for the former's being regarded as 'the Gospel' and the latter as 'the Epilogue'" (564).

another gift is being offered, “a gift instead of a gift” (v. 16),⁷ which some within Israel will accept, but others will choose the Law and not see in Jesus the fulfillment of its promises.

These parallel accounts are introduced by identifying the central “characters” as the Word existing in eternity with God (vv. 1-2).⁸ The accounts conclude by identifying the central “characters” again, only now, having told the story of the Word coming into human history, the “characters” are given a human face as the only Son in the heart of the Father.

The structure can be shown schematically as:⁹

Introduction (1-2) Logos/Theos in eternity

Part 1 (story told)		Part 2 (testimony)
A (3-5) light	have seen	A' (14) glory
B (6-8) John	have heard	B' (15) John
C (9-13) 2 responses	have experienced	C' (16-17) 2 gifts

Conclusion (18) Son/Father in history

7. In ordinary Greek usage, *anti* means “instead of” and *charis* usually means “gift.” Therefore, the expression *charin anti charitos* (1:16) should be translated in its Johannine sense as a “gift instead of a gift.” Translators frequently impose the Pauline sense of *charis/grace* upon the Johannine text. See the discussion by Ruth Edwards, “‘XAPIN ANTI XAPITOE’ (John 1:16): Grace and the Law in the Johannine Prologue,” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 3–6; also Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1–4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 46–47.

8. A very rich study of the “character” of God in the Fourth Gospel is Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001). On the characterization of the “Father,” which subverts the patriarchal understanding of fatherhood, see Dorothy A. Lee, “Beyond Suspicion? The Fatherhood of God in the Fourth Gospel,” *Pacifica* 8 (1995): 140–54.

9. For a summary of other ways of structuring the prologue, see Coloe, “The Structure of the Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” 40–43.

The bipartite structure, shown here, with three sections framed by an introduction and conclusion, is found in the creation account in Genesis 1. In this account, following a brief introduction (Gen 1:1-2), creation happens over seven days. The first three days describe three acts of separation: day 1, light from darkness (vv. 3-5); day 2, waters above from waters below (vv. 6-8); day 3, water from dry land (vv. 9-13). In the following three days, God acts to populate what was created in the first days. On day 4, the darkness is filled with the stars and the moon, while the day is regulated by the sun (vv. 14-19). On day 5, the waters below are filled with living creatures while the firmament above is filled with birds (vv. 20-23). On day 6, land creatures, including humanity, appear on earth (vv. 24-31). These six days bring God’s creative activity to an end, “the heavens and earth were finished” (Gen 2:1), and the seventh day is the Sabbath of divine rest. The writer then concludes the account, “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created” (Gen 2:4a).

The structure can be shown schematically as:¹⁰

Introduction In the Beginning (1-2)

<i>Separation</i>	<i>Population</i>
A (3-5) light/darkness;	A' (14-19) sun, stars
B (6-8) heaven/earth;	B' (20-23) birds, fish
C (9-13) land/waters;	C' (24-31) animals, humans

Climax: The Sabbath (2:1-3)

Conclusion The generations of heaven and earth (2:4a)

The Johannine prologue thus mirrors the structure of Genesis 1 as the following diagram demonstrates:

10. This structure is noted by many scholars; most recently, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1–11* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 20.

Genesis
Introduction (1-2)

Johannine Prologue
Introduction (1-2)

<i>Separation</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Story Told</i>	<i>Testimony Given</i>
A (3-5) light/ darkness	A' (14-19) sun, stars	A (3-5) light	A' (14) we saw
B (6-8) heaven/ earth	B' (20-23) birds, fish	B (6-8) John	B' (15) I said
C (9-13) land/ waters	C' (24-31) animals, humans	C (9-13) children of God	C' (16-17) we received

Climax: The Sabbath (2:1-3)

Conclusion (2:4a)

Conclusion (18)

As the above diagram shows, the parallel structure of the prologue is similar to the structure of Genesis 1, except that the prologue has no seventh day, no Sabbath. According to John's theology, creation was not complete "in the beginning," and we will hear in this gospel that God is still working: "My Father is still working and so am I" (5:17).¹¹ I will return to this point later.

