

## **From creation to new creation: a theological reflection of salvation imagery in Genesis and Revelation.**

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### **Abstract**

Creation is not an isolated event at the start of a great story but is, in essence, the epitome of God's love and the glorification of his Son. Knowing the full implications of freewill, God weaves his master redemptive plan throughout creation, and scripture, to secure his relationship with humankind. This paper seeks to answer:

- How does the creation account in Genesis anticipate the fall and restoration of humanity?
- How are the redemptive images found in Genesis and Revelation, echoed elsewhere in scripture?
- How does the new creation imagery in Revelation complete the creation imagery in Genesis?

From an early age, children within the Christian faith are taught the rubrics of life and the origins of the universe. Whether one believes the Genesis account to be historical fact or literary myth is a moot point, for it is, perhaps, far more than either. Indeed, a study of the narrative reveals it to be a demonstration of God's love, the establishment of his relationship with humanity and a revelation of his ultimate will and purpose for all creation.

The Genesis creation account contains imagery that anticipates the fall and restoration of humanity and indicators of redemptive plans that were established before the creation of humankind. These images are echoed elsewhere in scripture and realised fully in the closing chapters of Revelation.

In trying to create a narrative of the beginning of everything, there is a peculiarity in that one must first describe what existed *before our beginning*. In simple Christian theology, the answer is God; but if that is the conclusion, there is an infinite existence before the beginning, as we know it. Significantly, it is what happened *before* human beginnings that gives the

context for the Genesis narrative. Gunton considers this, stating that creation 'necessitates reference to the situation before the story's first event' (Gunton 2004:20).

First, is the existence of evil and Lucifer, or Satan. Gen.1:1 opens with God and his creation of everything both physical and spiritual. Ezra's prayer in Neh.9:6 affirms the Lord as creator of the heavens 'with all their host.' Whilst God did not create evil, it is in the spiritual realms that scripture provides glimpses into its origins. Isaiah provides brief reference to Lucifer's fall from heaven as a result of his pride and ambition (Isa.14:12ff) and John testifies that Satan has sinned from the beginning (1 Jn.3:8). Underlying Gunton's understanding of Genesis is the negativity of Satan's influence, with allusions to the 'gap theory': that is, a period of time, or a 'gap' between Gen.1:1 and 1:2. 'Genesis 1.2 evokes pre-creation entirely with negatives, except for describing the presence of the '*ruach* of the Lord'' (Gunton 2004:22). Different biblical translations have nuanced interpretations of this negativity. The NIV uses 'formless and empty;' the CEV uses 'barren with no form of life' for example. Some commentators suggest the image in this verse is one of chaos and potentially the result of God's judgement of Satan's rebellion (Grudem 2007:287), and this is a logical suggestion. Grudem himself, however, opposes such an argument, stating that there is no scriptural evidence to support this. This may be true, but there *is* scriptural evidence concerning the fall of Satan which must have occurred at some point prior to the creation of mankind. Jesus himself describes how he saw Satan fall from heaven (Lk.10:18).

Second, it is necessary to read Genesis 1 and 2 within the context in which it was written. The beginning of the divine beings in the Mesopotamian Enuma Elish Stories have parallels to Genesis, with the divine assembly emerging from 'a chaos of water and darkness' (Matthews and Benjamin 2006:11). It is worth noting that the Hebrews may have first celebrated Yahweh as a Divine Warrior and only over time would come to regard him monotheistically as 'the deliverer...and creator who calls the cosmos from chaos' (Matthews and Benjamin 2006:11). Certainly, in contrast to parallels made with Ugaritic and Canaanite mythology, the Old Testament insists that 'creation is not to be understood in terms of different gods warring against each other for mastery of a (future) universe, but in terms of God's mastery of chaos' (McGrath 2011:217). It is also important to challenge the gnostic belief that the 'world and creation is evil' and argue instead that there is 'an ongoing relationship between God and his creation' (Gnanakan 2006:111).

Routledge stresses that following Israel's exile, people were forced to evaluate their relationship with God 'within a hostile, polytheistic culture' (Routledge 2008:126). A contemporary opinion is that Genesis 1 is post-exilic and the emphasis therefore becomes polemic against neighbouring mythology, asserting that God, not the 'Babylonian chaos monsters, existed first, and he called the universe into being' (Routledge 2008:126).

