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Quaestiones disputatae

How Greek was Paul's Eschatology?

At the 69th Annual Meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS), held in Szeged, Hungary, three scholars were invited to debate the theme of the Greek element in Paul's eschatology – a theme proposed by Prof Udo Schnelle, President of SNTS for 2014. The three contrasting presentations, intended primarily for oral delivery, are published here. It is intended that this 'Quaestiones Disputatae' format will be a regular feature of the Society's meetings, and that presentations will be published in this journal.

GEORGE VAN KOOTEN

1. Introduction

In this scholarly disputation with my distinguished colleagues Oda Wischmeyer and Tom Wright, in which we address the question of how Greek Paul's eschatology is, I wish to emphasise two aspects: that Paul's engagement with 'Greek' eschatology is rather precise, and that it reflects a serious, genuine discourse. It is not simply a matter of Paul picking up snippets that are 'general knowledge' and 'in the air' (as Wischmeyer may be inclined to argue); rather his notions and thoughts can be traced to specific discourses, be they more Stoic or more Platonic in nature. Moreover, his engagement is serious: the coherence of his views should warn us against dismissing Paul's use of 'Greek' terms and notions (as Wright may tend to do) as merely tactical, half-hearted attempts to express himself in ways that are not representative of his own real convictions, but only serve to take 'every thought captive to obey Christ' (2 Cor 10.5).

Before arguing the case for Paul's participation in Greek eschatological discourses, I would like briefly to point out that in incorporating Greek elements into his eschatology Paul is no exception among contemporary Jews and Christians. In the *Sibylline Oracles*, for instance, the Acherusian lakes from the Greek conception of the afterlife feature as the place where the righteous enjoy 'eternal life with the immortals' (2.330–9), and in the Apocalypse of *The Life of Adam and Eve* Adam's soul is carried off to the Lake of Acheron and washed three times in the presence of God (37.3). Similarly Philo, in his *De aeternitate mundi*, engages with the 'eschatological' debate between the philosophical schools. He sides with Plato, against the Stoics and the Peripatetics, in endorsing

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the view, ascribed to Moses, that the world had a beginning but will have no end (7–19). Josephus, finally, credits the discovery of the periodic 'Great Year' (ὁ μέγας ἐνιαυτός) to the patriarchs (*Ant.* 1.106–7); he applies this notion of recurrent events in aligning the Romans' destruction of the temple of Jerusalem with the destruction by the Babylonians (*J. W.* 6.250–1 and 6.267–70).

My simple methodological question is why what was 'permissible' for Jewish Sibylline authors, Philo and Josephus should not also be permissible for Paul. All the more so since other New Testament authors also drew on Greek eschatology. Matthew talks of the eschatological end as 'the rebirth' (παλιγγενεσία) (19.28), while his report of Jesus' statement that 'the gates of Hades will not prevail against' the church (16.18) is rather similar in tone to Aelius Aristides' account of a verse sung by Alexandrian school children about divine protection: 'He has saved many from manifest death, | Even when they stood at the inflexible gates | Of Hades' (*The Sacred Tales* III 310.20–5). Similarly, Luke talks of the end as the 're-establishment of the cosmos' (ἀποκατάστασις πάντων) (Acts 3.21),[1] and Peter discusses the destruction of the elements by fire (2 Peter 3.10–12).[2] All these examples demonstrate the acquaintance of Jewish and Christian authors with Greek eschatological terminology, which they apply without any apparent reluctance.

2. Greek eschatology and Paul

2.1 *Christ and Hades*

Picking up on the issue of Christ and Hades from Matthew's Gospel, it is relevant to note that Paul, too, brings the two together in 1 Cor 15.54–5. Here he changes the invocation of Hades and death in LXX Hosea 13.14 (where they are portrayed as instruments of God's wrath, illustrating God's lack of compassion) into a positive triumphant statement of Christ's triumph over Hades, and man's deliverance from it. Thus Christ acquires a role very similar to that of Heracles, who fights a battle with Death and brings the figure of Alcestis back to life (Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.9.15; Euripides, *Alcestis* 1136–63).[3] It makes us aware of how Paul's application of LXX Hosea 13.14 to the acts of Jesus Christ would resonate with pagan Corinthians familiar with such stories about Heracles.

