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Water as Blessing: Recovering the Symbolism of the Garden of Eden through Ezekiel for Christian Theology – a Theological Investigation

Being a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Theology

By

Jim Cregan

When my thirst got great enough
to ask, a stream welled up inside;
some jade wave buoyed me forward;
and I found myself upright

In the instant, with a garden
inside my own ribs aflourish. There, the arbor leafs.
The vines push out plump grapes.
You are loved, someone said. Take that

and eat it.

from Mary Karr, "Disgraceland"
Sinners Welcome

Ezekiel 47:1-12

[1] Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was
flowing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the
temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end
of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar.[2] Then he brought me out by
the way of the north gate, and led me round on the outside to the outer gate
that faces towards the east; and the water was coming out on the south side.
[3] Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand
cubits, then led me through the water; and it was ankle deep. [4] Again he
measured one thousand, and then led me through the water; and it was knee
deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it
was up to the waist. [5] Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that
I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a
river that could not be crossed. [6] He said to me, "Mortal, have you seen this?"
Then he led me along the bank of the river. [7] As I came back, I saw on the
bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. [8] He said
to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the
Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will
become fresh. [9] Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms
will live, and there will be many fish, once these waters reach there. It will
become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. [10] People will
stand fishing beside the sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for
the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the
Great Sea. [11] But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be
left for salt. [12] On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all
kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they
will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the
sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."

Revelation 22:1-5

[1] Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal,
flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb [2] through the middle of the
street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve
kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for
healing of the nations. [3] Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. But
the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship
him; [4] they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] And
there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord
God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

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WATER AS BLESSING: RECOVERING THE SYMBOLISM OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN THROUGH EZEKIEL FOR CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY – A THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Abstract

The Garden of Eden is one of the most pervasive and enduring images in the Abrahamic Tradition. Despite being the inspiration of many profound works of art, including painting, music, literature, architecture, and landscape design, theological meaning has tended to be subsidiary to wider anthropological, archaeological or art-historical concerns. Recent interest in nature imagery in the Bible, including the Garden of Eden, suggests this aspect of religious expression is becoming more visible. However, most attention has tended to focus on the socio-political and ecological implications of these images, and is primarily agrarian in focus. Given the canonical location of the Eden myth in Genesis 2:5 and 3, and Revelation 22:1-5, bookending, as it were, the Christian Bible, this emphasis seems misplaced. Indeed, an examination of the use of Edenic imagery, with its roots in the temple cult of pre-exilic Jerusalem, points instead to an alternative interpretation expressive of an eschatology that simultaneously symbolizes, manifests and energises the enduring hope that lies at the root of the Christian experience. The Eden imagery used in Ezekiel 47:1-12, as it is reprised in Revelation 22:1-5, and also in John 4:4-42, is central to this understanding, mediating the Wisdom of God and the Holy Spirit through the notion of water as blessing.

Introduction

The monotheistic religion of the ancient Hebrews is characterized by a God who talks to humans, either by theophany, or through the prophets, or through religious symbols such as the temple and its associated practices.[1] The interlocutory nature of God is critically expressed in the permeable nature of the Garden of Eden. In particular it occurs in the interrelationship of the imagery of Eden with the ancient Temple, and the subsequent use of this combined Temple/Eden imagery throughout the Bible, where the Revelation of God takes the form not just of events but also of dialogue in relation to those events. The nature of this dialogue is itself critical to this process in that it "both maintains distance between the two persons engaged in it, and bridges that distance."[2] More importantly, "It does not abolish the distance … but brings that distance to life."[3]

This dissertation, then, is an investigation of the relationship between God and humans through an examination of specific instances of the use of Edenic imagery in both the Old and New Testaments. As such the dissertation is as much a theological reflection as it is an investigation. Accordingly, the research questions which structure this process seek not just to elicit information, but also to provide a new framework for the understandings derived from that information.

The major focus, an inquiry into how the imagery of the Garden of Eden functions theologically to enable it to serve as a primary metaphor in Christian eschatological writing, explores two specific, related instances of the use of Edenic imagery, namely Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 22:1-5. These passages are interpreted through the lens of four key authors: Guy Stroumsa, Margaret Barker, Gary MacCaskill, and Steven Tuell. By comparing and analyzing their opinions and theories on the use of Edenic imagery in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures a dialogical process is initiated. Whilst only two of these authors address the passages referred to above explicitly, collectively their ideas serve to foreground the conversation as to the exact

[1] Gabriel Josipivici, *The Book of God: A Response to the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 168.
[2] Josipivici, *The Book of God,* 168.
[3] Walter Benjamin, as cited in Josipivici, *The Book of God,* 168.

nature of the relationship of these passages to each other. The intention of the dissertation is to bring these ideas to life in a tentative move towards a theology of Eden. A summary of the key concerns and themes pertaining to each author explored in this dissertation can be found on the next page.

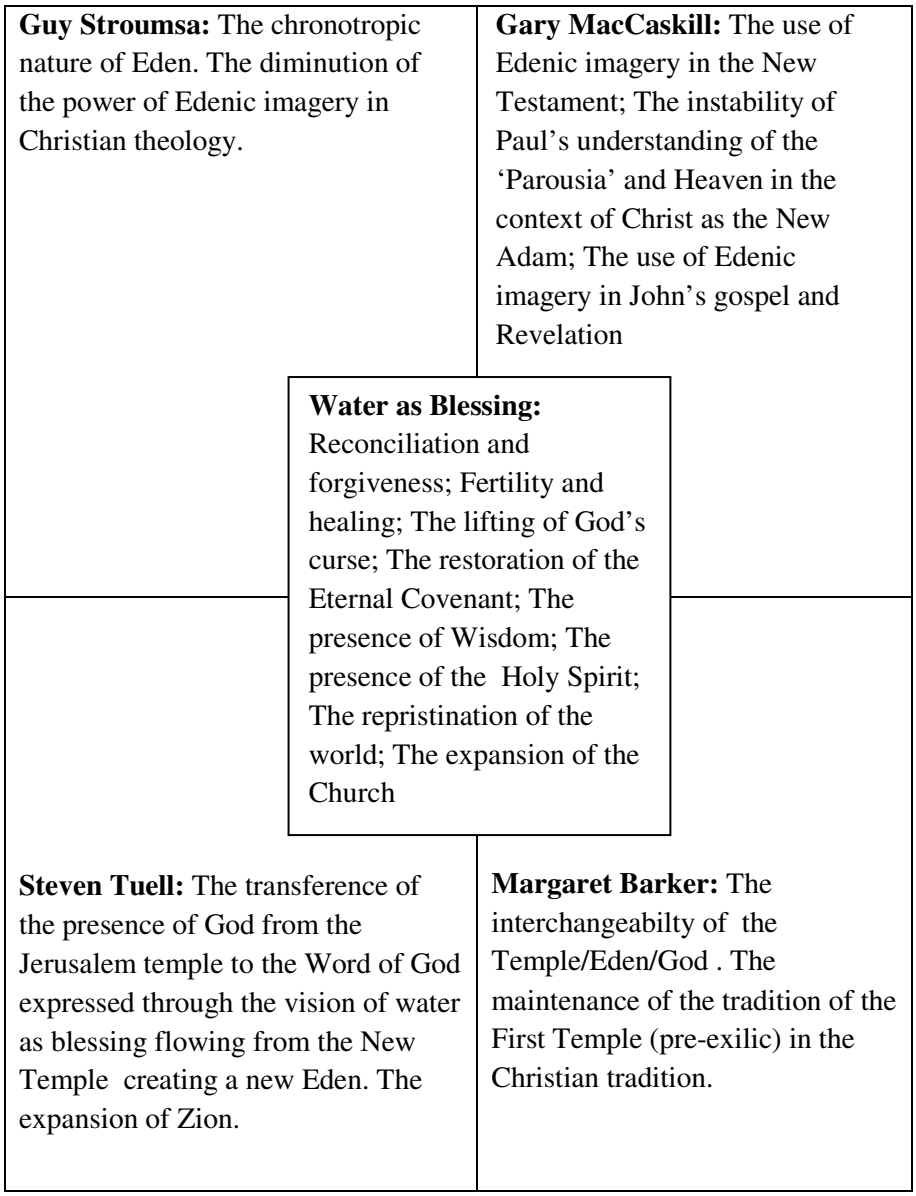
A subsidiary question asks if there is a key moment or event in the Christian narrative through which the imagery of the Garden of Eden finds resolution. That is, is there a narrative locus which explains, justifies and redeems the use of these images? Initially it is the notion of 'water as blessing' which is the main thread for this particular aspect of the investigation. The story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well found in John 4:4-42, which this dissertation will argue is critically related to both Ekekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 22:1-5, is held to be a significant manifestation of this motif. However, on the basis of the research undertaken for this dissertation, and the conclusions derived from it, further exploration of this question is deemed warranted.

It should be noted that whilst there is a belief that 'paradise' is a term used for the heavenly, eschatological Eden, and usage suggests widespread acceptance of this convention, the terms Eden and Paradise are, *prima facie,* interchangeable, *paradise* being the post-Septuagint translation of the ancient Hebrew *Gan Eden,* i.e. the Garden of Eden.[4] Jean Delumeau (1995), for example, reflects this dual identity in his classic cultural anthropological study *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition.* Others, reflecting a shift in usage at end of the Patristic period, take a stricter approach. Marcus Bockmeuhle and Guy Strousma (*Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views,* 2010), for example, appear to have made a deliberate editorial decision to refer to Eden as Paradise and Edenic imagery as 'paradisiacal', notwithstanding that the scope of the essays contained in the collection they edit is essentially that of the multiple dimensions of Edenic imagery, both as reality and soteriological and eschatological vision.[5] Be that as it may, this dissertation is an examination of the use and function of 'Edenic' imagery in aspects of the Old and New Testaments, and as such, tries

[4] Jean Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition,* transl. by Matthew O'Connell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 4.
[5] Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

to be consistent in using these terms, as they refer to the garden of earthly delights provided by God for Adam and Eve described in Genesis 2:5-3. I have used the terms 'paradise' and 'paradisiacal' only when referring to texts where these alternative post-Septuagint terms are used, or when quoting directly.

Diagram 1. Overview of key themes explored in the dissertation with links to significant authors.



Chapter 1: Guy Stroumsa and the Problem of Eden

In his initial comments to the collection of essays, *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views,* Guy Stroumsa observes that it was the capacity of Judaism and Christianity to enunciate, through the eschatological themes prevalent in paradisiacal imagery, "a viably transcendent hope for the human condition, the redemptive expectation of a world at once restored and new", which gave both "social and intellectual vitality" to each of these religions.[6]

The notion of a religious symbol that contained within itself both a profound sense of origin as well as an eschatological horizon of unequalled beauty and promise potentialised both Judaism and Christianity in a manner that few other religious images could. *Paradise,* the post-Septuagint Greek term for the Hebrew understanding of the mythical garden of Eden,[7] contained within itself not only the concept of an idealised past but a "narrative of hope"[8] in a manner that was at once concrete, and equally malleable to the specific historical circumstances and exigencies of each faith.

It comes as a surprise then to read elsewhere in *Paradise in Antiquity* that, despite the power of the image of Paradise to concretise both the identity and aspirations of each of the Abrahamic faiths, both individually and collectively, "it is conspicuous that gardens should receive so little attention among biblical scholars".[9] Moreover, that " the main part of modern critical scholarship on Genesis 2-3 does not comment upon the term *Gan* (i.e. garden) or the presumed biblical Hebrew concept 'garden/park.'"[10]

There are many reasons offered both by the various essayists in the collection cited above, as well as by other authors and theologians, as to why this might be the case - this in itself would be a worthwhile topic for further research.

---

[6] Guy G. Stroumsa, "Introduction: the paradise chronotrope", in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.
[7] See Jean Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition,* transl by Matthew O'Connell (New York: Continuum, 1995), 3.
[8] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 2.
[9] Joachim Schaper, citing Stordalen, "The messiah in the garden: John 19:38-41, (royal) gardens, and messianic concepts", in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17.
[10] Schaper, "The messiah in the garden", 17.

These reasons include philological, philosophical, historical, sociological, theological and anthropological perspectives. Certainly, a limited survey using a range of electronic databases for history, theology, religion, and psychology consolidates the view of a scarcity of serious theological consideration of the Garden of Eden. Entries for several relevant terms such as "theology of gardens", "theology of nature", "natural theology", and "theology of the garden of Eden" produce referrals that are typically incidental or non-specific to these terms, or are reflective, personal, or insubstantial in scope.[11] Alternatively, the imagery of Eden, as an ideal of communitarian care and restraint, is contrasted with capitalistic profligacy and waste in an ecological argument that has varying degrees of genuine theological content.[12]

Whilst, broadly speaking, this is not the focus of this dissertation, one of the reasons given for the diminution of academic commentary on Paradise, the *polyvalent* nature of Edenic imagery, warrants closer scrutiny. For it appears ironic that the strength and richness of Edenic imagery, its capacity to hold multiple meanings, often simultaneously, might also be considered its weakness.

As Stroumsa suggests, the imagery of the Garden of Eden and its derivatives are some of the most comprehensive, pervasive, and enduring to be found in both Jewish and Christian Scripture, as well as in the Islamic spiritual aesthetic inspired and informed by these earlier traditions. The reader is told, for example, in the opening pages of the Book of Genesis that the Garden of Eden, created "in the East" (*Gen 2:*8) after the formation of the first human, is the locale of God on earth.[13] Already there is the suggestion that, whilst mythic, Eden exists in a specific earthly place. God can be encountered not only in the source of the "double deep", that is, the originating well-spring of

[11] Vigen Guroian, a Greek Orthodox priest, provides a noteworthy exception here although his writing tends to be meditative and oriented towards liturgical use rather than 'theological' as the term would be understood in what could generally be referred to as the 'Catholic' or 'Western' tradition. See Vigen Guroian, *Inheriting Paradise: Meditations on Gardening* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 1999).