Returning to the presented text in Genesis, the assertion of God as ruler and creator becomes key and the hovering of God's Spirit can thus be interpreted as an image of divine supremacy and control.

According to Hebrew tradition, the image of chaos, water and darkness, as portrayed in Genesis 1:2, captures the nation's superstition and fear of evil. The sea and creatures of the deep are used symbolically to describe forces of evil. Job refers to such images (Job 7:12; Job 3:8) as does Isaiah 27:1, 'the Lord...will slay the dragon that is in the sea.' In the gospels, Hebrew mythology and symbolism is still prevalent, seen in the disciples' awe of the One who calms the sea and storm (Mk.4:35-41). From a post-exilic perspective, asserting God's authority within the creation narrative would have been important so to distinguish God's people and law from the surrounding traditions.

Conversely, emphasis can be placed not on the *chaos* of Gen.1:2, which Gunton implies, but on the fact that the current order is *not life-sustaining*. Coleson (2012:44) rejects the chaos and gap theory outright by suggesting that the verse 'produces far too small a gap into which to stuff the entire geological column...and the other assorted data that must be disposed of between Gen.1:1 and Gen.1:2 to make the gap theory tenable.' The logic of this argument is weak, however, as it suggests a finite time between the two verses that would be impossible to encompass Gunton's theory of negativity. Arguably, though, creation at this point was not under the constraints of time. However, Coleson's approach is one with which Grudem and other scholars would concur (Grudem 2007:288), suggesting that the Hebrew description of the primordial earth *tohu wabohu* more accurately refers to a wilderness not yet inhabitable for human beings (Duff, 2011).

Birch et al (2005:41) develop the *not life-sustaining* approach and regard the 'chaos' not as some 'divine opponent [as it does in Babylonian parallels], but as raw material that God uses to create what follows.' Deut.32:10 echoes this imagery as the people of Israel wait in the wilderness before entry into the promised or 'good' land. Again, after exile, Jeremiah speaks

of Israel's land using the same Hebrew *tohu wabohu* – formless and empty: there was no man, no birds of the air and the fruitful land was a desert (Jer.4:23f).

Extracting Genesis from Hebrew mythology and superstition is difficult but perhaps unnecessary. Both interpretations of Gen.1:2, that of chaos or wilderness, are valid in their assertion of God's supremacy and his creative authority. Both approaches are used metaphorically throughout scripture to emphasise that the earth is not reaching its full potential; that it is not yet fulfilling the purpose of God. Perhaps then, it is not a case of either or, but that both assert God's sustained control. Indeed, Birch et al (2005:37) stress that 'the reader of Genesis 1 must not get lost in literary, historical, and scientific questions' but rather, it is an invitation to 'pause and wonder at the jewel of a world that God has created.' The Near Eastern creation traditions were not simply dismissed but rather 'drastically revised in order to serve and accommodate Israel's own confession of faith' (Brueggemann 2002:40).

Both Christian and Jewish tradition acknowledge that the potential for evil existed prior to creation of the world as we know it, characterised for some by the images of darkness, water and chaos. Traditionally, this view is unsupported, since God would not have declared his creation to be good had evil been prevalent (Routledge 2008:133). However, part of the Genesis argument is the assertion of God's authority and that evil and Satan were contained, thus allowing for a 'good' creation.

Nevertheless, Lucifer had proposed an alternative to God and consequently God choose to demonstrate that his way of truth, of grace and of love, can be freely chosen, symbolised by The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (the Tree). Theoretically, at any point, God could have simply destroyed Lucifer and there would never have been the problem of evil. Arguably, that would have reduced God to the status of tyrant, demanding obedience through fear. However, it is worth noting that Adam and Eve did not necessarily require the trickery of the serpent for 'the fall' to have occurred. There was always a choice and the Tree is that symbol of God's gift of free-will. God declared that Adam and Eve could eat freely from any tree '...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Gen.2:17). In becoming 'like God' in the knowledge of good and evil there was always the possibility that humanity would choose pride, bringing creation into chaos without the creator's shaping and guidance. Genesis is the only place in which The Tree of Knowledge is mentioned and 'it is vital to see that it represents the temptation to be autonomous' (Bartholomew and Goheen 2014:40).