2.2 *Stoic Protology and Eschatology*

Apart from such resemblances between Christ and the pagan gods, Greek eschatological expectations are also woven into the very substructure of Paul's

1 Cf. I. L. E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of 'Apokatastasis'* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

2 Cf. E. Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2007) chapter 6.

3 Cf. W. Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999) 13–14.

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thought. We do not need explicit references by Paul to Greek philosophical texts to show this (*pace* Wischmeyer) as his use of distinctive Greek phrases speaks for itself, and shows that he was engaged in a broader religio-philosophical discourse. This becomes clear in the frequent instances of what Gregory Sterling has called Greek 'prepositional metaphysics': the use of the prepositions 'from' (ἐκ), 'through' (διά) and 'into' (εἰς) to frame the fate of the cosmos and individuals within the all-comprehensive care of God, from creation to the end of time.[4] Thus Paul states that 'God chose the uncreated things of the cosmos and the things that were set at naught, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God, from whom you are (ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε) in Christ Jesus' (1 Cor 1.28–30). And using the full array of prepositions he affirms that 'for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things (ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα) and towards whom we exist (καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν), and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things (δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα) and through whom we exist (καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ)' (1 Cor 8.6).

Similarly, having discussed God's compassion over 'all' (οἱ πάντες) the Jews (Rom 11.32), Paul transcends this focus on Israel in his subsequent eulogy, which marks the transition from his chapters on Israel (Rom 9–11) to his universalising depiction of Christianity as a 'logical worship of God', open for all whose mind is transformed (Rom 12.1–2). In this eulogy Paul moves from οἱ πάντες of the Jews to τὰ πάντα of all creation: 'from him and through him and to him are all things (ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα). To him be the glory for ever. Amen' (Rom 11.36). Paul's eschatology is not about 'YHWH returning to Zion' (as Wright contends), but about the movement of τὰ πάντα towards God, a movement that is actually a returning to him because τὰ πάντα issued from God and are currently being guided by God on their return to him.

In his expression of this view Paul comes close to a Stoic worldview and spirituality. According to the Stoics, God 'is indestructible and unoriginated, being the artificer of this orderly arrangement, who at stated periods of time absorbs *into himself* the whole of substance (ἀναλίσκων εἰς ἑαυτὸν τὴν ἅπασαν οὐσίαν) and again begets it *from himself* (καὶ πάλιν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ γεννῶν)' (Zeno, *SVF* 2.580 *apud* Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 7.137). Of course the difference from Paul is the eternal, cyclical recurrence of this process according to the Stoics, but the *structure* of this process as emerging *from* and returning *to* God is similar. Moreover, for those living within the current timespan, the existential experience is the same. Clearly, the later Christian doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* (Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 1.4) entirely obscures Paul's views on this issue, as the Stoic-Pauline view of a creation of all things *from God* is incompatible with a creation out of the non-existent (cf. Philo, *De aeternitate mundi* 78). What

4 See G. E. Sterling, 'Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts', *Studia Philonica Annual* 9 (1997) 219–38.

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this parallel with Stoic prepositional metaphysics shows is that Paul's eschatology is not an isolated topic, but part of his comprehensive protology and eschatology which are encompassed in God.