As well as the structural parallel between Genesis 1:1-2:4a and John 1:1-18, there are other parallels to be noted. Following the brief introductory verses, both passages introduce the theme of light shining in the darkness: "God separated the light from the darkness" (Gen 1:4); "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). The opening phrase, "in the beginning," the significance of God's word in both accounts, the initial theme of light, and the structural parallels indicate that the prologue deliberately evokes the first creation account to introduce readers to the gospel narrative.

2. The Hour

The creation theme is particularly significant in the passion/resurrection narrative.¹² Only in John do we read that Jesus is ar-

11. See also "my food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work" (4:34).

12. In the Fourth Gospel death and resurrection are one event termed the "hour." Death, in Johannine terms, marks an ending for the enfleshed Word,

rested in a garden, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples across the Kidron valley, where there was a garden" (John 18:1).¹³ Only John narrates that he is buried in a garden, "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid" (John 19:41). The garden therefore frames the crucifixion and John emphasizes that the cross is in the center, "So they took Jesus . . . to the place called the place of a skull. . . . There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus *in the middle*" (19:17-18).¹⁴ The Johannine addition, "in the middle [*meson*]," echoes the phrase in Genesis where God plants "the tree of life *in the middle* of the garden" (Gen 2:9).¹⁵ The evangelist depicts the crucifixion with the iconography of Genesis 2: there is a garden, and in the middle of the garden is the cross, the tree of life, and at the foot of the cross stand a man, the beloved disciple, and a woman, who is never named but called only "woman" (John 2:4; 19:26) and "the mother" (2:1; 19:25), which were names given to the first

but this moment is but a transition into glorification. In the words of Karl Rahner, "It is death into resurrection." See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 266. The moment of death is the moment of Jesus' exultation when he passes into the glory he had in God's presence "before the world came to be" (John 17: 5). In what follows, I will use the expression "appearance narratives" to speak of the events recorded in John 20.

13. Mark and Matthew name the place Gethsemane; Luke names it the Mount of Olives.

14. The Synoptic Gospels mention the two criminals crucified with Jesus "one on the right and one on the left" (Mark 15:27; Matt 27:38; Luke 23:33), but only John adds, "and Jesus *in the middle*."

15. LXX: *kai to xulon tēs zōēs en mesōi tōi paradeisōi*. This phrase, "in the middle of the garden," is repeated in Genesis 3:3. Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnaud Lamouille, eds., *L'évangile de Jean*, Synopse des quatre évangiles en français 3 (Paris: Cerf, 1977), 452; Frédéric Manns, *L'évangile de Jean à la lumière du judaïsme*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 33 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1991), 426-27. In Proverbs, the Tree of Life is identified as Divine Wisdom, which is also a striking Christological theme in both the prologue and across the gospel narrative. "She [Wisdom] is a tree of life to those who grasp her" (Prov 3:18). See Ben Witherington III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995).

woman: "She shall be called Woman" (Gen 2:23). "The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living" (Gen 3:20). These unique features of the Johannine passion, when taken together, suggest a deliberate evocation of the primordial Garden of Eden and a theology of creation.

Following the scene where Jesus alters the relationship between his mother and disciple to one of mother and son, the narrator states that Jesus knew "that all was now finished." Then, after receiving the vinegar, Jesus states, "It is finished [*tetelestai*]" (19:30). The verb *teleō* reiterates God's judgment at the completion of his six days creative work—"thus, the heavens and the earth were finished [*sunetelesthsan*]. . . . And on the seventh day God finished [*sunetelesen*] the work" (Gen 2:1-2).¹⁶ God's work, which was begun in creation, is brought to its completion at the cross as Jesus dies and breathes down the Spirit to the couple standing beneath the cross. In the next verse, we are told that it was the day of preparation before the Passover and the eve of Sabbath, and the narrator notes "that Sabbath was a great Sabbath." In the Hour, Jesus brings the work he was sent to accomplish to its conclusion. Throughout the gospel Jesus had claimed that God was in fact still working (5:17), that the creative work of God had not yet been completed, and that he had been sent to complete (*teleō*) this work (4:34; 5:36; 17:4). In discussing the prologue and its close structural relationship with Genesis 1, I noted that the prologue has no equivalent to the seventh day, the Sabbath, and I made the point that in this gospel God is still working. It is only with the death of Jesus that creation can hear the words "it is finished," and these words usher in the great Sabbath, marking the completion of God's initial creative work that has been in process since the dawn of time "in the beginning" (Gen 1:1).