The Tree of Knowledge is juxtaposed with The Tree of Life, from which Adam and Eve were permitted to eat. The giving of instructions to eat or not to eat was not simply an assertion of God's authority but the establishment of a relationship, a relationship of trust and reliance on God. Arguably, the Tree of Knowledge could be termed 'The Tree of Death,' not physical death *per se*, but a tree that, if touched, represents the death and 'distortion of relationships' (Bartholomew and Goheen 2014:42). Subsequently, free-will becomes a primary theme of scripture, with the choice of obedience being the foundation of Israel's relationship with God. Deut.30:19 echoes this stating '...I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live.'

The repetition of 'it was good,' (*Hebrew: tov*) occurs throughout Genesis 1 as the account gradually develops a life-sustaining eco-system into which God places humanity. Thus, out of something that does not sustain life, God creates something that is *tov*, something that works together in the way it was intended: creation was good because God had declared it so and had given it purpose. If God is good, as Jesus states in Lk.18:19, he can only create good things.

Isa.43:7 describes the purpose of creation to be for God's glory. Significantly, Irenaeus of Lyon (c.130-c.200) suggests that it had not yet been perfected: perfection of creation is only found in Christ. In God's great kindness, he 'made men like Himself...while at the same time by His prescience he knew the infirmity of human beings and the consequences which would flow from it' (Knight 2017, IV.38.4). It is difficult to ascertain Irenaeus' reasoning for his choice of language, but to suggest that creation was imperfect implies the same of God's character. If, however, Irenaeus was arguing that creation was imperfect only in that it was awaiting consummation in Christ, then there is merit in his reasoning. Orthodox tradition would argue that Christ's incarnation was always necessary, regardless of 'the fall' to 'consummate creation and to bring it to its perfection in Christ' (Shepherd 2013:9).

This is a difficult argument. Col.1:15–23 highlights that Christ is the *telos* of creation; not only were things created by him and through him, but also *for* him, seen similarly in Jn.1:1 'In the beginning was the Word.' Consequently, creation imagery is accentuated, bringing to the fore the intention to draw all things to Christ. But this does not automatically necessitate Christ's incarnation. Indeed, arguably, the only thing that necessitated Christ's incarnation was the fall. The tension is in God's omniscience, the question being: When God created the world,

did he know that man would sin? The answer must be 'yes' otherwise free-will would have been superfluous and the Tree of Knowledge, irrelevant. Wright argues not that the world is *imperfect* but that it is *incomplete* (Wright 2008:102) and that God's intention for creation was, and is, to be 'a receptacle of his love.' To follow this trajectory of thought, it was always God's intention to give of himself thus affirming Orthodox tradition that the incarnation was anticipated prior to creation.

We see, then, that Genesis opens a narrative demonstrating God's control yet pursuing a high-risk strategy of giving humanity free-will, with his desire for an authentic relationship, rather than dictatorship over humankind. Coleson rightly suggests that '*all* Christian teaching about God, humanity, and God's relationship to the world should conform to the *intended* teachings of these chapters' (Coleson 2012:34). The blueprint for God's relationship with humanity and fullness of eternal life is established in Genesis and should form the basis of Christian redemption and faith. This is perhaps best seen in an exegesis of 'The Garden' and the 'Tree of Life', images that will now be explored in some detail.

God creates the whole world in all its splendour, glory and beauty but then plants a specific garden in Eden (Gen.2:8). This garden is to be both home and place of work (Gen.2:15) to Adam and Eve in which they have close communion with God himself (Gen.3:8-10). The garden is key for this symbolises life, flourishing and an intimate relationship with God. Eden is 'the life-giving heart of nature from which the life of the world is continuously derived' (Bauckham and Hart 1999, p.148), portrayed symbolically in the river of the water of life and encompassing the four corners of the earth (Gen.2:10-12).

Banishment from the garden is not so much about the curse but the symbolic separation from God and the Tree of Life. Death as a result of eating from The Tree of Knowledge is not found in physical death, but in the death of communion with God. Jesus himself uses the image of a garden as representative of the humanity-God relationship when he refers to his Father as 'the gardener' (Jn.15:1). To be separated from the garden (symbolising relationship) and 'the gardener' suggests a fundamental breakdown, to the point of spiritual death, of the relationship. Wright agrees adding that the natural phenomenon of death, which is part of the created order, 'gains a second dimension...turning away from the worship of the living God is turning toward that which has no life in itself' (Wright 2008:95).