Moreover, there are various other topics in Paul that are fully in line with this protological and eschatological substructure of his thought. To give a few examples: the notion of 'the form of the cosmos (τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου)' passing away (1 Cor 7.31) is part of the same Stoic view of a divinely guided cosmological process. According to Marcus Aurelius, the divine Rational Soul 'goes about the whole Universe and the void surrounding it and traces its σχῆμα, and stretches forth into the infinitude of Time, and comprehends the cyclical Regeneration of all things (καὶ τὴν περιοδικὴν παλιγγενεσίαν τῶν ὅλων ἐμπεριλαμβάνει), and takes stock of it' (*Meditations* 11.1.2).[5]

Furthermore, Paul's view that the aim of the cosmic process is ἵνα ᾖ ὁ θεὸς [τὰ] πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, for God to be 'all in everything' (1 Cor 15.28), aptly describes a Stoic view on the status of the cosmos *after* the last eschatological conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) and *before* the next διακόσμησις (the new order after ἐκπύρωσις) or ἀποκατάστασις πάντων (the re-establishment of the cosmos). During the conflagration, God subsumes everything into himself and becomes fully identical with τὰ πάντα, whereas during the phase of cosmic extension God is ἐν πᾶσιν, in everything.[6]

And finally, another concept that is entirely coherent with these views is the depiction of the eschatological human body as a 'spiritual, pneumatic body' (σῶμα πνευματικόν) (1 Cor 15.44), a term that Stoics use to describe the quality of the cosmic body after the conflagration, when it is fully identical with God's reasoning power (see *SVF* 2.1054 *apud* Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 13.21.128). Hence, from a Stoic perspective (and probably also from a Pauline perspective), once the cosmos has been brought back *to* God, *from* whom it emerged, and once it is *identical* with God, not only the resurrected bodies (1 Cor 15.44) but the entire cosmos (1 Cor 15.28) will be a σῶμα πνευματικόν. Paul's entire protology and eschatology, therefore, have a profoundly Stoic substructure, and his views come across as highly coherent.[7]

5 See also the Stoic texts in *SVF* 2.577, 2.1009; Heraclitus, *Allegoriae/Quaestiones Homericae* 36.4 (Τὸ … τοῦ κόσμου σχῆμα), 43; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 8.7 (τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τοῦδε); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 7.140; Porphyry, *Contra Christianos*, fr. 34 (ed. von Harnack 1916). Cf. also Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2.87.

6 Cf. G. H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003) chapter 2.2.4.

7 This Stoic interest, or spirituality, is continued in the Pseudo-Paulines. See Eph 3.14 and 4.6 to be compared with *SVF* 2.1021 *apud* Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 7.147. Cf. G. H. van Kooten, 'The Divine Father of the Universe from the Presocratics to Celsus', *The Divine Father* (ed. F. Albrecht and R. Feldmeier; Leiden: Brill, 2014) 293–323. Cf. Col 1.15–17,

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2.3 *Platonic supplements*

Though the substructure of Paul's thought is firmly Stoic, it nevertheless accommodates some important Platonic notions. This is not a sign of eclecticism, in a negative sense, but rather illustrates Paul's creative, fresh thinking; in any case, the line between Stoics and Platonists was not always easy to draw. Paul's Stoic substructure accommodates the following Platonic notions.

First, Paul's anthropology harbours the Platonic notion of the 'inner man' (2 Cor 4.16 and Rom 7.22)[8] and the related notions of individual judgement and heavenly immortality immediately after death (2 Cor 5.1-10). This is in marked contrast with Stoicism, where – at least according to Chrysippus – human beings do not survive death, only the Sages surviving until the next conflagration.[9]

Second, these views on the inner man occur together with the rather Platonic notion of deliverance *from* the body (Rom 7.24; 8.23; cf. Plato's *Phaedo* 64c, 66a–67d).