In the first chapter of Genesis, God's final work on day 6 is the creation of humankind, and this too is Jesus' final act. When he speaks to his mother and the disciple, he changes their relationships. The disciple becomes "son" to the mother of Jesus, and so the disciple is now in a new fraternal relationship with Jesus. The Beloved

16. Martin Hengel, "The Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, JSNTSup 104 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 393-94.

Disciple is reborn as brother to Jesus and is therefore incorporated into his sonship. Through Jesus' words, the disciple is "born anew" as child of God, as the prologue had promised (John 1:12). The narrator then states that the disciple "took her to his own [*eis ta idia*]" (19:27). This phrase repeats the words of the prologue describing Jesus coming to his own, *eis ta idia* (1:11), and the consequences that some reject him but others receive him and are given "the power to become children of God" (1:12). The phrase "to his own" forms an *inclusio* that looks back to the promise given in the prologue and now marks its fulfillment at the cross. In Genesis 1, God's final act is the creating of humankind in God's own image (Gen 1:26-27); this action leads into God's judgment of creation's completion ushering in the Sabbath (Gen 2:2). From the cross Jesus draws disciples into his own filial relationship with God, creating them anew as sons and daughters of God, and when this has been done, he announces, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and creation is now ready for its "great [*megalē*] Sabbath" (19:31).

3. *The Appearance Narratives*

In one sense, the gospel is completed at the cross. The cross is the moment of Jesus' exultation. In death he has been lifted up and glorified. Disciples have now become brothers and sisters of Jesus and children of God, as the risen Jesus confirms when he says to Mary Magdalene, "Go to my *brothers and sisters* and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and *your Father*, to my God and your God'" (20:17). This leads to the question about the function of chapter 20 in this gospel. Why is this chapter needed? I will return to this question following the examination of the Johannine account, giving particular attention to some of the details that are not present in the Synoptic accounts.

The First Day

Two time markers are given: the first day of the week (20:1,19) and eight days later (20:26). The first day is the day after the Sabbath, which commemorates the completion of God's creative activity; the first day therefore signifies the start of a new creation. It is appropriate that the narrative begins in darkness (cf. Gen 1:1) when

Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb; as the events unfold, a new day—the first day—dawns. In first-century CE Jewish and Christian writings, the terminology of the “first day” shifted to the “eighth day” to reflect ideas about the eschatological age when God would fulfill all Israel’s longings. The “eighth day” terminology is first found in Christian literature in the Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 95–135).

He further says to them, *Your new moons and Sabbaths I disdain*. Consider what he means: Not the Sabbaths of the present era are acceptable to me, but that which I have appointed to mark the end of the world and to usher in the eighth day, that is, the dawn of another world. This, by the way, is the reason why we joyfully celebrate the eighth day—the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead; after which He manifested himself and went up to heaven. (*Ep. Barn* 15.8–9)¹⁷

The appearance narrative bears witness to the meaning of the crucifixion for the believers, from John’s perspective. In this gospel the focus is more on the impact of the resurrection for the disciples than on its significance for Jesus. The first creation has been brought to its completion in Jesus’ death, when he gives birth to a new humanity born of God. The blood and water flowing from the side of the crucified one symbolizes this moment of birth.¹⁸ The birth symbolism was noted by Edwyn Hoskyns in dialogue with a number of ancient commentators. He wrote: “Thus the original believers stand

17. The eschatological “eighth day” also appears in the Jewish apocalyptic source 2 Enoch (first century BCE): “And I appointed the eighth day also, that the eighth day should be the first-created after my work, and that the first seven revolve in the form of the seventh thousand, and that at the beginning of the eighth thousand there should be a time of not-counting, endless, with neither years nor months nor weeks nor days nor hours” (2 Enoch 33.1).