It is, as suggested by Bauckhan and Hart (1999:149), not so much the loss of what Adam and Eve had, but a loss of what they might have had. This later becomes a metaphor in exilic and post-exilic writings, with 'return from exile...depicted as the return to Eden' (Daly-Denton 2017:18). Isa.51:3 also sees the restoration of Israel as a restoration of Eden. Whether from the Jewish perspective of the restoration of Israel or the Christological perspective of the restoration of all of creation, the emphasis in scripture is a return to the garden relationship between humanity and God, as established in Eden.

Coleson, however, interprets the banishment from Eden as an act of mercy (Coleson 2012:146): to have eaten the fruit from the tree of life would mean living forever in a fallen state. Gen.3:22-23: '...man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to...take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.' The implication of this verse is that death was part of the created order, 'if this were not the case, the tree of life would have been irrelevant,' (Birch et al 2005:45). Therefore, even though creation was good, part of the cycle was death and life-after-death, symbolised by the Tree of Life. Nature testifies to the natural cycle of life and death and the sheer capacity of the planet suggests that physical death is necessary; indeed, Adam and Eve were created mortal (Bauckham and Hart 1999:149).

The Tree of Life must then, have eternal, spiritual implications. Either Adam and Eve had not yet eaten of this tree or eating from the tree was an ongoing necessity. To be consistent with the image of relationship and later portrayals in scripture of Jesus as the source of life, (Jn.6:35; Jn.14:6) the implication is a *sustained contact* with the life-source: 'Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine' (Jn.15:4). Therefore, after Adam and Eve had taken of the Tree of Knowledge the two concepts become incongruent: it is not possible to both deny God and be in sustained contact with him.

The Jewish *menorah* symbolizes the Tree of Life as 'the light of life' which, Christologically, John's gospel asserts to be Jesus (Daly-Denton 2017:19). The Tree of Knowledge, then, is the route by which humanity fell, the Tree of Life is the route by which it will be restored. The incarnation of Christ did not negate the need for physical death but rather, overcame the *relational death* between humankind and God.

Access to the Tree of Life can only be via the Tree of Calvary, and the symbolism should not be overlooked. It is helpful then, to consider the Garden of Eden in parallel to wider scripture

and eschatological images and we turn first to the Garden of Gethsemane, mentioned in Matt.26:36 and Mk.14:32. Note the thematic setting of a garden, already highlighted as representative of the intimacy of relationship between God and humankind. Both gospels record identically Jesus' words in Gethsemane, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death' (Matt.26.38, Mk.14:34). One view is that Jesus is referring directly to his physical death on the cross, and the suffering that this prospect would have caused should never be understated. However, given the wider implication of scripture and the precedence of Genesis, arguably the agony of being separated from the Father is even greater than the pain of crucifixion: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mk. 15:34). As Jesus took upon himself the separation of humanity from all that Eden represented, the Trinity was wrenched apart: Jesus took upon himself, *death*.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam, made in the likeness of God, falls short of what was intended for him. In Gethsemane, Christ, the very nature of God (Phil.2:6ff) but made in human likeness, submitted himself to the will of God, saying, 'Yet not what I will, but what you will,' (Mk.14:36). Original creation began in the Garden of Eden and culminates in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Tree of Calvary. However, it is in 'the resurrection of the crucified Christ that a new beginning is to be found in his end on the cross' (Moltmann 2007:579). This leads to another garden, a garden of restoration in the relationship between God and humankind: 'At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid' (Jn.19:41).

John's gospel is significant in his use of images and signposting and draws parallels to the first creation story. On the first day of the Genesis creation, it was dark. On the first day of a new week in the new creation, it was dark (Jn.20:1). In both narratives, God then creates light, literally and metaphorically. It is interesting to reflect on new creation mindful of Christ's statement 'I am the light of the world' (Jn.8:12), light also being the start of the Genesis creation sequence (Gen.1:3). As John unravels Mary's encounter with Jesus, there is a new dawn; a new light; a new beginning for creation. John's use of dramatic irony reveals that this a story about creation just as much as Genesis is a story about creation. John unequivocally reveals that Jesus was with God before the creation of the world and choses to become part of God's earth as a human being. Jesus not only steps into cosmic history but is wrapped up in all of creation itself.