Third, Paul also reflects the Platonic notion of the groaning of the lower strata of the cosmos (Rom 8.22; cf. Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 590F). Paul's view that not just human beings but the entirety of the cosmos will be liberated, on the other hand, is decidedly "un-Platonic". Although even here it must be borne in mind that the difference between Paul and Plato is not so large as sometimes assumed. Neither is Plato's view of heaven totally spiritualised as it is the place of 'the real heaven and the real light *and the real earth*' (see *Phaedo* 109e–110a), nor does Paul believe in a 'new earth' (*pace* Wright; this phrase occurs in Rev 21.1 and 2 Pet 3.13 but not in Paul's writings): the term 'new creation' in his writings refers to an inner process (2 Cor 5.17–18; Gal 6.14–16) which takes place in the 'inner man' and mind (2 Cor 4.16 and Rom 12.2), while the resurrectional body will differ from current physical bodies and will be spiritual (1 Cor 15.44). Hence, in line with this, the dwelling which people receive from God after death is 'eternal in the heavens' (2 Cor 5.1–2) and not on a new earth, leading to a hitherto unknown level of fully reciprocal perception and understanding of God and humankind (1 Cor 13.12). Yet Paul's view that the whole of creation will be liberated, indeed, more resembles Stoic thought, as the entire cosmos will be subsumed into, and rendered identical with, God and will, probably also in Paul's view, possess a σῶμα πνευματικόν.

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however, with a more Platonic emphasis on Christ as the image of God, *in whom* (instead of 'from whom') the cosmos is put and held together (cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 92c).

8 See G. H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) chapter 7.2.

9 Cf. C. Jedan, *Stoic Virtues: Chrysippus and the Religious Character of Stoic Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2009) 17, 177 nn. 51–2.

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Finally, Paul also applies the Platonic notion of the contrast between the degenerate era of the present, and the golden age of the past that needs to be reintroduced: 'we ought by every means to imitate the life of the age of Cronus, as tradition paints it, and order both our homes and our States in obedience to the immortal element within us, giving to the mind's ordering the name of "law"' (Plato, *Laws* 713e). This statement reads as Paul's programme for Romans 12–15, where the present era is criticised and the 'distorted mind' (Rom 1.28) is now restored in the logical religion of Christianity (Rom 12.1–2); this has consequences for Christians' 'homes' and their relation to the 'State'.[10] Hence, Paul's 'regenerating eschatology' also bears Platonic overtones.

3. Concluding reflections

From a scholarly point of view, these rather coherent complexes of Stoic and Platonic parallels suggest two things. First, that Paul does not simply eclectically pluck ideas out of the air, but consciously moves between the schools and appropriates their specific discourses as best suits his own intentions. This is rather consistent with the picture drawn in Acts, of Paul moving between the schools of Epicureans and Stoics (17.18), quoting a representative of the latter, Aratus, in support of his own protological views (17.28; cf. Aratus, *Phaenomena* 5), and thus inducing the conversion of some members (probably Stoics rather than Epicureans) of the Athenian philosophical elite (17.34); they follow in the steps of Roman centurions (Acts 10.1–48) and proconsuls (Acts 13.4-12) before them (*pace* Wischmeyer). And second, that it is impossible to interpret Paul as the complete antithesis of the Greeks, since it seems that Greek eschatological terminology and notions have become part of his own thinking. Theologically speaking the latter point seems to imply that Barthian-type models of an alleged diametrical opposition of the New Testament to Greek religion are not fruitful, as if pagan eschatological 'hope' (ἐλπίς) were merely 'wishful thinking' (so Wright). A more constructive approach, such as that proposed by J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, who emphasise the comparability of pagan 'myth' and Christian 'true myth', seems far more appropriate.[11]

Indeed, Paul's eschatology needs to be understood as part of his coherent, comprehensive protological and eschatological views, which show a thorough familiarity with Stoic thought. Within this Stoic substructure Paul accommodates Platonic and, of course, Jewish notions. Paul combines Stoic and Platonic views, inasmuch as he agrees with the Stoics that the cosmic process emerges *from* God and returns *to* him; he differs from them, however, in assuming that this process is

10 Cf. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, chapters 7.1 and 7.3, about decline and restoration of the mind, respectively.

11 On Lewis' concept of myth, see now A. E. McGrath, *The Intellectual World of C.S. Lewis* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014) chapter 3.