18. On the “birth” symbolism of the blood and water, see Dorothy A. Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 82, 152–59. Ben Witherington writes, “One needs to be aware that in ancient Near Eastern literature the word ‘water’ can be and is used as a *terminus technicus*, or at least a well-known circumlocution, for matters involving procreation, child-bearing, child-bearing capacity, or the act of giving birth itself.” See Ben Witherington III, “The Waters of Birth: John 3.5 and 1 John 5.6–8,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 156.

beneath the cross to receive the new birth very literally ‘from above’ through the Spirit breathed upon them, and through the Water and the Blood poured out upon them. . . . The Water and the Blood [bear witness] to the new birth of the Christians as nothing less than birth from God. The idea of re-creation and new birth therefore underlies St John’s account of the death on the cross.”¹⁹

In the resurrected body of Jesus, disciples glimpse the full transcendence of human personhood, now participating fully in the life of God; in *his* resurrection, we glimpse the transcendence that is in process for all creation.

*The Garden*²⁰

The first person to encounter the risen Jesus is Mary Magdalene, and because the tomb is situated in a garden, she thinks the person she sees is the gardener. There is wonderful irony in this appellation, once we realize the overtones of the Genesis garden present in the events of the “hour.” Understanding the Johannine evocation of the original garden of Paradise and who the original Gardener was, namely, God who “planted a garden in Eden, in the east” (Gen 2:8), and as a gardener cultivated it (Gen 2:9) and walked in it (3:8),²¹

19. Edwyn C. Hoskyns, “Genesis I–III and St. John’s Gospel,” *JTS* 21 (1920): 213.

20. In this short essay, there is not the opportunity to give detailed background on the symbolic traditions of the garden. I refer the reader to Manns, *L’Evangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme*, 401–29; Ruben Zimmermann, “Symbolic Communication between John and His Reader: The Garden Symbolism in John 19–20,” in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Future of the Fourth Gospel as Literature*, ed. Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore, Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 221–35. While the gospel uses the term *kēpos*, and not *paradeisos*, which is the term used for the garden in Genesis 2:8, these two words are interchangeable, and the word *kēpos*, to mean the original garden, is found in Ezekiel 36:35 and later Greek translations. On this point, see the arguments of Jeannine K. Brown, “Creation’s Renewal in the Gospel of John,” *CBQ* 72 (2010): 280; Hoskyns, “Genesis I–III and St John’s Gospel,” 214; and Manns, *L’Evangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme*, 405–7. Manns also notes a long patristic tradition of associating the garden of Jesus’ arrest and burial with the Garden of Eden (402–7).

21. The placing of the Garden of Eden “in the East” also alludes to the rising of the sun, and John notes that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb in the early

Mary's perception that Jesus is the gardener is accurate.²² The Risen One has passed through death into the glory that was originally his, with God in the beginning. He returns to Mary as the divine Gardener walking in the garden of his creation (John 1:2).²³

The much-discussed command spoken by Jesus to Mary Magdalene, "Do not touch me" (John 20:17), may also reflect the Genesis motif of Jesus as the "tree of life," discussed above, in reference to the placement of the cross. In Eden, when the woman explains to the serpent God's prohibition about eating from the tree "in the middle of the garden," she adds to God's command the phrase "and you must not touch it [LXX: *hapsesthe*]" (Gen 3:5), where God's original command was simply not to eat of the tree (Gen 2:17). The LXX uses the verb *haptō*, which is the same verb found in John 20:17 (*me mou haptou*). Whereas the first woman's disobedience in touching

morning while it was still dark (*prōi skotias*), indicating that she was there as the sun was rising. See Joel F. Drinkard Jr., "East," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 248. By the first century, the Garden of Eden was located in Jerusalem and identified with the temple as the Book of Jubilees makes explicit: "And he knew that the Garden of Eden is the holy of holies, and the dwelling of the Lord, and Mount Sinai the center of the desert, and Mount Zion—the center of the navel of the earth" (Jub 8:19).

22. "Mary's words are then true, the risen Lord is *ho Kēpouros*, for he is Lord of the Garden, and once more He walks in His garden in the cool of the day, the early morning, xxi, and converses not with the fallen but with the redeemed." See Hoskyns, "Genesis I–III and St John's Gospel," 215.