Mary's 'mistaken identity' of Jesus, in 'thinking he was the gardener' (Jn.20:15) signposts not only to Christ's divinity, for he has already acknowledged God to be the gardener (Jn.15:1), but indicates the new creation which will unfold as a result of his resurrection.

In Genesis, Adam is placed in Eden and given the role of gardener, and there is a clear connection between the first gardener, Adam and the second gardener, Jesus. It is through Jesus, the beginning of a new humanity, that the process of new creation begins. Jesus heralds this and then someday the rest of humanity who are in relationship to God will be re-created along with the rest of the created order. On that first Easter morning, hope for something more invades reality. John reveals the creator God, the master Gardener restoring the garden to how it should be.

The relationship between creation, the resurrection of Christ and eschatology cannot be overlooked for 'Christ is both the agent and the goal of all creation' (Innes 2009:137). As Heb.1:2 states, Christ is both 'heir of all things' and the one through whom 'the worlds were created.' The sacrifice and resurrection of Christ is the beginning of recapitulating creation. It is in Revelation, however, that the promise of Eden and its potential is fully realised.

Bauckham and Hart (1999:147) suggest that 'the biblical story begins in a garden and ends in a garden city.' Modern study of biblical eschatology reveals that end time (*Endzeit*) corresponds to primal time (*Urzeit*). As Coleson (2012:147) states, in Genesis we 'lost our birthright as human beings, Eden with its tree of life,' but in Revelation this is freely restored. Bauckham and Hart (1999:149) add that Revelation reveals the 'unrealized promise' of the first creation: the promise of perfection; perfection only achieved in the person of Christ.

Something that is perhaps often miscommunicated is that according to scripture, creation is not simply cast aside to make way for something entirely different. 'Paradise, the original creation depicted in Genesis, has been restored, not abandoned or destroyed' (Gorman 2011:164). Polkinghorne, cited by Walls (2008:572), concurs in that 'the new is not a second creation *ex nihilo*, but it is a resurrected world created *ex vetere*' or, as Wright (2008:96) suggests, not 'scrapping what's there and starting again...but rather liberating what has come to be enslaved.' In this sense, Irenaeus is correct for creation will be perfected in its liberation from sin. Conversely, Berry reflects on the notion that new creation will forever bear the scars of the damage humanity has inflicted on the present creation (Berry and Clarke 1991:82). This, however, does not appear consistent with claims of creation being liberated from

corruption (Rom.8:21) or the suggestion in Rev.21:4 that the 'former things have passed away.' Whether or not Christ will forever bear the scars of the cross, an integral part of the new creation process, is though, an interesting consideration but beyond the remit of this paper.

In this eschatological reality of liberated creation, Gorman states that 'the boundary between heaven and earth...is permanently removed. Eschatological life is marked by God's *perpetual perceptible presence*' (Gorman 2011:165). Linking back to the earlier discussion on the garden of Eden, where death is characterised by the separation from God, symbolised by the banishment from the garden, life can thus be defined as being in the sustained presence of God. Wright (2008:104), describes the future of creation as 'the marriage of heaven and earth...the ultimate rejection of...every worldview that...[separates] the physical from the spiritual...It is the final answer to the Lord's Prayer, that God's kingdom will come.' Rev.21:3 testifies that God's dwelling place will be with mankind: the two will be inseparable.

To have such an understanding of creation, and to see it realised in Revelation is key to how the imagery of Genesis is interpreted. Scott (2000:92) suggests that the doctrines of creation and eschatology are closely related: 'creation presupposes eschatology.' Both eschatology and creation have at their heart the glorification of God. If, as some argue, the glorification of the creator through creation is not yet completed, then its fulfilment is found eschatologically in the perfection of creation through Christ and the eternal worship of God.