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not cyclical, but *ends* at the moment at which everything becomes identical with God, just as the soul of the Platonic philosophers escapes reincarnation and enters into the eternal vision of God. Unlike the Platonists, Paul maintains that somatic existence (apparently including that of the groaning creation) is subsumed – in a Stoic way – into God's existence. Unlike the Stoics, however, he believes that the identification of God with all in all is not cyclical, but the truly definitive, eternal and intimate embrace of God and creation.

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The question raised for this *disputatio* is a fundamental one. Though in the following argument I shall rely only on my own studies and confine myself to some basic statements, I want to emphasise that we are not pioneers in this field. In fact, we have to bear in mind the groundbreaking work of the 'Religionsgeschichtliche Schule' as well as the opposing views of distinguished scholars such as Martin Hengel or James D. G. Dunn on the one hand and Troels Engberg Pedersen on the other. I shall develop my argument in six steps.

(1) The title of our investigation implies that there is something like a Greek philosophical or religious doctrine about the future end of the world, the creation or humankind that influenced Paul or that was shared and used by him in some way or another. Scholars agree that the Pauline text base relevant to the topic in question includes at least 1 Thess 4; 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 4; 5; Phil 1; 3; and Rom 8. In what follows I shall concentrate my reflection on these eschatological texts.

(2) The presumption of our theme is that Paul has absorbed cultural and religious influences of the Greek world that form the backdrop of his education and activities. The most reliable evidence for what we call influence or cultural milieu or intellectual context is the practice of *quotation*, either of names and schools or of text passages. This holds especially true for traditional cultures such as the ancient Jewish and the Greco-Roman ones. Since Paul's texts are outstanding examples of what we call intertextuality and are packed with quotations and allusions, I take my point of departure from his quotations in the field of eschatology. What kind of texts does he quote for affirmation or argument? Neither in 1 Thess 4–5 and 1 Cor 15, nor in 2 Cor 5, Phil 1 or Rom 8, does Paul quote a single Greek philosophical text. What he does quote, however, is 'scripture', that is the Septuagint, the collection of the Jewish Holy Books translated into Greek, as the Letter of Aristeas puts it. The quoted texts are: Ps 110.1 (1 Cor 15.25); Ps 8.7

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(1 Cor 15.27) – both of these texts are only allusions without a quotation formula, but nevertheless would be recognised by a Jewish audience; Gen 2.7 (1 Cor 15.45), the most relevant citation since Gen 2 functions as the argumentative basis for the whole conception of the two Adams; Isa 25.8 and Hos 13.14 (1 Cor 15.54); Ps 43.23 LXX (Rom 8.36).

So, first of all, I would like to state that there is no explicit evidence for a single philosophical or religious Greek non-Jewish *source* Paul refers to or argues against. The same applies to references to the mere theme of Greek philosophy and Greek philosophers. Paul's internal conversation partners and authorities are not 'Greek'.

(3) This being the case, we have to investigate more precisely the meaning of the term 'Greek' in the wording of our theme. Since the wording is concerned with differentiating, we have to consider what we are actually looking for when we ask about what is 'Greek'. Evidently, it is not the language: language as such is the same in Greek, Greco-Jewish and Early Christian texts and cannot be used to differentiate these cultural and religious spheres. In the field of New Testament studies and especially in Pauline scholarship, the term 'Greek' has a particular significance from the outset: it immediately evokes the opposition of 'Jewish' and 'Greek', not in terms of language, but of literary genre (letters) and rhetoric, of religious ideas, ethics and philosophical argument. As every Pauline scholar knows, in the field of Pauline studies, we can easily get lost in the learned labyrinth of the 'Greek' or 'Jewish' Paul, who was a Greek Jew and presented himself as apostle of Jesus Christ.