23. In her fine study of the creation motif in John's gospel, Jeannine Brown also makes the connection between the Garden of Eden and the garden of the resurrection in John 20. She considers that the evangelist is connecting Jesus "to that first gardener, Adam. At this point in the narrative, John implies an Adam Christology." See Brown, "Creation's Renewal," 281. *Contra* Brown, the biblical tradition presents God not Adam as the original gardener. It is God who plants the garden (Gen 2:8); in Genesis 13:10 and Isaiah 51:3 there is the phrase YHWH's garden, and in Ezekiel 31:8, "God's garden." As Mariusz Rosik writes, "In the Old Testament, Eden is thought of as a garden in which it is God, himself, who is the gardener." See Mariusz Rosik, "Discovering the Secrets of God's Garden: Resurrection as New Creation (Gen 2:4b–3:24; John 20:1–18)," *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum: Liber Annuus* 58 (2009): 84. Zimmermann ("The Garden Symbolism in John 19–20," 229) also adds that God is explicitly described as a "gardener" (Num 24:6; 4 Macc 1:29).

the tree brought death, Mary Magdalene's obedience brings the Easter proclamation of life as children of God.²⁴

Garden and Temple

The primary meaning of God's garden is the dwelling place of God's presence which leads to the association of the Garden of Eden and the temple in much Jewish thought.²⁵ In Eden, God was present "walking [*hlk*: *hitpa*"el] in the garden in the cool of the evening" (Gen 3:8). This same verbal form is used to describe God's presence with Israel "walking about in a tent and a tabernacle" (2 Sam 6–7; also Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14).²⁶ The temple was elaborately decorated with carvings of trees, flowers, and animals to depict the world of nature: cedars, cypress, gourds, olivewood, palm trees, pomegranates, oxen, lions, and a great laver of water. Just as kings in the Ancient East established their palaces surrounded by gardens, so God's temple was to be God's garden.²⁷

Adam was placed in the garden to till it and guard it (*abad* and *shamar*); these two terms are usually translated as "serve" and "guard." This same expression is used to describe the ministry of the priests who "serve God in the Temple and guard the Temple from unclean things entering it (Num 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6; 1 Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14)."²⁸

24. Rosik, "The Secrets of God's Garden," 93.

25. Howard N. Wallace, "Garden of God (Place)," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 906. Also, Howard N. Wallace, "Eden, Garden of (Place)," 282.

26. Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 66.

27. Lawrence Stager describes the lush gardens built by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, Queen Hatshepsut's gardens in Egypt, those of the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II in Assur, Sargon II and Sennacherib in Nineveh; see Lawrence E. Stager, "Jerusalem as Eden," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26, no. 3 (2000): 36–47. Rosik ("The Secrets of God's Garden," 82–83) also describes the significance of the garden for burial sites for kings in the Ancient Middle East.

28. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66–67. Beale (66–80) suggests eight other points of correspondence between the Garden of Eden and temple based on linguistic and conceptual parallels.

In the Gospel of John, one of the primary Christological symbols of Jesus' identity and mission is that of the temple. In chapter 2 Jesus identifies himself as the temple when he states, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19), and then the narrator explains, "He spoke of the temple of his body" (2:21). This temple symbolism then continues across the gospel narrative, particularly within the great temple festivals of Tabernacles (John 7, 8, 9) and Dedication (10:22-42).²⁹ Within the gospel narrative, the evangelist frequently juxtaposes Jesus and the temple; such juxtaposition is not simply providing a location for Jesus' words and actions but must be seen as part of the Johannine theological strategy, presenting with artistic irony that Jesus is the new temple.³⁰ The situating of the first appearances of the risen Jesus within a garden continues this narrative strategy, only now the temple is depicted in terms of the garden of Paradise.