[12] For the best of these see, for example, Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture & Agriculture: an Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); *Denis* Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Homebush: St. Pauls, 1995); and Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing God in an Ecological Age* (New York: O.U.P., 2003).

[13] See Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 12.

the four rivers of creation which flow from Eden[14], but also languidly walking in the garden that God created, enjoying the cool of the afternoon, sharing its pleasures with God's own creatures (Gen 3:8). According to Enoch, it is under the Tree of Life, at the centre of Eden, where God rests (2 Enoch 8:4).[15]

But its manifestation and articulation goes far beyond the imagery of time and place that is the focus of Stroumsa's introductory remarks. Eden comes to express a range of powerful values including the representation of order over chaos, of culture over wilderness (with all of its potential threats, both material and supernatural), of predictability over contingency, of the known over the unknown, and of good over evil.[16] As suggested earlier, Eden also inspires the great eschatological visions of both Judaism and Christianity. With the Tree of Life at its centre, Eden also becomes emblematic of the perfection of Creation before the Fall and in the ancient Hebrew tradition, by implication, of the world-to-come, *Olam Ha-Ba*. We also see this underlying theme reprised in what Simon Schama has referred to as "the timber history of Christ", where he describes a "vegetative theology" that has Eden at its centre, and where the Cross and the Tree of Life become synonymous. [17]

For the prophet Ezekiel, the reconstruction of the Temple as the centre of the New Jerusalem, with the River of Life at its heart, is not simply the reconstruction of the "old order", but its fulfilment (Ezek. 47: 8-9, 12).[18] For the writers of the New Testament, also, it is in the imagery of the Garden of Eden where Jesus finds correspondence for his great prophetic vision of the Kingdom of God. Building on Ezekiel, while at the same time justifying him, John, for example, writes that it is the "water of life, bright as crystal, issuing

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[14] James Dickie, "The Hispano-Arab Garden: Its Philosophy and Function" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London,* Vol.31, No. 2 (1968), 238. This is a story which has its equivalents in various ancient cultures across the Middle East and which is the foundation of the 'quatrapartite' style of Islamic gardens. For a fuller description of the integration of Persian garden design into Christian sensibilities see Penelope Hobhouse, *Plants in Garden History* (London: Pavilion, 1994), 8-15. A thorough explication can also be found in Emma Clark, *The Art of the Islamic Garden* (Ramsbury: Crowood Press, 2004).

[15] As related in Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004), 89.

[16] For a comprehensive discussion on this theme see Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[17] See the chapter entitled "The Verdant Cross" in Simon Schama, *Landscape & Memory* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), 185-242.

[18] See Eric W. Heaton, *The Old Testament Prophets (Revised)*(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 151. See also Bill T. Arnold, "Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology,* ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: O.U.P., 2008), 28.

from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1) that flows through the heavenly Jerusalem.

1.1 Edenic Imagery in Space and Time

It is implicit in the variety of values attributable to Eden described above that Eden's qualities are not just material, a succession of contrasting images juxtaposed to give rhetorical force to a particular 'this, not this' world view. Guy Stroumsa borrows the term '*chronotrope'* from Bakhtinian poetics[19] to describe this polyvalent quality of Edenic imagery that exists not just in the present but which also:

> moves back and forth along the axis of time: it can be conceived not only as belonging to the *Urzeit*, but also to the *Endzeit,* when it is reclaimed... Moreover, paradise is mobile in space: it is not only located in different places upon the earth... but also to circulate freely between earth and heaven. Paradise, then, can be nowhere and everywhere, and can be reached either never – the asymptotic Messianic times, or at any time – the "paradise now!" of the Gnostics.[20]

Stroumsa argues that such fluid notions of time and space were essentially *ad hoc* post-Genesis developments in early Judaism, the result of Paradise imagery "blowing up", that is, generating meanings beyond the initial time-and-space constrained understandings,[21] which were, in turn, appropriated by a variety of groups. Others, most notably Margaret Barker, whilst similarly recognising the chronotropic quality of Eden, argue instead that rather than being *ad hoc* arbitrary developments such understandings were deliberate, understood, and inherent in the earliest manifestations of the Jewish faith as expressed through the Temple.[22] A broader discussion of this topic will be taken up shortly.

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[19] Possibly confusing the term with the original 'chronotope' – literally time/space. After the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) who emphasised the essential interconnected between time and space, and the 'dialogic' aspect of the generation of meaning in specific literary contexts. See, for example, Nehama Aschkenasy, "Reading Ruth Through a Bakhtinian Lens: The Carnivalesque in a Biblical Tale", in *Journal of Biblical Literature,* Vol. 126, No. 3 (Fall,2007), 437-453.

[20] Guy G. Stroumsa, "Introduction", 2.

[21] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 1. In this he is at odds with English Old Testament scholar Margaret Barker, who argues that such polyvalent qualities were inherent in the understanding of Eden in the pre-exilic temple cult of ancient Israel. See Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History & Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 58-65, 105-111.

[22] Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jersualem* (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2008), 58-65.

It was this multiplicity of available meanings generated within, and by, Edenic imagery that, according to Stroumsa, troubled first century Jewish and Christian theologians who were "struggling to develop some kind of orthodoxy which would underline and reinforce the ecclesial structures they were building."[23] Conflicting with this attempt to impose, through both censorship and intellectual control, a unified vision of the Eden myth were a variety of religious groups who, Stroumsa argues, "offered competing versions of the same themes." [24] Stroumsa identifies a range of these groups who appropriated the Eden story and the imagery therein for their own purposes and who were competing to assert a dominant re-mythologization of the Eden story.[25] By way of summary he offers a dichotomy where understandings of Eden divide between the Platonist hermeneutics of Philo of Alexandria and Gnostic and Manichean beliefs derived from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament.[26] For Stroumsa the result of this 'hi-jacking' of the Edenic imagery by alternative groups was the engendering of a suspicious attitude towards the paradise story by orthodox religious authorities wherein "both Rabbis and Fathers sought to play down the mythological elements …and neutralize them, preferring to put the major emphasis on other figures and events of the early history of humankind."[27]

1.2 Christian Theology and the Diminution of the Power of Edenic Imagery

Stroumsa subsequently elaborates and refines his argument for the diminution of the power and place of the Eden story in the historical consciousness of Christian theology by referring to, quite correctly, "the dual structure of the Christian Scriptures, and in the very specific intertextuality they demand."[28] That is to say, for Christian theology the old Hebrew texts are not to be understood by themselves, but rather find their meaning in the context of the Christian story, most significantly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Insofar as Jesus is considered the 'new Adam', presiding over the 'new

[23] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 3.
[24] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 4.
[25] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 4.
[26] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 4.
[27] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 3.
[28] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 8. See also Hans Walter Wolf, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist" in Walter Brueggmann & Hans Walter Wolff, *The Vitality of the Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 42, 43.

Temple', one result of this reading back into the Hebrew Scriptures of the Christ narrative is a significant contraction of the power of the original Eden story. However, given that, from the above, for a Christian or average Western reader the original Eden story can *only* be interpreted from a Christological perspective, this notion by itself seems problematic. That, is, whilst this explanation offers a reason for the contraction in the *theological* interest in Eden it does not explain the continuing *non-academic* interest in the Eden myth, with all the subsequent creative works this interest has generated, across so many areas of Western culture including art, music, dance, drama, literature, politics, as well as the prolific use of Edenic and paradisiacal references in everyday language.

On the one hand Stroumsa argues that, within the overarching Christian metaphor of the Kingdom of God, the emphasis on the power and beauty of God, most forcefully represented through *creation ex nihilo* at the heart of the Eden story, is displaced by an emphasis on a new eschatological horizon That is, Eden becomes "the place of the Just at the *Endzeit"*.[29] Under this new paradigm *the Just*, in death, can look forward not to the restoration of an idealised past, that is Eden, but to an idealised future, the Kingdom of God in the millennium, where they will be (re)united with Christ. To this extent the parousia, in and of itself, may point to the lack of focus on Eden in Christian thought insofar as Christianity, expressed through the notion of the Kingdom of God, becomes the New Eden. Conversely, "The centrality of Jesus Christ for the new religion weakened the weight of eschatology, since the central messianic expectation had already been fulfilled."[30] That is to say the chronotropic energy of the Eden story is dissipated in the Christian belief of the eternal presence of Christ amongst them. Stroumsa describes this process in the following manner:

> The Christian demythologization of paradise grew from a complex background. Its most obvious origin is probably directly related to the transformation, or rather the realization, of the Jewish concept of Messiah. Christ had offered salvation, and yet history was far from having ended. Hence, the Jewish

[29] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 9.
[30] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 9.

> linear view of history was profoundly modified. If there was no clear end to the *Heilsgeschichte*, its beginning in time, too would be blurred. The one real focal point of world history was neither its beginning nor its end, but rather its middle, the coming of Jesus Christ upon the earth. His life, death and resurrection, which must be perceived by the Christian believer as constantly occurring in the present.[31]

In summary: i) Stroumsa identifies the polyvalent nature of Edenic imagery; ii) focussing on what he refers to as the *chronotropic* characteristic of this imagery, Stroumsa recognises the eschatological and mythological potential of the Eden story to energise early Jewish and Christian faith; iii) Stroumsa argues that the instability of the imagery, due to its polyvalent character, supported a variety of interpretations of the Eden myth that were viewed suspiciously by orthodox Church leaders who, in response, deliberately redirected early Christian theological focus away from the Eden story and the imagery therein; and iv) Stroumsa concludes that this deliberate intervention, coupled with of the inherent neutralisation of the power of the Eden story due to the 'realised' eschatology' of Christian faith, led to a diminution of the influence of Eden as both a source of religious inspiration and an object of study.

Indeed, the results of this combination of influences are so strong, Stroumsa asserts, "One should insist upon the fact that for Jesus and his disciples, the story of the Garden of Eden is not very significant." [32] It is a perspective that this dissertation disputes, arguing instead that the Eden myth is central to both the teachings of Christ, as related in the Gospels, and was understood as such by the readers for whom the Gospels were intended. It is also central to the representations of Christ by the Gospel writers. In particular, the notion of water as blessing, derived from the Eden myth and expressed in John 4:4-42 and Revelation 22:1-5, will be examined in the context of Ezekiel 47:1-12.

[31] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 9.
[32] Stroumsa, "Introduction", 8.

Chapter 2: The Garden of Eden and the Temple - Alternative Perspectives

Another Old Testament scholar, Margaret Barker, comments on many of the features of Edenic imagery in the early Jewish and Christian faiths that are the focus of Stroumsa's analysis. However, her conclusions as to the significance of these features, and the possible inferences that can be made from Barker's presentation of this material, differ significantly from Stroumsa's findings.

In contrast with Stroumsa's perspective Barker's research supports a view that, rather than there being a lessening in the influence and significance of the Eden story in the Christian faith, as expressed through the Christian Scriptures, the imagery itself, with its roots in the pre-exilic temple faith of ancient Judaism, is central to the Christian narrative. That is to say, whilst the decline in interest in Eden as the focus of theological study from the First Century CE is evident in a broader context, the reasons for this decline do not lie in the Christian narrative itself. Rather, as this dissertation will show, Edenic imagery, notably the image of water as blessing as an expression of Jesus' presence in the world, mediated by the Holy Spirit, lies at the heart of the Christian story.

Barker's analysis also shows that, rather than being problematic, the polyvalent nature of Edenic imagery, *particularly* its chronotropic quality, allows fullest expression and understanding of the metaphor of the Kingdom of God as it supports an expanded eschatological horizon, even allowing for the presence of Christ on earth. That is, instead of the Christ event 'fixing' the eschatological time frame into an eternal present, the capacity of Edenic imagery to move not only in and out of time, but also in and out of space, effectively neutralises the inherent tension of the notion of the Kingdom of God as both "now, and not yet". As a consequence the use of Edenic imagery provides the existential scaffolding for the Divine to permeate every dimension of human experience, both in the present and in the future.

From this perspective Stroumsa can be seen to provide a 'neat' solution to a problem unnecessarily posed. It is probably too strong to say that 'he can't see the forest for the trees'. However, Stroumsa's conclusion, that it was through the realised eschatology that developed in response to the Christ story, that the faithful, through Christ, are justified in an 'eternal present', appears to deliberately, unnecessarily, and wrongly downplay a pre-existing orthodox eschatology which had historically already integrated this notion. The exact nature of what constitutes 'orthodox' eschatology, from a contemporary perspective, will be discussed later in this dissertation. However, the point of the *chronotropic* nature of Eden imagery is *not* that it is a problem for which a solution needs to be found, but that it precisely articulates an ancient view, embodied in the mythical nature of Eden, which is expressive of the interpenetration of the Divine and the material world, of the historical and the eternal. That is, rather than being a problem, the *chronotropic* characteristic of Edenic imagery is, in itself, a 'solution' to the perceived tension between the 'now/not now' dichotomy of expectations inherent in the metaphor of the Kingdom of God.

2.1 Eden and the Temple - Interchangeable Relations

Foundational to Barker's thesis is a view that Eden and the pre-exilic Temple of ancient Israel, built by Solomon in the middle of the tenth century BCE (2 Kings 25:8-17), were metaphorically interchangeable.[33] One could argue that this is self-evident, as both Eden and the Holy of Holies, within the *debir* or Sanctuary of the temple, were both recognised within ancient Judaism as the home of God. But such a notion is more comprehensive and more complex than this simplistic observation allows. In her own introduction Barker makes claims for the ancient temple as "a place of creation and renewal". As such, "these themes centre upon the garden of

[33] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 68-70. This is a notion supported by Torje Stordalen in his comprehensive analysis of Genesis 2-3. Stordalen himself cites earlier work by Walther Eichrodt, and more a recent study by Leveson who concludes that "the combination of Eden, cosmic mountain and Temple, is found in several passages reflecting traditional sanctuary ideology." See Torje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Garden of Eden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leeven: Peeters, 2009), 308. See also pp 366-367, 377. See also, Gary Anderson, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden: Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden" in *The Harvard Theological Review* 82:2 (Apr. 1989), 129.