So, the primary question is what 'Greek' actually means in interpreting Paul. Paul comes from the Jewish diaspora in Asia Minor, a political, religious and cultural world of its own, where Jewish communities aimed at living their Jewish way of life as a distinct ἔθνος within the political framework of Greek cities under the pivotal rule of the *imperium Romanum*. Since the classic works of Victor Tcherikover (1959) and Martin Hengel (1969), the strict religious and cultural alternative of 'Greek' and 'Jewish' has lost its dominance for the interpretation of diaspora Judaism in Alexandria, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. This is the reason for today's New Testament scholars commonly avoiding the simple opposition of 'Jewish' against 'Greek' or 'Hellenistic'. This situation could lead us to the opinion that the investigation of 'Greek' ideas in Paul could soon prove to be a 'dead-end street'. Since, however, the opposition between Greek and Jewish has been used by both ancient Jewish and non-Jewish authors and accordingly also by Paul himself, it makes sense to revive the issue of the 'Greek' aspect of Paul's thought, once a major field of research in the 'Religionsgeschichtliche Schule'.

When Paul writes about 'Jews and Greeks', he thinks of 'Jews and pagans', that is, of the main religious difference in the world he knows; in other words, he

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demonstrates his Jewish way of understanding the world. Moreover, his texts are the result of a distinct awareness of the status of Jews being an ἔθνος of their own. In this regard, Paul shares the religious and cultural attitude of Jewish citizens towards the 'Greek' – that is, the pagan majority. This attitude is characterised by both a rejection of the 'Greeks' combined with a privileging of the distinctively Jewish religion, ethos, history, identity and status as an ἔθνος on the one hand (Wisdom of Solomon), and wide interest in Greek philosophy and culture on the other (Pseudo-Aristeas, Philo). The latter type is often combined with the attempt of fashioning Moses as a teacher of Greek philosophers and as cultural hero (πρῶτος εὑρετής).

So, once again: what are we looking for when we use the term 'Greek' for specific elements of Pauline theology? As far as I see, we should seek to understand Paul as one of the so-called Jewish-Hellenistic diaspora writers with more or less loose relations to their cultural environment, but we should not feel inclined to put him especially close to figures such as Philo or Josephus – Jews with a profound education in both Jewish and Greek religious, ethical and philosophical tradition and literature, who are not only aware of Greek philosophical debates but often explicitly discuss the position of philosophers. The answer to the question of the 'Greekness' of the majority of Jewish-Hellenistic authors will vary widely from case to case. The same applies to Paul. The only thing we can exclude is any reference to specific Greek philosophical schools or moral positions in his letters. To be precise: Paul does not discuss Stoic or Platonic positions, and to my mind it does not make sense to find philosophical positions or influences as such in his arguments.

To sum up once more: we will fail to find *influences* of distinct philosophical schools such as the Stoa or Platonism, when we look for elements of Greek eschatological ideas in Paul. What we will come across, however, is something like a philosophical *koine*, words or even terms that are used in Jewish and non-Jewish Greek philosophical and religious language – 'language' understood in terms of terminology: terms such as εἰκών, motives such as πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς, and, most important, topics that Jewish and 'Greek' authors have in common. The key topic in our field of interest is ὁ κόσμος. We can add a second term: the soul, since the future of the soul is connected with and depends on the future of the κόσμος.

(4) Here we are faced with another complex issue: whether and how far the term 'eschatology' is compatible with Greek religion and philosophical ideas. The idea of the end came into being with the pre-exilic prophets as the end of Israel, at the latest after the exile as the end of all nations and of the world as a whole. The rich apocalyptic literature of Jewish authors writing in Hebrew and Greek focused on the topic of the 'end' in a cosmological sense, but also on Israel's destiny. Correspondingly, from Daniel and parts of 1 Enoch onwards, certain apocalyptic

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texts as well as the Maccabean books promote the idea of resurrection and final punishment for individuals, so that each human being will have an 'end' too. Paul himself seems to have encountered the idea of the resurrection of the dead during his period as Pharisee. When we look at the cosmological ideas of the Greek philosophers, only the Stoa knows an end of the κόσμος, but only in connection with the idea of a new cycle of the world after the ἐκπύρωσις – and the same applies to the soul or the individual person, while other philosophical schools think along Aristotle's line and deny the idea of an end of the κόσμος. As I have already pointed out Paul did not take an active part in this philosophical debate, but his visions of the 'end' are at least partly commensurable with one of the philosophical themes of his time.