Eschatological Gifts: Peace and the Spirit

When Jesus comes to the disciples, his first words are "Peace." The Hebrew word *Shalom* means far more than what is conveyed by its English translation, "peace." *Shalom* in the Old Testament carries the sense of wholeness, or completion,³¹ and is derived from the

29. I have argued elsewhere on the significance of the temple in the Fourth Gospel and shown how one temple is destroyed in the passion narrative and, at the same time, a new temple is raised. See Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001); "Raising the Johannine Temple (John 19:19-37)," *ABR* 48 (2000): 47-58; "The Nazarene King: Pilate's Title as the Key to John's Crucifixion," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle (Louvain: KUL Press, 2007), 839-48.

30. Manns comments: "The importance of the symbolism of the times and places in the Fourth Gospel has been noted many times. John's details are never supplied gratuitously. They are inserted into a network of meanings that the exegete must evaluate if he wants to educe the theological scope of a scene." See Manns, *L'Évangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme*, 401.

31. "In one form or another, the notions of wholeness, health, and completeness inform all the variants of the word." See Joseph P. Healey, "Peace," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 206; also Gerhard von Rad, "שלום in the O.T.," in *Theological Dictionary of*

word *shalem*, to be completed.³² Thus, there is continuity between the final words of Jesus on the cross, "tetelestai, it is finished," and the first word of the risen Jesus, "Peace." In the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament, the term also has a sense of God's final eschatological salvation.³³ The word looks not only back to what has been brought to completion but also ahead to a future fulfillment. From his study of the use of the term "peace" in the Old Testament and rabbinic usage, Werner Foerster concludes: "εἰρήνη thus acquires a most profound and comprehensive significance. It indicates the eschatological salvation of the whole man [*sic*] which is already present as the power of God. It denotes the state of the *καινή κτίσις* [new creation] as the state of definitive fulfillment. In this sense salvation has been revealed in the resurrection of Jesus."³⁴

When Jesus repeats his greeting, "peace," he breathes on the disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22). The word translated "breathed" (*enephusēsen*) recalls God's action in the garden of Genesis when God formed an earth creature from the dust and then "breathed [*enephusēsen*] into his face" the breath of life, and the earth creature became a living being.³⁵ When Jesus comes to his disciples and greets them the first time with, "Peace," this could be understood as saying: God's first creation has been brought to completion. When he says to them again, "Peace," and breathes on them the Holy Spirit, this is an act of new creation, reaffirming Jesus' words and actions at the cross. The words of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit on Golgotha constituted the disciple as a child of God, drawing the disciple into Jesus' sonship. In the appearance narratives, the "hour" of Jesus continues, and when the group of disciples are gathered, the Spirit is breathed and the disciples are sent into the world, "As

the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-76), 2:402-6.

32. Robert L. Thomas, "שָׁלוֹם, Shalem," in *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, 1998), H7999.

33. Werner Foerster, "Εἰρήνη," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-76), 2:412.

34. Foerster, "Εἰρήνη," 414.

35. Zimmermann, "The Garden Symbolism in John 19-20," 233-34.

the Father sent me, even so I send you" (20:22). There are not two bestowals of the Spirit. I would rather speak of two moments within the *one* Hour,³⁶ one moment where the focus is on the believer's relationship to Jesus, and a second moment where the focus is on the believer's relationship to the world, as the agent of Jesus in the world.³⁷ For this reason the narrative describes two moments in the giving of the Spirit to the believers, a moment of birth at the cross (19:30) and a moment of mission (20:21-23).

4. *Creation and Re-Creation: Theological Implications*

Recognizing the significance of beginnings and endings, Morna Hooker notes, "Beginnings and ends not only belong together but also point forward and backward to the significance of the story that lies in-between."³⁸ In immersing the story of Jesus within the themes of original creation and eschatological re-creation, this gospel proposes a soteriological perspective that focuses on life and its fullness. This is made explicit in the words of the Johannine Jesus, "I came that they *may have life* in its fullness" (John 10:10); also in the concluding words of the evangelist, "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you *may have life* in his name" (John 20:31). Other New Testament writings provide a range of different images in an attempt to answer the question, "What was God doing in the Jesus event?" Paul makes use of first-century Jewish and Hellenistic images to speak of justification, redemption, expiation, reconciliation,

36. The unity in the hour of the crucifixion (chaps. 18–19) and the resurrection (chap. 20) is evident in the Johannine insistence that the day of death is a day of "Preparation." Death is not the end but is the essential preparatory stage leading to the dawn of the eschatological "eighth day."