Eden, which the temple was built to represent."[34] Her research, in support of this claim, describes the imagery of Eden penetrating every aspect of Temple architecture and experience. At the same time, "Everything written about the *meaning* of the temple has to be derived from second and third hand and we have to sift the surviving literature, both biblical and non-biblical for anything which might be an allusion or a memory...there are few certainties and many possibilities."[35] Her conclusions, then, are the result based on meanings generated from the intersection of the material she does have available, some of which are original, and some of which are supported by the work of other scholars.

2.2 'Communicative competence' and the Apprehension of Meaning

Torje Stordalen augments the evidence provided by the textual material available on which Barker bases her conclusions through reference to ancient literacy practices. That is, rather than being obtuse or arcane, the imagery of the Temple would have been understood, and responded to accordingly, by those for whom Temple worship and associated activities were integral. Even minimal participation in the life of the Temple demanded from its participants a basic level of "communicative competence"[36] in the symbolic dimensions of the temple, ritually, narratively, and aesthetically. Various Eden narratives throughout the Old Testament suggest that, whilst sometimes difficult for modern readers to apprehend, for the intended audience the significance of such references would have been articulated to various religious and cultural commonplaces.

Stordalen, after an exhaustive examination of both exegetical and hermeneutical material that focusses on Genesis 2-3, is quite specific on this aspect of ancient Judaic religious practice. This conclusion is also implicit in Barker's research. For example, in response to the sometimes limited acceptance by theologians of the notion of a definite relationship between the water that issues forth from the reconstituted temple in Ezekiel 47:1 and the rivers of Eden, Stordalen argues Ezekiel's use of this imagery:

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[34] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 2.
[35] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 1.
[36] A term used by Stordalen to argue for an implicit awareness of the Eden story and the metaphor "Zion-is–Eden" in Ezekiel 47:1-12, to the degree that such topics (including the notion of "Wisdom-is-the-Tree of Life") were traditional. See Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 377, 390.

> implies common knowledge of Eden and its symbolic application. This would have been a conventional literary topic during the Early Persian Age, and later. It would have interacted with other topics (as implied in Ezekiel 31) and with architectural and pictorial symbolism…To us this interaction is silent. *We* only know conventional Eden symbolism from reflection on Isa 51:3; Ezekiel 31; 28:11-19; 47:1-12; Quo 2:1-11; Proverbs 3:13-18; Sir 40:27 etc. However, from the point of view of a comprehensive perspective such interaction would have been extensive.[37]

That is, some commentators may be cautious, where the *alterity,* or otherness, of ancient Jewish texts is so formidable,[38] where the religious and cultural milieu they describe are so distant from contemporary experience , and where the relationships between the various referents are not explicit in the original texts. However, the weight of evidence, most notably exhibited through the wide-spread usage of these texts, both canonical and apocryphal, supports the assumption of the general understanding of the symbolic referents, even when their presence in these texts is brief or implicit.[39] Stordalen's logic is quite concrete and is reflected in Barker's assumptions – since the Temple supported a religious philosophy that saw a creative and regenerative God present in the history of Israel so, too, the Temple reflected this philosophy and was understood to do so.

[37] Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden,* 480.

[38] A point expressed poetically by R. Yehuda – "The tree of life is five hundred years distance" – in relation to an ancient commentary. As cited by Menahem Kister, "The tree of life and the turning sword: Jewish biblical interpretation, symbols, and theological patterns and their Christian counterparts", in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140.

[39] A point Stordalen also makes elsewhere. See Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden,* 377.

Chapter 3: Edenic Imagery and its Association with the Temple

3.1 The Rock and the Altar

An underpinning theme in the inter-relationship between Eden and the Temple is the rock upon which the first temple was built. According to various Old Testament sources (1 Chronicles 21:15; 2 Samuel 24:16) it was on the great rock of the threshing floor of Ornan (called Araunah in 2 Samuel 24:16) on which this took place, where the Lord appeared to David threatening the destruction of Jerusalem for the transgressions of the people of Israel. David's repentance, with that of the elders, averted the plague and the site was subsequently chosen on that basis. Today it is still manifest in Jewish history by the Dome of the Rock. According to Barker, it is unclear whether the stone was the site of the great altar in the open space of the temple courtyard or was incorporated in the Holy of Holies, although, she argues, this second option sits more comfortably with researchers since the floor of this part of the building was higher there, and accordingly more sacred.[40]

Nevertheless, as Barker writes, whilst the facts pertaining to the foundation of the Temple might be unclear, the significance of the rock is not. As the place from which the heavenly waters flow, in the revivified temple of *Ezekiel,* and subsequently of *Revelation,* the Great Rock is a source of blessing that harks back to the oldest memories of Israel. As the foundation stone of the Israeli faith, it is:

> Remembered as the foundation of the sanctuary, it was the rock on which the high priest sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement in the time of the second temple, when the ark and the cherub throne were no longer in the temple. Remembered as the rock on which the altar stood, it was the place from which all the waters of the earth had to be controlled. The waters under the earth were all gathered beneath the temple, they believed, and it was necessary to ensure that sufficient

[40] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 18. Holiness, in ancient Israel, was represented systematically through hierarchical arrangements such as height i.e. the higher the more divine, and distance from the Temple i.e. in terms of holiness emanating from the temple from most holy to least holy within the Land of Israel, which itself was considered "holier than any other land." Thus, the order of holiness is as follows:- i) The Holy of Holies, ii) The sanctuary, iii) Between the porch and the alter iv) The Court of the Priests, v) The Court of the Israelites, vi) The court of women, vii) The Rampart, viii) The Temple Mount, ix) Within the walls of Jerusalem, and x) The walled cities (of the Land of Israel). Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 25. Citing Mishnah, *Kelim* 1.6-9.

> was released to ensure fertility, but not so much as to overwhelm the world with flood.[41]

Clearly then, both the physical and religious integrity of the temple, evolving as it did from the sacred rock, is paramount to the well-being of Israel. The manifest detail of Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple, with water flowing from it to fertilize and revivify a parched land (Ezekiel 47:1-12), achieves greater definition in the context of this crucial perspective. Such is the degree of God's forgiveness towards Israel that the waters flow in abundance, almost to the point of surfeit, but not destructively so, and not beyond providing benefit. According to legend, King David himself played a prominent role in controlling these underground waters,[42] a story reprised through Jesus' calming the seas (e.g. Matt. 23-33; Mark 4:35-41). However, it is not the stories themselves that is of relevance to this dissertation, but the detail of the relationship between the Temple and Eden that they reveal. On this, Barker is once again worth quoting:

> Stories such as these are recorded in the Talmud and attributed to rabbis of the third century (CE), but they are much older than that. This association of the temple with the control of water and the forces of chaos goes back to earliest times. The psalmist could write: 'the Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever' (Ps. 29.10) Thus it came about that the rock was the beginning of the creation, the fixed point from which the land was formed (several of these stories are told in b. *Yoma 54a)*. The waters of Noah's flood welled up from this point. It became the site of many great events in Israel's history: dust was scraped from its stone to create Adam; Adam, Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices there; Abraham and Melchizidek met there; Abraham came there to offer Isaac as a sacrifice; and Jacob slept there when he saw the ladder which reached to heaven. The temple was built on a crucial spot; it was the bastion against ever threatening chaos. Evil and disorder, as we shall see, were represented by the subterranean waters of the great deep, waters which had to be driven back before creation could be established and God's

[41] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 18. The creational and Edenic associations of the temple are, according to Macaskill, "well established". See Macaskill, citing both Brown 1999, 73-89 and van Ruiten, 1999, who draws on the *Book of Jubilees* for his analysis. Grant Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament" in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 77, n. 67.

[42] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 19.

> people live in safety. The temple blocked these forces of evil and prevented their eruption.[43]

The rock, at the heart of Eden, is the source of the well-spring from which God's blessing flows. The Temple and Eden, then, from the time of earth's creation were inextricably linked. Jerusalem, with the Temple at its centre, was to the Jews what Delphi was to the ancient Greeks, the navel of the world.[44] But it is also more than just the place from where God created the world - from a Jewish perspective it is the world's harmonic crux. A world out of order could find no place for the Temple, but just as significantly, a Temple out of order reflected a world in chaos, and invited destruction. Both Ezekiel's and John's vision of the restored temple then, from which water issues, is not simply incidental to the story of loss and redemption they portray, but climactic.

3.2 The Sea, the Firmament, and the Bronze Basin

The central place of water as both blessing and curse was made abundantly clear by the ancient Jews in a number of critical architectural features within the ancient Temple. These features further built on Edenic symbolism, specifically of water and its control as representative of God's control over the chaotic forces of nature, as well as Israel's dependence on the contingency, and blessing, of God.

The most compelling of these architectural features, according to Barker, was a huge bronze basin, half the width of the temple itself, which, she reasonably claims, must have dominated the discursive space of the temple forecourt. Within this space the temple was held to represent the firmament, set in the seas out of which creation arose. The basin, or *Great Sea,* "probably represented the primeval waters in ritual... there was an established belief that the courtyard was the sea surrounding the stable earth." [45] Barker points to a

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[43] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 19.

[44] A theme touched on in Yarden, citing *Ezek 5:5,* and *38:12.* L. Yarden, *The Tree of Light: A Study of the Menorah* (London: Horowitz Publishing, 1971), 36. A point also made by Heaton who draws the reader's attention to Isa 2:2-4; 60:10-11, Micah 4:1-4 to declare that the Temple is the site from where God emphatically rules. Eric W. Heaton, *The Old Testament Prophets (Revised)* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 151.

[45] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 65.

number of commentaries which suggest that this was the case, including those of Rabbi Pinhas ben Ya'ir (second century CE), the interpreters of the Pentateuch (*Numbers Rabbah* XIII.19), and the Babylonian Talmud (b. *Sukkah* 51b) which remembered "that the white and blue marble of the temple walls looked like the waves of the sea".[46] Barker concedes that these commentaries were all written *after* the final destruction of the second Temple in 66CE. However, she also refers to Josephus, who was familiar with the Temple, as saying that the outer courtyard represented the sea.[47]

More convincing are texts "which undoubtedly refer to Solomon's temple", that is, the first temple, and which "associate the temple with the seas subdued before the creation... thus it is very possible that the complex symbolism found in first-century writers such as Philo and Josephus were not a later interpretation but a memory of the original."[48] Of these texts passages from the Psalms, in particular, are instructive. Psalm 93, for example, is noted, wherein the Lord, enthroned and "robed in majesty…and power" is proclaimed as mightier than the clamorous floods, or the tumultuous waves of the ocean (Ps 93:1-4). Similarly, Psalm 29 praises God, whose voice rings out "over the waters…the multitudinous waters" (Ps 29:3a-3c), and who "sits enthroned over the flood as a king…for ever." (Ps 29:10). Psalm 89 similarly praises a God who controls "the pride of the ocean," and who stills the waves when they "ride high" (Ps 89:9-11).

Earlier, Barker had provided a description of the temple where, within the *debir,* the chariot throne of God, in some accounts the centre of the heavenly world, was placed.[49] The implications of the image are clear: "this is a picture of the creator who has triumphed and is literally enthroned in his sanctuary over the floods he has subdued."[50] There are many other examples from other biblical texts provided by Barker (e.g. Pss. 33:7; 74:13; Jer. 5:22; Dan.7; Exod. 15) that further elucidate and reinforce this ancient understanding of God enthroned in the temple, metaphorically expressed as Eden, who asserts

[46] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 65.
[47] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 65.
[48] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 65.
[49] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 27.
[50] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 66.

authority over the chaotic seas. The stories of King David subduing the subterranean waters before building the Temple, found elsewhere (b. *Sukkah* 53b)[51], and referred to above, are for Barker, "variations of the same theme."[52]

Further consolidating the inter-relationship between Eden and the Temple is the belief that Paradise, or Eden, "whether described as the garden or as the palace of the heavenly throne",[53] was itself also surrounded by the sea. Barker cites a first century CE text, *The Life of Adam and Eve* (28.4) which describes Adam being led back to Paradise by the archangel Michael. The archangel, we are told, "froze the waters around Paradise, so that they could cross".[54] More familiar, argues Barker, is the image of the sea surrounding the heavenly throne in Revelation: "and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal" (Rev 4.6). It can also appear in front of the heavenly temple: "And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands" (Rev 15.2). The temple, then, the home of God's on earth, stood in the midst of the chaotic seas, and both *represented* and *was* "the firmament which the creator had established and continued to maintain for his people."[55]

The Edenic image of water issuing from the temple to provide blessing is a clear juxtaposition with the destructive potential of water, metaphorically represented as the sea as the manifestation of the chaotic forces of the cosmos, and would have been understood as such. The benefits and blessings that flow from the temple, as related in Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 22:1-5, derived from God's taming of these forces, must be seen in this context.

3.3 The Tree of Life and Tree of Light

Another significant feature linking the temple to the garden of Eden was the presence of the *menorah,* or Tree of Light, the great lamp-stand which stood beside the altar,

[51] As related in Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 19.
[52] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 66.
[53] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 67.
[54] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 67.
[55] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 67.

and which was recognised as a symbol of the Tree of Life. In one sense it follows that if, as tradition has it, the Lord rested in Eden under the Tree of Life (2 *Enoch 8.4*), and the Lord dwelt in the Temple, then the Tree of Life would also be present in temple symbology. Such a connection is not directly present in material related to the pre-exilic or first Temple of Solomon, except by implication.[56] Nevertheless, the reader's attention is directed to the importance of the *menorah,* in the First Temple, through a number of Biblical and non-Biblical references. Barker, for example, quotes from the Exodus Rabbah, in which are quoted "some who remembered that the lamp was 'God who gives light and the Torah'" (*Exodus Rabbah XXXVI.16*) and who said that, in Messianic times, the lamp was to be one of five things restored to the temple, along with the fire, the ark, the Spirit, and the cherubim. She makes the point that "since there *was* a seven-branched lamp in the second temple" not only was the lamp present in the First Temple, there was also something uniquely special about it in the first place.[57] Barker, in conjunction other modern scholars, suggests that this unique quality might be in relation to 'mystical speculation' which was not encouraged in the Second Temple.[58] This does not concern us here. The point is that the *menorah,* as a symbol of the Tree of Life, *was* present from the First Temple.