Of the two trees mentioned in Genesis, only one is found in Revelation. The Tree of Knowledge is no more; it is superfluous since there is no longer any evil to be known. Of the new Jerusalem, symbolic for the bride of Christ (Rev.21:9) 'nothing unclean will ever enter it' (Rev.21:27): sin does not exist. The absence of sin is perhaps also captured in the suggested lack of 'sea' (Rev.21:1). The world's oceans, containing unfathomable sea-life, cover the majority of the planet and this paper has already examined how the new creation is born out of the original creation. It is therefore difficult to comprehend how a significant part of creation is simply wiped out. The argument therefore has to be that the absence of sea is referring to an absence of chaos and evil. The nature of this section of Revelation is largely apocalyptic and, as such, cannot be taken literally and it is necessary to consider both from criticism and a literary approach to determine what John is seeking to portray to his reader. The imagery would be consistent with the imagery surrounding the sea throughout scripture: Dan.7 describes four terrifying beasts emerging from the sea, representing oppressive kingdoms;

Isa.57:20 compares the wicked to 'the tossing sea.' Revelation challenges this historic image, reinforcing the absence of sin and fear and re-asserting the power and control of God, introduced in Genesis. This interpretation sits comfortably with the chaos-theory presented in Genesis, discussed at the start of this paper.

The Tree of Life, however, reaches a glorious reimagining in Revelation. This tree, mentioned in Ezek.47:12 and reintroduced in the closing chapter of Revelation, now becomes an abundance of trees lining the river of life that flows from the throne of God; there is unlimited life in his presence. Perhaps the single Tree of Life in Eden was an indication of an intended eternal life which, in Revelation, flourishes, multiplies and becomes freely available. Significantly, Revelation reveals that even the leaves of the tree are valuable, for they provide 'the healing of the nations' (Rev.22:2), pre-empted in Ezekiel. If the leaves provide healing, then that need for healing must have been anticipated by God in Genesis. Only as we look back at Genesis can we see that Genesis in fact points forward to Christ. Thompson links the healing power of the tree as an allusion to the cross of Jesus, referencing Galatians 3:13, 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"' (Thompson 1998:185).

In conclusion, this paper has explored how the creation account in Genesis anticipates the fall and restoration of humanity. Imagery such as the Tree of Knowledge pre-empted the pride of mankind whereas the Tree of Life points to the promise of eternal life. Scripture affirms the sovereignty of God and his full control over evil and his provision for a restored relationship with humanity, realised in the person of Christ and symbolised in garden imagery. Revelation is the fulfilment of all that was foreknown in Genesis and envisions the perfection of creation. To understand the theology of creation it is necessary to remove it from the confines of time, science and even human interpretation and regard it as a creative, trinitarian expression of love. Creation was 'designed to reflect God, both to reflect God back to God in worship and to reflect God into the rest of creation in stewardship' (Wright 2008:94).

Finally, how is this relevant to contemporary Christianity? In an increasingly fragmented society, '...chaos and disorder still threaten to disrupt God's purpose' (Routledge 2008:129). Scripture reveals this was never God's intention. God's ultimate purpose was to be in relationship and community with his people demonstrated not just in the garden imagery of Genesis, but traced through scripture in God's declaration of relationship between himself and his people (Gen.17:7; Ex.6:7, Ezek.36:28, Jer.30:22) and finally in Rev.21:7, 'The one

who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.' Contemporary political challenges, the persecution of the church in its many guises, issues regarding human sexuality and identity and breakdowns in relationships and communities, are just a few areas where understanding God's creative design and purpose can give meaning and hope.

For some, the end of the world is approaching, 'paralyzing and numbing us all. Nothing is as fatal as the expectation of an unavoidable catastrophe' (Moltmann 2007:578). Even within the church, fear and uncertainty can taint the future hope that Christians should have. This study of creation and redemption imagery in Genesis and Revelation demonstrates the living hope that is available to all who believe in Christ. A detailed exegesis of the first and final chapters of the bible, read in the light of the person of Jesus, reveals a gospel of hope, not a gospel of despair or chaos as some may suggest.

God's good news started with the opening words of the bible: 'In the beginning God' (Gen.1:1). Moltmann (2000:137) says that biblically the world did not begin with the Fall therefore it will not end with the world's downfall. Rather, 'it begins with the primordial blessing of temporal creation, and ends with the blessedness of the creation which will be eternal.' Let us conclude, then, with the words of Jesus, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End' (Rev.22:13).

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