37. For a very clear discussion on the use of *apostellein* and *pempein* as they apply to Jesus and the disciples, see Garry H. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 200–204. Even in this missioning moment, the creation theme is still present in the New Testament, *hapax legomenon*, *enephusēsen*, referring to Genesis 2:7 as discussed above. On this, see also Hengel, "Old Testament," 391.

38. Morna Hooker, *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 267.

salvation;³⁹ in the rending of the temple veil Mark suggests a theology of atonement (15:38), and this imagery is repeated in Matthew (26:51) and Luke (23:45). Joseph Blenkinsopp considers that "it is no exaggeration to say that the contest between Jesus and Satan is the leading theme in the Synoptic Gospels."⁴⁰ The Pauline and Synoptic imagery have dominated Western theology leading to a very narrow focus on the human person and sin, while Anselm's theory of satisfaction has given rise to horrific images of a vengeful God. A study of Johannine soteriology may provide a much-needed alternative that is more attentive to the cosmological significance of the Christ-event and thus more coherent for the twenty-first-century person. Johannine soteriology will focus on re-creation as the "primary explanation of Christian experience."⁴¹

A Johannine soteriology will necessarily understand the presence of the Word within creation from its beginning (John 1:1-3). From this it follows that the incarnation of the Word is an irruption and manifestation of the divine presence already at work within the whole of creation and human history.⁴² In announcing that the Word became flesh (*sarx*), the divine action is not narrowed to humanity but is extended to include the entire created reality. Here it is important to note that "flesh," in the biblical usage, is not simply what today we name in biological terms as a substance common to animal life and therefore excluding inanimate creation; flesh, as understood within the Old Testament, is that aspect of creation that denotes finitude in contrast to God's eternity. "As creature of God he [the human person] is flesh, always exposed to death. . . . Man is

39. Joseph Fitzmyer identifies ten different Pauline images used to speak about the "effects of the Christ-Event"; see Joseph Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (London: Chapman, 1990), 1397–1402.

40. Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 187.

41. Hoskyns, "Genesis I–III and St John's Gospel," 216, also 218.

42. A recent book by Denis Edwards points out that the link between creation and incarnation was central to the theology of Athanasius. Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption and Special Divine Action* (Hindmarsh, S.A.: Australian Theological Forum, 2010), 109–13. Edwards's work has been particularly helpful in my articulating a small part of the theological ramifications of John's creation/re-creation theme.

understood in terms of his relationship, not his nature. He is what he is in relation. Thus flesh is his situation before God."⁴³ Flesh is that which is bound by time and destined to end, in contrast with the eternal being of God. "All flesh is grass and all the glory of humanity as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of our God abides forever" (Isa 40:7-8). Rudolf Schnackenburg explains the term flesh (*sarx*) thus: "It expresses that which is earth-bound (3:6), transient, and perishable (6:63) . . . in contrast to all that is divine and spiritual."⁴⁴ While it is true that the biblical authors were not thinking in terms of modern cosmology or modern biology, it is not inappropriate to extend the meaning of "flesh" to include all that is perishable, that is, all the cosmos governed by the natural laws of decay, entropy, and death; "flesh," and therefore the consequences of the incarnation of the Logos, needs to include all created reality—*ta panta* (see John 1:3; 3:35; 13:3; 16:15; 17:2; 17:10; 19:28).

A Johannine soteriology will therefore necessarily consider the meaning of the incarnation for all creation and not restrict its meaning to dealing with human life. Here, we could learn much from some of the earliest commentators such as Origen, who, in his commentary on John 1:4, wrote: "'That which has come into being in him,' that is the Logos, 'was life,' in order that just as God brought the universe [*ta panta*] into being, so also what has been created to live might be given life by sharing in him [the Logos]" (*Comm Joh Catena frag 2*).⁴⁵

43. Eduard Schweizer, "Σάρξ," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 7:123.

44. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. K. Smyth, et al., 3 vols., Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (London: Burns & Oates, 1968–82), 1:267. For a brief summary of various aspects of Johannine anthropology, see Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, ed. John R. Donahue (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 170–73.