This presumption is strengthened by considering a number of additional texts. Enoch writes how, "On his visionary journey in heaven, he saw a great tree by the throne, "whose fragrance was beyond all fragrance, and whose leaves and blossom and wood never wither or rot" (1 Enoch 24.4). No mortal could touch the tree until after the great judgement, when its fruits would be given to the chosen ones, and the tree itself transplanted *again* into the temple."[59] Elsewhere, in Enoch's account of God resting in the centre of Eden under the Tree of Life, the appearance of the Tree of Life is described as 'gold and crimson and with the form of fire', that is, of light (2 Enoch 8.4).[60] Barker also describes an alternative account of the life of Adam and Eve

[56] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 90. Yardin is more forthright, drawing on both archaeological and anthropological texts to reach the conclusion that "the menorah originated from a sacred tree, more specifically the Tree of Life of mythology – a primal image of which can be glimpsed in the third millennium B.C. epic tale 'Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living', and which played a decisive role in the tree cult of the ancient world." Yardin, *The Tree of Light,* 35.
[57] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 91.
[58] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 91. A theme developed more fully in Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology* (London: SPCK, 2004), 90
[59] Barker, *Temple Theology,* 88.
[60] As cited in Barker, *Temple Theology,* 89.

(*Apocalypse of Moses 22*) written at the end of the Second Temple period, when God *returns* to Paradise and "the chariot throne rests at the tree of life and all the flowers come into bloom".

Certainly Moses, in building the tabernacle, was instructed to make the *menorah* according to "the pattern shown … on the mountain" (Exod. 25:31-40). Insofar as the Temple itself was meant to emulate "the pattern of heaven", and the "mountain of God" was also synonymous with Eden, it follows that the *menorah* itself, with its almond blossom motifs, was symbolic of the Tree of Life. The fundamental design motif of the *menorah*, described in great detail in Exodus, is revealed as the almond blossom, both calyxes and petals, which serve both as the cups which hold the lamps, and as the capitals from which the branches extend (Exod. 25:31-41, 37:17-24). The relationship between the almond blossom and the temple is also manifest in the appointment of the Levites as the priestly tribe, as revealed in the story of Aaron's branch (Num 17:8), wherein the flowering almond is once again associated with the presence of God. Similar representations can also be found, for example, in Jeremiah who, Barker notes, "saw a blossoming almond tree which he recognised as a sign that the Lord was watching his people" (Jer 1:11-12). In the context of the regenerative and creative aspects of the temple the almond then is significant – first to flower, it was known as the 'Watchful Tree', a sign of God providing sustenance, light, and beauty, present in a landscape and among a people emerging from the deprivations of bitter winter.

Attention must also be drawn to the presence of the symbology of the Tree of Light in New Testament writings and subsequent Christian understandings. Barker's claim, referred to earlier, that Philo assumed the direct symbolic relationship between the *menorah* and the Tree of Life, is elaborated on in her discussion of Philo's understanding of the central shaft of the *menorah* representing the Word whom he also called, in various texts, 'the archangel', 'the mediator and judge before the face of God', 'the viceroy of God', and

'the high priest and the king'.[61] Barker notes that these titles are, in the main, immediately recognizable as pertaining to ancient kings; that this is not surprising since Philo, "knew a good deal more about temple imagery than we do, and he used this for all his expositions." [62] More importantly, however, is the observation that:

> The information he gives, which is not explicit in the Old Testament, though implied there, is that the king was believed to be an angelic being, the high priest and the central shaft of the *menorah*, which symbolized the presence of God. When John describes the glorified Jesus, he uses exactly the same imagery: 'I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man' (Rev 1:12-13).[63]

Critically, "Here we see the seven lamps with the angelic King figure in the midst of them, in other words the ancient Eden/temple symbolism right at the heart of the early Christian vision of heaven."[64] From what has been outlined above concerning the relationship between the *menorah,* the Tree of Life, and the Temple, a similar theme can be seen to be expressed elsewhere in the Book of Revelation, where faithful Christians, those who "prove victorious" , are told they will be fed from the Tree of Life "set in God's Paradise" (Rev 2:7; 22:14), which stood by the throne of God and the Lamb, watered by the river of life (Rev 21: 1-2). Clearly, in the context of the temple, either the ancient temple of Ezekiel, or the temple of emergent Christian theology initiated by the New Testament writers, the Tree of Life and the *menorah* are one and the same.

On the evidence presented here it is worth considering that, in contrast with Stroumsa's view discussed earlier, the suspicions of orthodox Christian and Jewish leaders towards Eden may not have been in relation to the uncontrollable aspects of the imagery *per se*. Rather, their concerns lay in the explicit connection of Edenic imagery with the First temple, from which,

[61] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 94.
[62] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 94.
[63] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 94.
[64] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 94.

according to Barker, they were trying to disassociate.[65] That is to say, Eden was always understood as polyvalent. The real concerns for Jewish and early Christian authorities, however, lay in the source of this meaning and its inherent potential to destabilise existing and emerging religious orthodoxies.

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3.4 Other expressions of Edenic imagery - Temple Architecture and Liturgy

There are other, more obvious, expressions of the relationship between the Temple and Edenic imagery which can be identified in the garden motifs located throughout the Temple as decoration, as furniture, but also in liturgical practice. (There are a number of instances where these have subsequently been incorporated into the interior and exterior designs of Christian churches, both ancient and modern.[66]) Barker relates that the *hekal,* the main body of the temple between surrounding the forecourts and the inner sanctuary, was itself decorated with golden trees and flowers, and jewelled "like Ezekiel's garden of God." [67] In doing so she once again asserts the synonymy between Edenic themes, when they occur in the Old Testament, and the Temple itself.

However, it is the three main aspects of the ancient temple identified above, of the altar, of water, and of the Tree of Life, which this dissertation focusses upon, insofar as they predominate in the Edenic visions of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 47:1-12, of John in Revelation 22:1-5, as well as in John's gospel itself where, in John 4:4-42 I will argue, Ezekiel's vision of water issuing from the reconstituted temple finds an alternative expression in the allegory of the Samaritan Woman at the Well.

3.5 Eden and the Temple: the Manifestation of a Prophetic Ideal

At the same time as Barker identifies key architectural elements of the ancient temple that manifest Edenic imagery she also argues that such relationships should not be reduced to a "crude historical understanding", that is, as an archaeological or

[65] Barker, *Temple Theology,* 1-13.
[66] See, for example, Denis R. McNamara, *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy* (Chicago: Hillebrand, 2009), 48-57.
[67] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 68.

architectural observation of style in relation to the building practices of the time.[68] Rather, the religious importance of these elements must be continually acknowledged as the context for their presence. For example, integrating the symbolism of the Edenic imagery found in the temple into their eschatological understandings, the Old Testament prophets:

> …looked forward to a time when the End would be like the Beginning, and everything would be restored to its original state, but this was not so much their view of linear history as an expression of their belief that the material creation was perpetually out of harmony with the divine original, and that it was constantly necessary to re-establish the correspondence. The future and the past were perpetually and potentially present.[69]

The relationship between Eden, the Temple, and Jerusalem, then, can be further asserted through reference to these prophets through whom "Eden was often linked to Jerusalem as the ideal it would one day attain."[70] Isaiah writes, for example, of the time when a Davidic king would regather the scattered people of Israel "from the four corners of the earth" and they would live in harmony again, on God's "holy mountain" (Isa 11). The Second Isaiah, referencing both the Temple and Eden, implores those, who in the torment of their Babylonian captivity, "seek righteousness", to "Look upon the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you" as proof both of God's blessing and of God's steadfastness to the original covenant God had made with the Israel. "For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song" (Isa 51:1-3). Reiterating the theme of Isaiah 11, the Third Isaiah also prophesises a time when Jerusalem will be recreated as a place of "joy" and "gladness",[71] and where the bitter past will no longer be remembered. Anderson comments on the use of the terms 'joy' and 'gladness' in relation to their association with marriage imagery i.e. with sexuality, fertility, and the

[68] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 67.
[69] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 68.
[70] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 68.
[71] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 68.

new life that springs forth from the marriage partnership. Insofar as water, as blessing, is the source of all life in these arid regions which were home to the prophets, the connection between the beneficent waters of Eden, of fertility, and of hope and promise for the future remains a close one.[72] Similarly, evoking the myth of Eden, and reprising some elements of Isaiah 11, "to die at the age of a hundred will be dying young; not to live to be a hundred will be the sign of a curse…Long before they call I shall answer; before they stop speaking I shall have heard. The wolf and the young lamb will feed together, the lion eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do not hurt, no harm on all my holy mountain, says Yahweh"(Isaiah 65:17-25).

[72] Anderson, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden", 131-136.

Chapter 4: The Use of Edenic Symbolism in The New Testament

Barker's analysis, then, gives cogency to the notion of the metaphorical, and at times, literal equivalence between Eden, the Temple, and Zion. It also serves as a helpful framework for a closer examination of the use of Edenic imagery in the New Testament, particularly in the context of Guy Stroumsa's view, previously discussed, that the presence of Christ in the world dissipated the eschatological power of Edenic imagery in early Christian thinking.

Grant Macaskill points out that there are only three occurrences of the word "paradise" i.e. Eden as an eschatological category,[73] in the New Testament: Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:4, and Revelation 2:7. Of these, the nature of "paradise" is limited to an implicit understanding in the first two instances. It is only in Revelation 2:7 where Edenic referents are expressed explicitly and subsequently further developed in Revelation 22.1-5.

Macaskill, as have others, finds the brevity of this list puzzling, especially in the context of the influence of Eden on the Christian imagination that developed in response to the Gospels. In an essay in response to this apparent paradox he examines how the potential influence of these New Testament formulations may have functioned in the development of what he refers to as "Christian paradise traditions."[74] In addition Macaskill asks, "whether the Church ignored or failed to understand the seemingly marginal nature of paradise expectations in the New Testament", or indeed, if it recognized "wider theological themes lying behind these few texts that gave them a greater significance?"[75]

Macaskill himself argues ambiguously, in his initial comments, for the eschatological value of Revelation 22:1-5, observing that, notwithstanding the limited appearance of these Edenic referents, its "canonical location" draws attention to its imagery in a manner that might otherwise not have been the

[73] Grant Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament" in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 64.
[74] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 64-81.
[75] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 64.

case. [76] That is to say, it is as much the position of the text in this concluding book of the Christian Bible, as its content, which gives force to its imagery. I will return to this point later. Be that as it may, it is the more numerous and specific references to Adam and Eve, as the first occupants of Eden, (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49, 1 Tim 2.13-15) which receive the bulk of his attention.

4.1 Edenic References in Paul and Luke

Whilst some of these Edenic references, mostly Pauline in origin, are paraenetic, or otherwise simply contextualise the temptation story of Eden, the significant majority are Christological in focus. Additionally, this "Adam Christology", as Macaskill refers to it, is much more pervasive in Paul's thinking than the explicit references might suggest and, not surprisingly in response to this conclusion, it is the Pauline texts that draw the initial focus of his analysis. Consequentially, for Macaskill, this 'Adam Christology' becomes the primary locus of meaning for specific Edenic references located elsewhere since "the Christocentric theology of the New Testament writers overshadows the physical or geographical aspects of Paradise."[77]

It is a conclusion I would dispute, not because the 'Adam Christology' developed by Paul in the New Testament is unimportant, but because, in light of the significance of Edenic imagery described extensively earlier in this dissertation, the specific references to Edenic imagery located elsewhere in the New Testament, especially Revelations 22:1-5, can be seen to be, in and of themselves, profoundly Christological. That is, it is precisely in the polyvalent aspects of Edenic imagery that its Christological potential moves beyond the more obvious references to Christ through the story of Adam and Eve, to inform and extend other Christian theological concepts such as Christ as the new temple, and the nature and the action of the Spirit.

[76] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 64.
[77] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 65.

For example, in addition to the story of Adam *vis-à-vis* Christ as the story of "the loss (or exchange) of glory for idolatry, the response of God to Adam's sin, and the recovery of glory through Christ",[78] the use of Edenic imagery in the New Testament is also about the restoration of the revivified Temple, the home of God on earth, through Christ, and subsequently the Holy Spirit. That is, in agreement with Macaskill, "the presentation of Christ in such terms in Romans 5:12-21 places the Eden story at the heart of Christian soteriology".[79] However, a fuller appreciation of the meaning of Edenic imagery, as it is expressed in the New Testament, suggests that the soteriological impetus this imagery supports, in conjunction with the eschatological horizon to which it points, can be found much more broadly distributed throughout the New Testament than in the Pauline texts. It can also be seen to have much wider influence in developing Christian understanding. Nevertheless, it is these texts to which Macaskill gives his attention.