To sum up this topic: Greek cosmology and Jewish eschatology have important *themes* in common, regarding the idea of an 'end' in its spatial and temporal dimensions.

(5) So far, I have touched the main 'idea' of Pauline eschatology: the 'end' of the κόσμος and of humankind or individuals. Now I shall address very briefly the field of 'motives' in Pauline eschatological texts. The 'Religionsgeschichtliche Schule' provided us with an abundance of supposed parallels from Greek religion and philosophy, and today our knowledge in this field can be further broadened by the materials collected in 'Der Neue Wettstein'. But *Motivgeschichte* is a doubtful undertaking with weak evidence and changing contexts. In particular, metaphors migrate and can be used in different contexts. It is not parallels but language – in other words the lexemes or the particular 'eschatological lexicon' – that matters for our investigation and ought to be brought together with basic themes of the κόσμος, the soul and the 'end'. In this field we may find what we are looking for: the 'Greek' dimension in Pauline eschatology. We can start from the assumption that Jews and 'Greeks' shared some elements of a cosmological–eschatological interest, *lebensweltliche* experience and linguistic *koinē*. Only such a *koinē* can explain why Paul's preaching and teaching was successful, at least to a certain degree. Non-Jews could understand that Paul had a message that met their cosmogonic and cosmological interests, questions and doubts as well as their concern for their individual destiny.

In this sense, investigating the 'Greek' dimension in Pauline eschatology does not mean looking for influences, dependencies or motives that originate in a specific philosophical school, but for shared language and a shared interest in questions of the destiny of the κόσμος and the soul that could be understood also by a pagan audience. So, what we are looking for is the medium of intellectual and religious *reception* of at least parts of Pauline eschatology by pagan ears and pagan imaginations.

(6) How limited these ears were, we can imagine when we read Luke. It is Luke the skilled narrator who puts a pagan philosophical quotation into Paul's mouth

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(Aratus, *Phainomena* 5), but it is also Luke the historian who reports that the Athenian philosophers refused to listen to the eschatological part of Paul's speech at the Areopagus because it seemed so alien to them.

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Introduction

Constraints of space dictate a brief summary of complex issues. We must avoid the Hegelian polarisations which played out a zero-sum game between 'Judaism' and 'Hellenism' either as historical descriptions or as a priori theological evaluations. All Second-Temple Judaism is, in some sense, *Hellenistic* Judaism. Even when Jewish writers extol the Jewish God and the Jewish way of life, they can use Stoic or Platonic themes, as in Wisdom of Solomon and 4 Maccabees. We must recognise, too, the distinction between *derivation* and *confrontation*. To echo a motif is neither to endorse it nor to indicate genealogical descent. Paul 'takes every thought captive to obey the Messiah' (2 Cor. 10.5). He borrows ideas from non-Jewish culture, but the power behind his own beliefs remains a *narrative*: Israel's God had fulfilled his promises in Messiah and Spirit, generating (not an isolated community with new, 'pure' ideas, but) a messianic worldview rooted in ancient Jewish ideas and engaged with the wider culture.

1. The Place of Eschatology

The question of ultimate futures, for the world of human beings, is far more prominent in Jewish writings than non-Jewish. There are indeed the 'golden age' theories, whether driven by cosmic speculation or, as with Virgil or Horace, political expediency. From Homer to Plato there are theories about life after death; among the Stoics, visions of cosmic conflagration and rebirth. But these occupy a tiny proportion of the literature compared to eschatology in Second-Temple Jewish writings. The word ἐλπίς in ancient Greek is not particularly prominent, often merely implying wishful thinking, a cousin of τύχη, 'fate'. To express a good, secure hope (as in Socrates's dying words) requires a further adjective, perhaps ἀγαθή or μεγάλη. Hope may have been the last thing left in Pandora's box, but it was a generalised optimism, not a specific, defined or well-grounded expectation.