45. As cited in John N. Suggit, "Jesus the Gardener: The Atonement in the Fourth Gospel as Re-creation," *Neotestamentica* 33 (1999).

Johannine soteriology will also need to describe the effect of the Christ-event on human creation not solely in terms of sin but in terms of "re-creation," as suggested by the garden iconography of Genesis 2, or "re-birth" (John 3:5), as indicated by the transformation of the Beloved Disciple to brother of Jesus and child of God, and signified by the flow of blood and water. The disciple, reborn as a child of God, is now gifted with a new quality of life as lived by God in eternity, what this gospel terms "eternal life." Within Eastern Christianity, humanity's participation in the life of God is spoken of as *theosis*, or deification.⁴⁶ For Athanasius, incarnation was the means of bringing about the transformation of humanity into the divine image, as John Suggit notes, "the essential fact for him was that the Logos 'became a human being in order that we may be made divine'" (*De Incarnation* 54:3).⁴⁷ A return to the Johannine gospel and other ancient writings (*ressourcement*) may provide a new and better language to speak of the Christ-event within an evolutionary and cosmic consciousness. Among Catholic theologians, the work of Denis Edwards draws upon the work of the early patristic writers as well as the more recent work of Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner. While these modern theologians draw upon methodologies proper to their discipline, their conclusions resonate with my biblical exegetical study of the Fourth Gospel. Edwards writes:

46. Irenaeus is thought to be the clearest exponent of this thinking: "The Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself" (*Adversus Haeresis* 5. pref.). Western Theologians are now giving more attention to this ancient Eastern terminology. Denis Edwards writes on redemption as "Deifying Transformation"; see Edwards, *How God Acts*, chapters 7 and 9; also Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); and Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, eds., *Theōsis: Deification in Christian Theology* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co, 2006).

47. Suggit, "Jesus the Gardener," 165. In his controversy with the Arians, Athanasius states, "For he took to himself a created human body, in order that as a craftsman he might renew it and make it divine in himself. . . . In that flesh he has become for us the beginning of a new creation" (*Arian*. 2.70).

Along with this Eastern theology, Rahner sees salvation as ontological rather than juridical, understands salvation as deification that involves human beings and with them the whole creation, and sees the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of this divinizing transformation. He thus locates a basis for something like the Teilhardian vision in the theology of great Eastern thinkers like Irenaeus and Athanasius.⁴⁸

5. Conclusion

The theme of creation and new creation frame the narrative of the Fourth Gospel. Jesus is announced as the *logos*, present with God “in the beginning,” and the “hour” brings God’s first creation to its conclusion and ushers in the birth of a new creation. The appearance narratives witness to the beginning of this new creation when materiality is glorified in the risen body of Jesus, promising that what has begun in Jesus is already in process (1) for disciples who have been divinized in becoming children of God, and (2) for all creation that had its origins in the Word and now, through the eternally embodied Word, looks to its final transformation in God.⁴⁹

48. Denis Edwards, “Teilhard’s Vision as Agenda for Rahner’s Christology,” *Pacifica* 23 (2010): 244.

49. For a recent approach to the meaning of the resurrection for all matter, see Edwards, *How God Acts*, esp. chap. 9.

Chapter 6

*Christ and Creation: Logos and Cosmos*¹

Anthony J. Kelly

This chapter treats of distinctive Christian and theological elements in the experience and understanding of creation. John’s classic statement on the incarnation is central to our exploration: “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). The Word, the *Logos*, is related to the cosmos of our experience as the luminous field in which everything comes into being, so as to participate in the one cosmic order of divine creation.

1. *The Logos and the Cosmos: Theological Basis*

The Christian perspective on creation can be suggested by referring to some key passages from the prologue of John’s gospel:²

1. This chapter is a much revised and expanded form of a section of my book, *An Expanding Theology: Faith in a World of Connections* (Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1993); now out of print.

2. For a fuller theological consideration of the prologue, see John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 105–22. Macquarrie’s own translation of this passage, especially his use of “meaning” for *Logos* is particularly imaginative. For further discussion, see Anthony J. Kelly and Francis J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2003), 29–60.

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