The hope for "creational restoration" expressed, for example, in Romans 8:18-23, in the context of this Adam Christology, according to Macaskil, "naturally" acquires Edenic associations. "The liberation of creation from its bondage (Rom 8:21) will provide a physical home for the saints whose bodies have been redeemed (Rom 8:23), who are 'conformed to the likeness' (Rom 8.29) of the Son and who now enjoy a state of glory (Rom 8.30)."[80] Indeed, "Echoes of the story of Eden reverberate through these verses."[81] Accordingly, Macaskill argues that interpreters of the New Testament would be "naturally" predisposed to "give prominence to paradise as a motif in their soteriology, eschatology, and artistry."[82] By way of example, he cites as a footnote St Jerome who, in his *Homilies on the Psalms 66,* "links our redemption in the new Adam to our hope for paradise restored."[83] In some ways this citation is shorthand for a massive debate on the exact relationship between the restored "paradise" of Christ and the original paradise of Adam

[78] Macaskill citing Hooker, 1990. Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 65.
[79] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 65.
[80] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 66.
[81] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 66.
[82] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 67.
[83] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 67.

which extended from the time of Paul through to the Middle Ages, and which had its origins precisely in Paul's use of the present tense when referring to humanity "dying in Adam" and the future tense when referring to the new paradise, being "made alive", i.e. obtained in, through and by Christ.[84] On the intentional use of present and future tense by Paul in reference to all dying in Adam and being made alive in Christ Macaskill, in reference to 1 Corinthians 15, writes:

> The latter is specified in verse 23 as occurring on the return of Christ. This highlights the inescapably future orientation of these verses, with 24-28 outlining the requirement for Christ to reign until all enemies are subjugated to him. We are not, therefore, speaking about the present experience of believers in Christ and in participation in the new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5.14-17). When Paul returns to the question of the nature of the resurrection body, in verse 35 and following, he once again draws on the Adam typology. Now the contrast is between the earthly nature of the first Adam and the heavenly nature of the second (47-49)…The dishonour and loss of glory that characterised Adam's fallen state seem to be in view in verse 43; these serve to introduce the contrast between the earthly Adam and the heavenly Christ that is unpacked in verses 45-49, a contrast that, of course, forms the basis for Paul's understanding of the resurrection state that the redeemed will enjoy.[85]

A discussion of the fuller implications of this follows in Macaskill's treatment of 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 where one component of this debate, the exact nature and status of this restored paradise, is analysed further. In this passage Paul's understanding of this resurrection state is problematized by Paul himself who experiences a vision of heaven that, Paul claims, "no mortal is permitted to repeat." (2 Cor 12:4) It is a notion that contrasted with existing Jewish eschatological views through comparison with a story from the rabbinic tradition of 'The Four Who Enter Paradise', only one of whom successfully enters paradise and returns. The other three, all rabbis, die as a result of their failure to observe "certain rules".[86] References to the ancient temple, implicit

[84] See, for example Ch 2, "Paradise as a Place of Waiting" in Jean Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 23-38.
[85] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 66.
[86] A story found in collections from Merkabah mysticism and cited Macaskill based on the work of a number of other authors. Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 69.

in the ritualistic aspects of this story, are strengthened by the account of the surviving rabbi who, in Macaskill's retelling, speaks of passing "the curtain" and being "deemed worthy to behold God's glory". [87] For Macaskill, such language suggests "that paradise represents the heavenly temple". In comparing Paul's narrative to the rabbinic story we can see that this was the experience that Paul himself was attempting to convey.

Barker would argue more strongly that Paul's vision was indeed a reference not just to the heavenly paradise but to existing, understood notions of the structure and functioning of the ancient Temple. Within the temple the 'veil' was an integral part separating the *debir,* the innermost part of the Holy of Holies, from the sanctuary, and which in itself represented the permeable membrane separating the divine from the mundane.[88] However, Macaskill citing a variety of sources,[89] argues that Paul's account was ironic, a deliberate attempt to parody this ancient view, in an effort to substitute his own perspective of paradise, the heavenly Eden, as a presently existing but intermediate state of the dead in Christ, one which had its antecedents in, but which was distinctly different from, that which had preceded. Macaskill writes:

> Whilst aspects of Betz's case[90] have generally been rejected the recognition that Paul is employing irony here is more widely accepted. Faced with the challenges of his credentials, Paul recounts not a recent incident but one from his past ("fourteen years ago", 12.2), the details of which he is forbidden to share (12.4) and which he refuses to boast in (although to do so would not be foolish, according to 12.6), having been kept from conceit by a thorn in his flesh (12.7), that he can endure only by God's grace (12.8) Thus he will glory not in his honoured status as a recipient of paradisiacal visions, but – and here the irony climaxes – in his weakness.[91]

Understood in this manner it is clear that such a notion deliberately draws a distinction between the concept of heaven that Paul was tentatively exploring

[87] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 69.
[88] Barker, *The Gate of Heaven,* 104-132.
[89] For example, Bosenius 1984, 180-181; Humphrey 2002.
[90] A claim that this particular passage is not just ironical, but parody. Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 71.
[91] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 71.

towards what became a new Christian theology, in the context of the Kingdom, and that within Judaism of the time, and certainly within Hellenic i.e. Platonist, understandings of the soul after death.[92]

By way of conclusion Macaskill examines and reflects on what he has identified as the newly developed Christian notion of 'paradise' as an intermediate state between death and the parousia in the context of the passage, specific to Luke, which refers to Christ's ascension to paradise (Luke 23:42-43). In this passage the criminal, crucified beside Jesus, requests to be "remembered" when Christ is taken into his "Kingdom". He is told that, indeed, "today you will be with me in Paradise." For some, this passage is a clear indication of Luke's Platonised view of death. [93] It is a notion that Macaskill rejects by comparing it to other Lucan texts which "indicate a continuing belief in a final resurrection and parousia."[94] Nevertheless, despite the strength of Macaskill's assertion to this effect, his ultimate conclusion remains equivocal. Macaskill writes:

> Despite the diversity of opinion on this, however, almost all scholars would agree on two points: Luke undeniably has a realized aspect to his eschatology, seeing the kingdom as a present reality, yet he maintains belief in a future parousia. While there is less agreement about the significance of the ascension in his schema of salvation history, most would still regard this event as marking a definitive point in the establishment of the kingdom, without necessarily suggesting it is climactic. Bringing this context to Luke 23.43 suggests that a straightforward equation of paradise with the kingdom is problematic: the kingdom is already present, and from the ascension onwards, Jesus will reign over it from the right hand of God, but it will not be consummated until the parousia. While Jesus is able to promise the criminal an immediate transition to paradise, this does not represent the totality of Jesus' kingdom.[95]

[92] That is, that the souls of the dead, in a non-somatic state, went immediately to Hades or Sheol. Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 71-72.
[93] For example, Montefiore 1927, 538; Dupont, 1973. As cited in Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 72.
[94] Citing Bevan 2006, 70-71; Mattill, 1979, 26-40. Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 72.
[95] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 74.

A number of points, then, can be made in relation to Macaskill's examination of Edenic references in the New Testament thus far. Firstly, the theme of Jesus as the new Adam permeates Paul's Christology and is present to the readers as a central motif through which Christ's mission on Earth can be understood. Secondly, both Paul and Luke's attempts to use paradisiacal or Edenic imagery in a definitive way to express Christian notions of heaven in the context of the parousia are clearly unresolved in their developing theology. That is not to say that Christian understanding does not accommodate Paul's and Luke's usages in everyday life, but that these usages 'slip' between notions of paradise expressed through a realised eschatology and that pertaining to the parousia. The consequence is that, despite both Paul and Luke's attempts to redefine the term 'paradise' in the context of an emerging Christian theology , people in general, and Christians in particular, continue to use the term 'paradise', with its Edenic imagery, in a multiplicity of ways. Some of these usages conform to early Pauline and Lucan theological formulations, as they were expressed through the early Church, and some clearly do not.

It could be argued that such 'problems' are precisely a result of the implicit nature of the Edenic references that both Paul and Luke express. That is, their *re-interpretation* of the Eden story present in Genesis 2-3, in the context of a gestatory Christian theology, attempts to fix in time the inherently chronotropic and polyvalent qualities of Edenic imagery in ways that the imagery does not easily, or naturally, support. Stroumsa's observations, referred to earlier, of the imagery subsequently 'blowing up' in the course of early Christian theology, to a significant degree find their source in these New Testament texts. It is not surprising then, that the more concrete use of Edenic imagery in Revelation 22:1-5, with its roots in the notion of water as blessing, which goes back to the earliest days of the Temple, despite its polyvalent qualities, has a more stable interpretation.

4.2 Edenic Imagery in John's Gospel and Revelation

I have noted earlier that Macaskill considered the "canonical location" of the more explicit Edenic references contained within Revelation 22:1-5, as a primary reason for the attention given to its imagery. [96] It is an unusual comment, not least because of the insightful and thorough exegesis on the passage Macaskill conducts which reveals, amongst other things, the writer of Revelation's[97] clear, poetic and obtainable vision of the New Jerusalem, and the blessings that flow from within, to the one who "conquers" or "overcomes" (Rev 2:7). [98] This is not simply a vision of the place where *the Just,* or the newly dead righteous dwell, familiar in existing Jewish eschatology of the time, but rather, the heavenly temple that descends to earth. Contextualised by John's gospel, Eden, as it is manifest in Revelation, is clearly symbolic of the emerging church itself, in contrast with the existing corrupt institutions of Rome, purified through the presence of Christ and the "acts of the saints" (Rev 19:7). Moreover, it also stands by way of contrast with the moral reality of the existing church whose members were deemed by the writer of Revelation in his earlier letters be struggling, committing adultery, worshipping Baal, eating food that had been "sacrificed to idols", and, by implication generally not keeping to Jesus' commandment to "endure trials" (Rev 2,3).[99] Despite this, in its imperfections, the writer of Revelation, through his use of marriage imagery, still addresses the church as a body united with Christ, "the union of a flawed church with her Saviour."[100] The Edenic references of Revelation 21:1-5 then, Macaskill argues, are, by way of contrast, "a climactic depiction of that union, now cleansed of all impurity and entering its fullest consummation." As such, "all of this allows us to see how the description of paradise in 22.1-5 functions within the paraenesis of

[96] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 64.

[97] Macaskill appears to assume that John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel and John, the author of Revelation, are one and the same, and this is implicit in his commentary. However, modern scholarship does not support this view, arguing instead that, whilst "the author of Revelation was an early Christian prophet by the name of John… The authority of the book lies in the effectiveness of the text itself and the fact that the church has included it in the canon." See Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Apocalypse (Revelation)" in Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 997-998. Accepting this distinction, within this dissertation I maintain that John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, and John, the writer of Revelation, are separate entities.

[98] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 75.

[99] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 75.

[100] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 75.

Revelation, the climax of a complex symbolic drama, intended to encourage the church in its struggle with the world."[101]

In the context of this dissertation what is of particular interest is the degree to which the writer of Revelation draws on the theology of the ancient temple, in particular through the Edenic imagery of Ezekiel 47:1-12, but also Genesis 2-3, and Zechariah 14, to develop his symbolic framework. On this Macaskill is articulate and succinct and is worth quoting at length:

> From the throne of God and the Lamb that is at the heart of the city flows a "river of water of life." This draws upon the description of the river in Eden (Genesis 2.10) as it is developed in the image of the life-giving river that flows from under the altar in Ezekiel 47. The latter passage intensifies the Edenic associations of the temple account that are found throughout Ezekiel 47-48 and that in turn draw upon similar associations in earlier parts of the book. The image in Ezekiel is also paralleled in Zechariah 14.8, where the "living waters" go out from Jerusalem towards the east and west. In Revelation 22, of course, there is no altar for there is no temple: God and the Lamb comprise the temple of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21.22). The description of the tree of life "standing on either side of the river" and "yielding its fruit each month," with leaves that are "for the healing of the nations" draws together the core symbol from Genesis 2.9 and 3.22 and the description of the trees that grow on either side of the river in Ezekiel 47.12. The use of tree imagery in Ezekiel 47 links this passage back to the opening description of the temple in chapters 40 and 41, where trees are integral to the architecture…The description in Revelation 22.1-2 thus stands within, and draws upon, a textual tradition that makes strong associations between Eden, Zion, and the temple and develops these by means of the interwoven images of water and trees.[102]

That is to say, the main focus of the passage is on the contingency of God, through the integrated imagery of Eden, Zion and the Temple, as a life sustaining reality. Water, the primary image of life in the Ancient Near East,[103] flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, irrigates the trees on

[101] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 76.
[102] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 76-77.
[103] As such, along with shade, it forms the central feature of Islamic garden design. See for example Clark, E., *The Art of the Islamic Garden,* Ramsbury: Crowood Press, 2004, 87-113. See also John Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise: The History and Design of the Great Islamic Gardens,* New York: New Amsterdam Press, 1987, 28-30, 191-199.

either side of the river of life, and through the bounty of their produce, comes to nourish and heal the nations. Importantly, the life of the occupants of the new Jerusalem, those who have "conquered" or "overcome" their moral weaknesses that the writer of Revelation has earlier identified in his letters to the various churches of the eastern Mediterranean, is "inseparable", not only from the life of God, but also "from the atoning work or Jesus, since it proceeds from the throne of the Lamb".[104] Macaskill draws the reader's attention to the substitution of the altar in Ekeziel 47:1 with the throne of the Slain Lamb (cf Rev 5:6-7), emphasising the sacrificial nature of Christ's death.[105] At the same time the relationship between the ancient temple and the new temple, is firmly alluded to.

To the writer of Revelation's audience, familiar with the symbology that he is building upon in his account of the new creation, it is also a strong signal as to the continuation of the ancient Temple theology, where Christ is at once the temple, the altar, the sacrifice, and the blessing that flows from that sacrifice. This is a powerful New Testament example of the polyvalent character of Edenic imagery as it was manifest through the temple. However, as can be seen, rather than problematizing the message that the writer of Revelation is trying to convey, its mythological dimensions consolidates and amplifies that message, giving it a richness and depth that continues to inform understanding of the significance of the Christ event up to the present.

For Macaskill, the life sustaining reality of God, manifest through the imagery of water, is equivalent with the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world. It is an argument that he is obliged to make at length since, as he himself acknowledges, "some contemporary scholars dismiss this as fanciful".[106] In doing so he draws particularly attention to the relationship between the seven branched lampstand or *menorah* of the ancient temple, and the seven eyes of God, or seven spirits to which John refers, and which cannot be separated from God since they are the eyes of the Lord (implicit in *Zechariah 4:10)* and

[104] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 77.
[105] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 77.
[106] Referring to Osborne 2002, 769; Beale 1999, 1105. Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 77.

of the Lamb (explicit in *Rev 5:6*). Insofar as the seven eyes of the lampstand are inseparable from God they represent the activity of God in the world through the Holy Spirit, the 'procession' of his agency in the world, in a new triune formulation of God. The water issuing from the 'temple', that is to say the Lord and the Lamb, in Rev 22:1-2, becomes, then, symbolic of that Spirit that is before the throne (i.e. the lampstand) and that proceeds from it.[107]

It is another example of the complex symbolic dualisms, substantially drawn from Edenic imagery, which characterises the narrative framework of Revelation. In this case the Spirit, as the manifestation of God's agency in the world, is formulated as being, at once, light and water, illumination and sustenance. Such symbology, however, is contained within a larger narrative of the fellowship of the Church with the triune God, through whom the 'cursed' world is restored, and blessings such as peace, healing comfort, and bounty are enjoyed.[108] In this case the writer of Revelation has substituted Ezekiel's Zion with notions of the universal church, but the inherent structure of the narrative remains firmly that of Ezekiel's original vision.

In contrast with the Pauline interpretations of paradise, previously described, the writer of Revelation's account, then, appears to conflate the heavenly paradise with the heavenly temple. At the same time it finds its fullest expression on earth in the union of the Church with Christ. According to Macaskill, "There is, then, a belief in a present paradise, where the righteous dead reside and to which, in some sense, the church is spiritually connected in its fellowship with God through the Spirit; but this does not eclipse or

[107] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 78.

[108] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 80. Nicholas Lash has also reflected on Revelation 22:1-5, in the context of his essay on the Apostles' Creed. As the locus of God on earth, various retellings of the Eden myth, align, he contends (acknowledging the limitations of the metaphor), with the three articles of Creed, and by inference with the three aspects of the Trinity. Through the lens of the early medieval theologian Peter Lombard, writing in *The Sentences*, Lash sees the waters flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb of God, "from whose pierced heart the living waters of the Spirit irrigate the 'the thirsty land', transforming those 'who pour (themselves) out for the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted' into a watered garden 'like a spring of water whose waters fail not'." However, for Lash, the power of this imagery is not just redemptive, it is also eschatological. The rivers of Eden do not just pour out from the garden, "they also pour into it." Made 'in the beginning' God's garden, for Lash, "does not lie behind us, but ahead of us, in hope, and in the meantime, all around us in our place of work." Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God: A Reading of the Apostles' Creed* (London: SCM Press, 1992) 122-123.

contradict an expectation of a future earthly paradise, when Christ's reign is perfected and the hopes of the Church fully realised."[109]

[109] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 81.

Chapter 5: Ezekiel 47:1-12 Reconsidered in Light Of its Use in The Book of Revelation.

In developing the conclusion to his presentation and analysis of paradisiacal references in the New Testament Macaskill restates his earlier equivocal position as to the value of these referents in Revelation. That is, the placement of the account of paradise in Revelation 22:1-5 is "significant" but in a specific and limited way. Macaskill reflects that:

> Found so close to the end of the Christian Bible, these verses take on a particular significance in shaping Christian expectations of the future. Moreover, they give the Christian canon a certain symmetry, balancing the account of the first paradise in Genesis 2-3 with a description of its recovered eschatological equivalent.[110]

Taken on face value Macaskill could be suggesting that the account of the new Eden given in Revelation 22:1-5 simply gives narrative shape to the Christian Bible. But his wider observations, based on the strength of his exegesis of the passage, permit a stronger interpretation. In this reformulation the text becomes critical to Christian theology, not just in establishing eschatological expectations in the context of the Christ event, but through contextualising and giving shape to the reader's understanding of the Christian Bible itself. Put simply, by bookending the events of Genesis 2-3 with Revelation 21:1-5, a world that has been broken is shown to have been healed through Christ's sacrifice. The eternal covenant has been reinstituted, the temple made holy again. The curse has been lifted, blessings flow, hope is restored. Through the Church, in union with Christ through the Spirit, human endeavour can, and will be, perfected, both in life and in death.

The imagery of Revelation, which has been used to convey this re-pristinated world, is clearly Edenic. As indicated earlier, it draws heavily on the imagery and the theological formulations derived from that expressed in Ezekiel's vision of a reconstituted Zion. This comes after the self-inflicted travails of the nation of Israel which, for Ezekiel, climaxed in the Babylonian exile.

[110] Macaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament", 80.

5.1 Commentary on Ezekiel 47:1-12: A Limited Field

At the beginning of this dissertation I referred to Joachim Schaper's surprise that gardens in general, and Eden in particular, should, in his estimation, have received such little attention from biblical scholars.[111] Macaskill, subsequently, echoed the puzzlement of other scholars in observing that explicit Edenic references in the New Testament were so few, especially in the context of the influence of Eden on the Christian imagination that developed in response to the Gospels. [112] A third element of surprise should now be added to this list of apparent ironies – the minimal consideration given to Ezekiel 47:1-12 by Christian theologians in light of its obvious importance in giving ultimate shape and definition not just to the conclusion of Revelation, but also, through Revelation's canonical location, to the early Church's understanding of the Christian story in its entirety.

Walter Eichrodt, for example, in what is considered one of the classic texts on Ezekiel, affords just six pages out of over six hundred to this particular passage,[113] insightful as they may be. Walter Zimmerli, "one of the exegetical giants of the mid-twentieth century",[114] does a little better, with just over ten pages dedicated to Revelation 47:1-12, out of a double volume that runs close to one thousand pages.[115] Eric Heaton, similarly, in a classic overview of the Old Testament prophets, affords this passage just a few notes in passing.[116] More recent publications appear to be no less unenthusiastic, in the wider context of Old Testament Edenic references. Torje Stordalen, cited earlier,[117] in a much praised recent publication on Genesis 2-3, gives thoughtful consideration to Ezekiel 47:1-12, but he does so as part of a wider examination of Edenic references throughout the Old Testament, of which Ezekiel 47:1-12 is just a small, if significant, part. That is, of nearly 600 pages

[111] Schaper, "The messiah in the garden", 17.
[112] MacCaskill, "Paradise in the New Testament," 64.
[113] Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970).
[114] Ralph W. Klein, "Ezekiel at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century", in Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (eds) *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2000), 1.
[115] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, Transl. by James. D. Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).
[116] Heaton, *The Old Testament Prophets, 151.*
[117] Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden* (2009).

of commentary, only 28 specifically refer to Ezekiel 47:1-12, and a number of these references are incidental.

That the limited examination of Ezekiel 47:1-12 should apparently be the norm as part of a much broader focus of Biblical scholarship and research is understandable. However, as the emotional[118] and theological climax of the book of Ezekiel this lack of attention, by Christian scholars in particular, appears to be an anomaly. This is especially so when it is accepted that the themes and partial imagery from Ezekiel 47: 1-12 is reprised in the Book of Revelation as the climax of that early Christian prophet's vision of the New Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Stroumsa's prefatory observations in the general context of Biblical scholarship that point precisely to this situation, there appears to be a lacuna in Christian theology that tends to render Edenic imagery only partially visible to its immediate concerns.

This becomes more apparent when the focus of Ezekiel 47:1-12, as the vision of the blessings that flow into the world following God's return to the temple after God's self-imposed exile, is closely examined and the implications of that analysis understood. The profound symmetry of this imagery with the Christian vision of a God who is no longer confined to the temple but who is available to all who are in need of healing, and every aspect of creation that is cursed, is acute (cf. Rev 21:3-5.)[119] Zimmerli is good on this point:

> In the veiled imagery of the references to the temple spring and to the waters which flow from it 47:1-12 tries to state that the appearance of God in his sanctuary in the midst of his people does not create a self-contained 'holy-place'. All the

[118] For a thorough exploration of the emotional aspect of the Book of Ezekiel Dereck Daschke's psychoanalytical analysis is thorough and scholarly. Daschke's view is that Ezekiel's story is an understandable response to the loss of Zion, both physically and spiritually, "through a bridge of symbols between inner and social worlds through fantasy activity" that is implicitly narrative based. Ezekiel's Eden story, in which God returns to the temple from which blessings now flow, not just for the members of the temple cult, but for the entire world, is seen to be expressive of the resolution of Ezekiel's manifest grief, following various stages of mourning. See Dereck M. Daschke, "Desolate Among Them: Loss, Fantasy, and Recovery in the Book of Ezekiel". In *American Imago,*56.2 (1999),105-132.

119 Eichrodt argues that the features of the Edenic myth that Ezekiel has chosen to focus on "surely represent only one of the numerous variations of the mythical conception which seemed to the prophet to be especially appropriate for his purpose." Nevertheless, he is clear in his belief that the passage in Revelation 22:1-5 is sourced from Ezekiel 47:1-12, "in order to portray the salvation to come in the last days." Eichrodt, *Ezekiel,* 584.

> preparation of the sacred place, with its protection against unthinking access on the part of what is ungodly, as this is reflected in the architectural layout of the sanctuary, is meant in the last resort to serve God's intention to allow life and healing to flow out from here into the land. This life and this healing are to be effective precisely where unnatural disease and hostility to life are most obviously operative. The Dead Sea, that enigma of the geography of Palestine, with its magnified hostility to life must serve as the expression of this proclamation.[120]

In this instance Zimmerli *does* make the connection between Ezekiel's vision of blessings that begin with a small trickle[121] and form into a mighty river, and the New Testament notion of the Kingdom of God – the modest work of the Spirit which begins in place of God's presence on earth, but which grows through its inner power (cf. Matt 13:31-33, Mk 4:30-32) into something capable of displacing all preceding realities.[122] But even here his concerns are exegetical rather than theological.

Be that as it may, Zimmerli's observation is illustrative of how multiple aspects of the Edenic myth were mobilised by Old and New Testament writers alike (the New Testament writers in a more limited fashion, as we have seen) for their various purposes. Eichrodt similarly argues that the features of the Edenic myth that Ezekiel has chosen to focus on, in this case the waters flowing from the mountain of God, "surely represent only one of the numerous variations of the mythical conception which seemed to the prophet to be especially appropriate for his purpose."[123] Allowing this, Eichrodt is

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120 See Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48.* Transl. by James D. Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 516.

121 Like water poured from a bottle, or jug, is Zimmerli's sense of the original. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2,* 505.

122 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2,* 505.

123 Fohrer claims that, notwithstanding Ezekiel's increased emphasis on the historical judgement of Israel, the influence of Israel's narrative traditions is "less than that of the mythological or popular traditions". Indeed, in addition to Canaanite and Phoenician material Fohrer claims that Ezekiel "makes use particularly of Mesopotamian subject matter, images, cultic practices and so forth...In addition he frequently draws upon ancient popular material for concepts, narratives, songs and poems." See, Georg Fohrer (initiated by Ernst Sellin)(transl. by David Green), *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 416. Ezekiel's use of this material should not surprise us. The Eden myth itself, in its various forms, is much older than the story told in Genesis 2-3. James Dickie, for example, describes Edenic images, where the Spring of Life breaks surface at the centre of the world, found on Persian ceramics datable to 4000 B.C.E. See, James Dickie, "The Hispano-Arab Garden: It's Philosophy & Function", in *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1968),238. In a broader context, that is the account of divine abandonment, and recovery, that underpins Ezekiel's vision Daniel Block has constructed a chart of no less

clear in his belief that the passage in Revelation 22:1-5 is sourced from Ezekiel 47:1-12, "in order to portray the salvation to come in the last days."[124] That is to say, the blessings that flow from the new Temple, as they are presented in Revelation, are an affirmation and, I would suggest, a celebration, of the fulfilment of God's promise that was initiated in Ezekiel and that would become a reality in history through the Christ event. For Eichrodt, "It is therefore quite legitimate to call this state of salvation eschatological, seeing that it marks the end of what hitherto has been known as history, and prepares the way for a new event."[125]

> The myth now serves to produce awareness of the total otherness of God's new world by the element of the miraculous contained in it. But this decisive feature is not limited to an earthly manifestation of how salvation takes a bodily form among the chosen people corresponding to the daily experience of earthly happening, important as is the rejection of all attempts to spiritualise this away. It may be called a this-worldly happening (Fohrer). But it is to be understood that it takes place in a transformed world, and that the forms taken are not a mere natural development from present earthly history, but are a result of a radical and creative new-shaping of it all. For the river of paradise and the marvellous effects brought by it signify the transformation of this world into the garden paradise, whence not only the hosts of earthly diseases, but also sin and guilt have been banished, and God's good pleasure in his creation comes to full effect and works a complete inward and outward transformation of the whole shape of human life.[126]

Ezekiel's main narrative emphasis, as we have seen, is on the transformative quality and capacity of God whose blessings flow into a non-cultic world outside of the temple "as an abode for the fellowship God and man", whilst, at the same time, cutting the ground "from under the feet of pagan

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than fourteen examples from the Ancient Near East of similar accounts that precede Ezekiel. See, Daniel I Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif", in Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (eds) *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2000), 32-33.

[124] Eichrodt, *Ezekiel,* 584.

[125] Eichrodt, *Ezekiel,* 584-585.

[126] Eichrodt, *Ezekiel,* 585.

conceptions[127] which are still tied to the influences of the power of nature".[128] Such concerns may be seen to be contextual, and specific to Ezekiel and his circumstances. Nevertheless, the eschatological dimension of Ezekiel's vision can be seen to re-present itself, in a slightly different guise, in Revelation, offering what might now be considered a contemporary eschatological perspective. That is to say, for both Ezekiel and the writer of Revelation, the use of Edenic imagery to characterise their vision of a world transformed through God's grace offers an eschatological 'horizon' that is now "inscribed into every aspect of human existence".[129]

5.2 The *Kāböd* and the Word of God in Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 22:1-5

For the patristic commentators who worked with the material of Ezekiel in allegorical paradigms the waters which flowed from the threshold of the temple were equivalent to the teachings of the Church which, the writer of Revelation asserts, had been transferred from God to the Church through the Spirit (Rev 22:1). [130] Such an interpretation appears, in the first instance, to be decidedly and uniquely Christian. But, as with many other aspects of the writer of Revelation's appropriation of Ezekiel's vision, the concept itself, according to Steven Tuell, is already implicit in Ezekiel's writing, having its antecedents in the earlier substitution of the Torah for the pagan images it displaced. Indeed, in what can only be described as a radical reworking of priestly assumptions Ezekiel, Tuell argues, has replaced cultic practices with text which his readers can appropriate vicariously,[131] in any situation.[132] As a

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[127] The immediate point of reference here is, of course, not just Babylonian paganism, but the many instances of the maintenance of pagan practices amongst the Israelites themselves which have led, in part, to the disaster of exile and abandonment that Ezekiel describes. See, for example, Exodus 32:1-6.

[128] Eichrodt, *Ezekiel,* 584.

[129] Cf. Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), 31.

[130] For example, Jerome on the teachings of the church: "The waters that flow forth from the threshold of the temple refer to the teaching of the church… We can understand water up to the ankles as meaning first the human sins that are forgiven us who enter the waters of the Lord; they show us the saving grace of baptism and are the beginnings of our progress." From "Commentary on Ezekiel 14.47:1-5"(CCL 75:707,709). As cited in Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Glerup (eds), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament XIII, Ezekiel, Daniel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 46.

[131] Steven S. Tuell, "Divine Presence and Absence in Ezekiel's Prophecy" in Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (eds) *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2000), 97-120.

[132] As in many other instances whereby the prophets themselves have become the embodiment of their own visions we see Ezekiel expounding his in a variety of detailed physical positions including walking, lying down, looking out etc. Such various physical attitudes have led to some confusion as to Ezekiel's mental state,

result Ezekiel's readers are concomitantly presented with a dramatic re-interpretation of the nature of the presence or absence of the Divine Glory or *kāböd,*, an encounter traditionally limited to the Israelites but now subsequently offered to both Jew and Gentile alike (Ezek 47:21-23).

Ezekiel achieves this 'repositioning' of God, from within the sanctuary of the Jerusalem temple to wherever God is needed by those who believe in God, through the presentation of three great visions, which thematically link and give structure to his narrative. [133] In the first vision (Ezek 1-3) the *kāböd* comes to be with Ezekiel and the other exiles in Babylon, beside the river Chebar, where we first meet Ezekiel himself. In doing so, it is implicit that God has left Jerusalem. In the second vision (Ezek 8-11), the *kāböd* has abandoned both the temple and the city, leaving both vulnerable to destruction. In the final stage, and climax of Ezekiel's prophecy (Ekez 40-48), the *kāböd* appears for the last time, inhabiting the glorious temple of Ezekiel's final vision that is not simply the reconstruction of the 'old order', but its fulfilment.[134] In doing so Ezekiel transfigures the geography of Israel so that Zion has become a high mountain, Gihon, from a small trickle, has ultimately become a broad river with miraculous properties, the Dead sea has become a life sustaining, freshwater lake, and – most significantly according to Tuell - the city is no longer called Jerusalem but, ambiguously, "YHWH is there", and is separated from both mountain and temple. Such a notion, in light of the previously understood interchangeability of Eden, the temple, Jerusalem and Zion, is a profound rupture of a previous given. "Is this, after all, the earthly Israel and the earthly Zion?" asks Tuell. "Where do the *kāböd* and the prophet reach their journey's end?"[135]

In answering these questions Tuell reaches the conclusion that, contrary to existing understandings of the *kāböd* appearing within the confines of a fixed, sacred space, specifically the Holy of Holies within the sanctuary of the

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particularly in early commentaries. However, when understood in the context that Tuell elaborates Ezekiel's deliberate detail in relation to this makes sense.

[133] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 97.

[134] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 97. See also Heaton, *The Old Testament Prophets,* 151.

[135] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 97.

temple, Ezekiel proposes a notion which, Tuell argues, is without precedent within the temple cult of ancient Israel. That is, for Ezekiel, the Divine Glory comes to the prophet in exile, and through him to all the other exiles who no longer, either through contingency or fate, are able to practice their faith within the sanctified space of the temple, but whose faith otherwise maintains in an "unclean land".[136] On face value it is a notion so uncharacteristic of existing priestly practices and beliefs that Tuell, citing Samuel Terrien, locates its origins in events that, he contends, must have shattered the cosmic order.[137] We are told, for example, that Ezekiel's initial contact with God is voiced in the imagery of fire that finds parallels in Moses's experience on Sinai (Ezek 1:4-5; Deut 4;12,15,33,36; 5:4,22,24,26; 9:10; 10:40), and which, similar to that found in Exodus and Deuteronomy, subsequently describes a wilderness narrative wherein pagan worship threatens Israel's relationship with God, with the ensuing disaster that entails. Certainly, the notion of the temple no longer being centred in the geographical Jerusalem must have been a confronting one for the religious authorities of the time, and a powerful caution to some to change their ways in the manner that Ezekiel demands.

Not surprisingly, most commentators accept that there has been extensive redaction subsequently of the last part of Ezekiel's text to ameliorate the full implications of what he is proposing.[138] However, an alternative reading which identifies features of the temple present in the Edenic imagery Ezekiel uses, including that of the "very high mountain" on which the new Jerusalem is to be found (c.f. Isaiah 65:25), and the Edenic image of the river flowing forth from the temple providing blessings to both the land and its inhabitants, I believe, softens this interpretation.[139] This is especially so when one considers

[136] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 101.
[137] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 101. Citing Samuel Terrien,1978:258.
[138] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 114-116.
[139] This is despite Tuell's view that, "All told, the traditional institutions through which the divine presence had been mediated have become, for Ezekiel, profane and corrupted. But then, in Ezekiel's view, the old means of divine mediation were always at best imperfect mirrors, all but hopelessly flawed. Jerusalem, he reminds us, had its beginnings among foreign peoples and unclean alien rites (16:1-3); little wonder then that the temple and its personnel had finally yielded entirely to … profanation. Kingship had proven a great disappointment; priests and prophets had failed utterly in their commissions. Indeed, even the Sinai revelation itself was understood by Ezekiel as shot through with corruption (See Ezek 20:25-26). Further, even if the means of

the *mechanism* through which these images are conveyed, which centres on the deliberative use of text by Ekeziel as a 'verbal icon' in substitution for key aspects of cultic practice.

According to Tuell, Ezekiel's immediate audience is not just confronted with the startling content of his visions, in the context of absence or presence of the *kāböd.* They must also come to terms with Ezekiel's creative theological assumption, that in the absence of the temple the content of his text should, in itself, be seen to mediate the presence of God, in place of the temple and its associated rituals. It is a concept that has its antecedents in some traditional approaches to the understanding of the Torah, and which we see reiterated by in Revelation, and subsequently in the traditions of Eastern Christianity "where the gospels function as verbal icons of the Christ." [140]

Reiterating Torje Stordalen's observations we should assume that Ezekiel's audience has the 'communicative competence' to appreciate what Ezekiel is proposing. In support of this argument Tuell cites Karel van der Toorn who argues that in Deuteronomy the role customarily played by images in Ancient Near Eastern cults is played by the Torah. Subsequently, for example, in place of the image of a guardian deity at the entrance of a household, houses of observant Jews have words of Scripture, typically the *shema, (Deut 6:4-9)* as the essence of Jewish monotheism, enclosed within a *mezuzah* attached to the front door post.[141] Similarly, in place of amulets depicting the gods, pious Jews wear the *tephillin,* or small boxes containing excerpts from the Torah, attached to their foreheads and upper arms during morning prayers. Moreover, the placement of the tablets within the Ark is considered a replacement of the image of God with text. [142] For van der Toorn, then, "The question is not, or not only, whether the Israelites worshipped images, but whether they had symbols which for all practical purposes served as divine images for them."[143]

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mediations had not all been hopelessly corrupted, they were inaccessible to the exiles. In larger measure, then, Ezekiel is the prophet of the absence of God." Tuell, "Divine Presence", 101.

[140] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 109-114.

[141] *Mezuzah* literally meaning 'door post', but also referring to the text itself.

[142] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 111. Citing Van der Toorn, n.d. 230,241.

[143] Tuell, "Divine Presence", 111.

Accepting the proposition that for the ancient Israelites scripture can serve an iconic function Tuell, in turn, argues that the vision of the new Jerusalem, mediated by Ezekiel and reported by him in writing as a form of 'verbal icon', was a means of experiencing divine presence. Thus, understood in the context of the entirety of Ezekiel's vision, the Edenic images used by him - in particular the images of water as blessings that flow from the temple, resulting in a reconstituted Eden outside of the temple in a land that had previously been cursed - can be seen in themselves to constitute an aspect of the Divine Glory. Understood in this manner the allegories of Jerome, referred to earlier,[144] seem less quaint and more perspicacious. [145] At the same time, understood in this manner the writer of Revelation's description of the Holy Spirit issuing from God and of the Lamb, in the Edenic image of water gushing from the temple in Revelation 22:1-5, can be seen to conform even more to its Ezekelian antecedent.

[144] See n. 106.

[145] It could also be that Jerome was more acquainted with ancient Jewish traditions than otherwise supposed. Indeed, the extent to which text was believed to mediate the holy presence of God in ancient Israel can be appreciated in a report from Jerome to Paulinus, bishop of Nola. Jerome comments on a Jewish regulation of his day which barred anyone under the age of thirty from reading the beginning or the ending of Ezekiel! See Tuell, "Divine Presence", 110.

Chapter 6: The Verities of John and the Woman at the Well

The observation has been made that John's theology, especially his attitude to history and eschatology, is expressed as a single indivisible unity: "the entire ministry is the self-giving, the exaltation on the cross is the exaltation in glory; the Spirit is Christ's own *alter ego*; and there is no concern about a future *παρουσία* (parousia), for the coming of the Spirit is 'the coming', absolutely."[146] Whilst this insight is later qualified by a recognition that much of John's narrative is implicit, even where it appears abstract, [147] it should come as no surprise that someone who "thinks 'theologically' and is ready to fuse different members of his structure together by the use of multivalent words"[148] should reiterate the "great verities"[149] of his vision through multiple, diverse representations of the same themes.

Of these 'great verities' it is the transference of the meaning of Israel's temple, from a building, to the person of Jesus, and then to the community of believers, shown in John's gospel,[150] that is the essence of Revelation 22:1-5. Now, whilst there is a direct relationship between Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 22:1-5, it could be argued that the most poetic and accessible representation of Ezekiel's vision of the expansion of God's presence beyond the temple of Jerusalem is to be found not in Revelation itself but in John's gospel, in the story known in many instances simply as 'The Woman at the Well' (Jn4:4-42).[151] John's account, of Jesus' meeting with a Samaritan woman at a place known as Jacob's well, anticipates the later reprise in Revelation of Ezekiel's concluding vision of the new Eden in ways that are at once subtle and arresting. More importantly, through the meeting of Jesus with, from a Jewish perspective, such a quintessential 'outsider'[152], the

[146] C.F.D. Moule, "The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel", in *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 5, Fasc. 2/3 (July 1962) 174.
[147] Moule, "The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel", 175.
[148] Moule, "The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel", 175.
[149] Moule, "The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel", 175.
[150] Mary Coloe, "Temple Imagery in John", in *Interpretation* 63.4 (October2009),368.
[151] See, for example, paintings by Millet, Rembrandt, Tintoretto, etc, depicting this scene, entitled "The Woman at the Well."
[152] That is, not only a woman, with a questionable history, but a Samaritan as well!

Gospel message is humanised in a poignant, profound, and ultimately illuminating way.

In this familiar story Jesus, hoping to avoid conflict with the Pharisees who are aware of Jesus' success baptising "more disciples than John", is travelling home to Galilee, via Samaria. Wearied from his travels, he stops by 'Jacob's well' to rest, when a Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water. Jesus asks the woman for a drink, and there ensues a multi-layered conversation that, following the previous pericope on Nicodemus and the need for a person to be born again (Jn 3:1-21), and the subsequent passage describing John the Baptist's declaration of Jesus as the 'bridegroom' who had come to claim the bride (Jn 3:23-36), is rich with associations of fertility and new life.

The well imagery itself, harking back to the stories of Rebekah and Abraham's servant (Gen 24:10-19), Jacob and Rachel (Gen29:1-14), and Moses and Zipporah (Exod 2:15b-21), suggests that the Samaritan woman herself is therefore to be the bride implicit in the earlier passage.[153] Whilst some believe there is insufficient evidence for this link,[154] other factors suggest they are being too conservative in this view. For instance, the reader is told that the woman had been previously married five times, and is now living with a sixth man. Jesus would therefore be her seventh 'husband', an improbable notion in the social milieu of the time,[155] but consistent with ancient numerological associations of the number seven with completion and return, as well as the integration of heaven and earth (c.f. Mark 8:4-8). [156]

The nameless Samaritan woman has been described as the mirror image of Nicodemus (a man, a Jew, a respected member of society who meets Jesus by night where, ironically, Jesus himself is the outsider).[157] Yet in her otherness -

[153] J. Gerald Janzen, "How Can a Man Be Born When He Is Old? Jacob/Israel in Genesis and the Gospel of John", in *Encounter* 67 (2006), 338.
[154] See, for example Francis J. Maloney, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 121(7).
[155] Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community. 2nd ed* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 48.
[156] See Clark, *The Islamic Garden,* 64-65. See also Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Liguori: Triumph Books, 1991), 51.
[157] Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel,* 47.

an unmarried woman, a Samaritan, who meets Jesus alone in broad daylight- she becomes representative not just of all Samaria, but of all people of faith. It is a notion developed by John not just dramatically, insofar as the anonymous woman is eventually displaced in the story by 'the people of the town', but also linguistically, for whilst the conversation begins in the first person singular it quickly evolves into plural speech.[158] Just as in Ezekiel 47:1-12, in this passage the blessings of the repristinated temple are available to all people prepared to participate in the life of God.

However, allowing for the above, the strongest and clearest association between Ezekiel 47:1-12 and John 4:4-42 lies in use of the imagery of the water of life that flows from the temple. For here too, just as in Ezekiel, it is from Jesus, as the New Temple, that the perpetually sustaining water of life will flow to those prepared to work towards perfecting themselves through the Spirit, in grace. Similarly, the blessings that flow from the temple are now available beyond the boundaries of Zion, beyond the ritual limitations of the Torah, amongst those who believe in their hearts, through their own experience, that Jesus is the anticipated Messiah (Jn 4:25-26), "the Saviour of the world" (Jn 4:42). A summary of the relationships between this passage and Ezekiel 47:1-12 is offered on the next page.

Geoffrey Wainwright also draws our attention to the story of the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well, describing it as Hans Urs von Balthasar's own preferred image of eternal life. Wainwright draws the reader's attention to this so as to illustrate the power of metaphor in general, and this metaphor in particular, in overcoming what he considers the "inevitable 'over-againstness' implied in the opposition between the viewer and the object."[159] That is to say, it is metaphor and parable, the "dark interval"[160] of the human imagination which, by its openness, not only bridges the potential distances between both individuals and communities and the deeper truths of their existence, but which also has the capacity to brings these distances to life.[161]

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[158] Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel,* 48.
[159] Geoffrey Wainwright, "Eschatology", in Edward T. Oakes and David Mann (eds) *The Cambridge Guide to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 121.
[160] See also John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Publishing, 1994).
[161] See p6 of the Introduction.

Diagram 2. Thematic overview comparing Ezekiel 47:1-12 and John 4:4-42

Ezekiel 47:1-12	John 4:4-42
The temple is no longer in Jerusalem, or even in Israel, but rather a transcendent place – 'YHWH is there' (stated explicitly in the concluding verse of the text – 48:35)	The temple is no longer in Jerusalem, or on the holy mountain of the Samaritans, but in Christ, through the Spirit (4:21-24)
The river of life flows from the temple, first as trickle, then as a might river (47:2-5) – it will be life sustaining, because it comes from the temple. (47:12).	The 'water' issues from Jesus as the New Temple. Jesus says it "will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (4:14). See also 7:37-39 where links to Ezekiel are also apparent, especially in light of Jerome's comments re Ezekiel 47:1-12. See n. 125.[162]
The blessings of God are available to all people of faith (with the 12 Tribes of Israel foremost. See 47:13-48:8) – the water irrigates land "to the East" – i.e. not Israel, which is to the West (47:8). To the degree that the Israelites have relinquished their unique relationship with God through their various infidelities, God, mediated through the blessing of water, is now present to all.	God's blessings are available to all people – first the Jews, then the Samaritans (as a metaphor for all people).The Samaritan woman herself, otherwise totally unacceptable according to Jewish purity laws, [163] represents the specific instance of this. The Samaritans come to believe in Jesus as the messiah through the woman's testimony (4:39), then of their own accord. (4:42)
In the image of water and associated fertility evidence is presented in the most profound way that the curse of God against the Israelites for their infidelities has been lifted. (47:8-12). The period of mourning for the desecration of the temple has now passed.	The curse of Adam has been lifted. Jesus, as the New Adam, is united with his 'bride'. The 'joy' and 'gladness' of the wedding imagery[164] with its implicit references to fertility and sexuality points to the end of mourning.
The swamps and marshes of the barren lands into which the river of life flows are to remain salt (47:11) i.e. available for liturgical purposes, for purification, and initiation.[165] Whilst God's blessings are available to all there must be purity of worship and personal responsibility for behaviour.	As the representative of all people, the Samaritan woman becomes a metaphor for the Church which "must worship in spirit and truth" (4:24). We have already been told that the woman speaks the truth (4:18) when responding to Jesus' questions.

[162] See also Zechariah 14:8. Given the overall context, this use of this reference by John in isolation is unlikely.

[163] "The daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from their cradle" – Mishnah Niddah 4.1. as cited in David Daube, " Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Meaning of συγχράομαι", in *Journal of Biblical Literature* (Vol 69. No. 2. June 1950): 137-138. (συγχράομαι – sugchraomai: meaning 'to use together', or 'to associate with' – author's translation)

[164] c.f. Isaiah 65:17-23

[165] Some have suggested this as symbolising remnant bitterness in Israel, even after their restoration before God. However, as Van Zeller argues, such a conclusion, whilst possible, is not justified by Ezekiel's vision. Dom Hubert Van Zeller, *Ezekiel: Man of Signs* (London: Sands & Company, 1944), 125,126. See also Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred,* 148.

For von Balthasar the abstract nature of the eschatological horizon means that to speak of such things as death, Heaven and Hell "we can *only* (my italics) speak prophetically, parabolically ... or by resorting to analogies as Jesus does."[166] The metaphor, in its multi-valent possibilities, offers the reader the opportunity to participate in the 'interiority' of the scene described. And it is to the imagery of the Garden of Eden that Jesus, through John, and subsequently von Balthasar are drawn. Wainwright concludes that for von Balthasar the fulfilment of Jesus' promises of John 4:14, that "Whoever drinks of the water of that I will give them will never be thirsty; the water that I will give will become in them a spring of water up to eternal life", entails "a most powerful experience of God, an awareness that is much more than a vision: it is a participation in the very surging life of God himself. (*ET4,* 443)."[167] Indeed, "one can penetrate truly into the inner sphere between the Father and the Son only if one drinks of the water of life …'is born in wind and water from above'".[168] Moreover, the very act of "allowing oneself to be worked upon", so as to "merge into God's work" is, for von Balthasar, the very meaning of faith.[169] In this instance this means accepting the sustenance of what Jesus has to offer, the 'water of life' that "flows from the new temple of Ezekiel, his own body."[170] Such a conclusion draws into sharp relief the presumption by Stroumsa, referred to earlier,[171] that "for Jesus and his disciples, the story of the Garden of Eden is not very significant." Indeed, for John at least, the Garden of Eden is an image that is at the heart of his and Jesus' creativity.

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[166] Hans Urs von Balthasar, as cited in Wainwright, "Eschatology", 120.
[167] Wainwright, "Eschatology", 120.
[168] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics. Vol VII.Theology: The New Covenant,* Translated by Brian O'Neill (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 378,379.
[169] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord,* 151.
[170] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord,* 253.
[171] See par 2, p.14. in reference to Stroumsa's view on this.

Conclusion – Water as Blessing

This dissertation had its origins in the perceived paradox that a rich religious symbol such as the Garden of Eden, which could potentialise the Abrahamic faiths in so many powerful and enduring ways, struggled to find a home in orthodox Christian theology.

The reasons for this situation were not the focus of the investigation. However, in undertaking the broader research for this dissertation, a number of hypotheses on the perceived value of Eden were open to consideration. In light of the canonical position of the Eden story in Revelation 22:1-5 and the Gospel stories that have the Garden of Eden at their heart, Guy Stroumsa's thesis, that the polyvalent character of Edenic imagery problematized its usage in orthodox Christian theology, must be seen as conjecture. Edenic imagery had been circulating in religious discourse to such a degree prior to the development of Christianity that a broad understanding of its qualities and capacities, as well as its potential limitations, must be assumed. The assimilation of Ezekiel 47:1-12 into John 4:4-42 and Revelation 22:1-5 is indicative of this. Margaret Barker's extensive research on the interchangeable aspect of Edenic imagery with that of the Temple, and with Zion itself, give rise to her own belief that cultic aspects of the First Temple, including the extensive use of Edenic imagery, were foundational to the cultural and religious framework of the nascent Christian faith. The notion that it was this reason, not the instability or polyvalent aspects of the images themselves, which led to their marginalisation by orthodox Christian leaders at the time, is an intriguing one. But, for the time being at least, this too must remain a hypothesis. In both instances neither Stroumsa's nor Barker's propositions account for the profound influence and enduring presence of Edenic imagery in broad cultural practices, nor in the sustained capacity of Edenic imagery, whether as the Garden of Eden or Paradise, to illuminate the eschatological horizon of people of faith over millennia.

What the research for this dissertation does make clear is that rather than Edenic imagery being marginalised within the Christian story itself, of little

significance to Jesus and his disciples, the Garden of Eden and its associated imagery is a central motif of the Gospel, framing and informing the Christ event itself. This is not surprising. For the notion of Eden as both idealised origin, and eschatological horizon sufficient to hold the 'sorrowful hope' at the heart of the Christian faith provides the imaginative language for this dependency. It is to the imagery of Eden that Christians turn to scaffold their understanding of both Heaven and the Church, and Edenic imagery, figuratively and literally, adorns both in turn.[172] Specifically, it is Eden in the form of the New Jerusalem described in Revelation, which is at the centre of salvation history. Of this, McNamara writes:

> The whole of scripture points to this moment, when the goal of God's salvific mission is achieved and his triumphant glory is manifested in his creation, where, as Saint Irenaeus said, "the glory of God is man fully alive," filled again with divine life. Here the Tabernacle of Moses, the Jerusalem temple, the incarnation, and the Passion find their completion. Here heaven and earth become one, and God's will is finally done "on earth as it is in heaven."[173]

Bearing in mind that scriptural writers of both the Old and New Testament have used different aspects of the Eden story for their various purposes, within the broad framework of Edenic imagery available to them, it is the symbol of water as blessing that dominates. On the one hand this would appear to be a natural extension of the wide-spread belief throughout the Ancient Near East in water as the primary life sustaining element. At the same time it was the capacity of God to subdue the chaotic and destructive potential of water, expressed through the imagery of the Great Sea and the monsters within it, which reinforced this belief.

Possibly because of these associations water can be seen in these ancient scriptures to express a multitude of additional positive values and attach to a range of life-enhancing human experiences and exchanges including those of reconciliation and forgiveness, of personal and communal restoration, of purification and reinstatement, of fertility, birth, renewal and healing.

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[172] McNamara, *Catholic Church Architecture,* 72,73.
[173] McNamara, *Catholic Church Architecture,* 77.

Whilst these values appear intrinsic to the use of the symbol of water as blessing Ezekiel, John, and the writer of Revelation build on these inherent meanings in ways that are more discursive, in the context of God's covenant with Israel as a sub-text of the Eternal covenant which Jesus, as the New Temple, had come to restore. Within these texts the activity of water as a mediator of the Wisdom of God, as in Ezekiel, or the Holy Spirit, as in John's gospel and in Revelation, amplify the potency of Ezekiel's, John's, and the writer of Revlation's respective visions. For water is, of itself, structureless - it fills the spaces of whatever contains it. Ezekiel's river does not just nourish, it also completes the forms of the revivified wastelands, both human and geographical, into which it flows. Similarly, Jesus, "pours out" his Spirit, to saturate us both individually and collectively, gracing us with new life.[174] To this extent water, strong in its vulnerability, can be seen as selfless. It wishes everything to come into completeness, and as such is the perfect emblem of the Spirit. The indications are that Ezekiel, John, and the writer of Revelation understood this to a profound degree.

As to the secondary question to which this dissertation is addressed, trying to locate a key moment or event in the Christian narrative to which the motif of the Garden of Eden and its associated imagery resolves, or finds its locus, the conclusion is less well defined. Indeed, in revealing the significance of Edenic imagery to Christian theology by comparing Revelation 22:1-5 with Ezekiel 47:1-12, questions as to the wider extent of its application by other Gospel writers come to mind. For example, is the Garden of Gethsemane a deliberate reference to Edenic imagery, and if so, has some deeper level of meaning as to its presence in the Passion narrative possibly been overlooked?[175] Similarly, does Mary Magdalene's post-resurrection encounter with Jesus the 'gardener', with its royal connotations to ancient 'gardener kings', have deeper connections through Edenic imagery to the

[174] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 540.

[175] Joachim Schaper makes some interesting remarks in this direction, arguing that there is no explicit reference in the Synoptic gospels that Gethsemane was an actual garden (see, for example Mk 14:32). However, in light of the material presented in this dissertation, implicit references (e.g. Jn 18:1) deserve a closer look. See Joachim Schaper, "The messiah in the garden: John 19.38-41, (royal) gardens, and messianic concepts", in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23-24.

ancient Temple?[176] Moreover, does Easter Saturday itself, out of which a new world is fashioned, have Edenic associations, and, if so, to what extent?[177] These, and other questions like them, are the stuff of further research.

One final point needs to be made. Despite the contention of this dissertation that "Edenic imagery allows the fullest expression and understanding of the metaphor of the Kingdom of God"[178] such imagery is not, nor can it be, reductive or all inclusive. God is always more. No one metaphor can adequately accommodate the divine plan, even a metaphor as rich and abundant as Eden.

[176] In the same essay Schaper draws readers' attention to references, particularly in John, which make a connection between Jesus and the ancient line of Davidic kings for whom gardening was an expression of the royal status. Schaper, "The messiah in the garden", 24-27.

[177] Whilst von Balthasar is cautious about the notion of Jesus 'descending' unto Hell, following his death, for Kelly the imagery of the 'seed', to describe God's transformative act, is irresistible. See Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope,* 85. Likewise, for Wainwright, commenting on von Balthasar's eschatology, "Heaven is begun from below" in the dust of death. Wainwright, "Eschatology", 120. See also von Balthasar, "The Momentum of the Cross", in *The Glory of the Lord.* See especially pp 228,229.

[178] See par. 2, p16.

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