The prominence of Jewish eschatology may reflect political circumstances. The persecuted and oppressed long for radical change. But the hope then articulated drew upon the character of Israel's God, specifically as creator and judge. The God who had made the world would put it right. The paradigm was the

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Exodus, as in Wis 10–19. Retellings of that foundational story sustained this double belief and gave it political and also philosophical targets: the Epicureans in Wis 1–5, the pagan rulers later on. The Jewish hope for 'the age to come' could be variously expressed, but it rested on Jewish-style creational monotheism, coupled with Israel's election. Israel's God, the creator, would act at last, in a new Exodus, a new victory, a new creation.

2. Paul: New Creation

I have argued elsewhere that Paul retrieved and transformed the ancient Jewish eschatology around his belief that the creator God had *inaugurated* the new age through the messianic events concerning Jesus and the Spirit.

The climax of Rom1–8 is the often marginalised passage 8.18–25, expressing the rebirth of creation. Any potential analogy with the Stoic conflagration and cosmic rebirth is superficial and problematic. These verses pick up four earlier strands: Adam, Abraham, the Exodus and the Messiah. The 'glorification' of human beings in 8.21 and 8.30 is the reversal of the Adamic loss of glory in 3.23, which looks back to chapter 1 (humans turn away from divine power seen in creation). Abraham, in Rom 4, reverses this by giving God glory and trusting his power, so that he will inherit, not the 'land' only, but the whole κόσμος (4.13). As in Gen 15, this is accomplished through the new Exodus: in Rom 6, the slaves are set free by coming through the water; in Rom 7 they arrive at Sinai with all its puzzles; then in chapter 8, heaping up the Exodus-imagery, the Spirit dwells in them, like the pillar of cloud and fire, to lead them to their 'inheritance' – not the holy land, certainly not 'heaven', but the renewed creation.

This 'inheritance' is won by the Messiah. Paul expounds Ps 2 and 8, joining together the worldwide Davidic extension of the Abrahamic 'inheritance' and the 'glory' of the image-bearing humans. The passage invokes the so-called 'messianic woes', frequent in Jewish speculations about the coming end. However much Paul (intentionally or otherwise) echoes non-Jewish parallels, Rom 8 retells Israel's eschatological narrative, reworked around Messiah and Spirit.

The other obvious 'new creation' passage is 1 Cor 15.20–8. Again, Paul's language resonates with themes from the wider Hellenistic world, but his underlying argument expounds a biblical and Second-Temple theme: the victory of the creator God over the powers, including death itself. The whole chapter is soaked in Gen 1, 2 and 3: Paul's theme is the rescue of creation from corruption – the antithesis of Platonic eschatology. The argument is again made through messianic Psalms, in this case 8 and 110: all things are 'put under his feet'. All creation is subject to the Messiah, the true Adam. Verse 24 may also allude to Dan 2.44, evoking the wider theme of successive world-empires, fused with the Israelite

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belief in the kingdom of God. The victory of verses 24–8 is echoed at the end, where Death, Sin and the Law are overcome (vv. 54–57). In this chapter we have, not the messianic woes, but the messianic battle, another important Jewish theme.

In several passages, Paul retrieves the Jewish notion of the strange, dark national story reaching a sudden and unexpected conclusion: 'when the time had fully come', God sent forth his son (Gal 4.4). Paul must have known the Roman parallel: Virgil, Horace, Ovid and Livy tell the politically powerful narrative of Rome's history reaching its surprising climax in Augustus, son of God, lord of the world. Virgil did not get this from the parallel Jewish sources, nor did Paul get it from Virgil. Here is an accidental but sharp confrontation, indeed contradiction.

The sign of this contradiction is the resurrection, foundational to Rom 8 and 1 Cor 15. This is the second main theme of Paul's eschatology.

3. Paul: Resurrection

When Paul spoke of the resurrection of those ἐν Χριστῷ, he drew on ancient Jewish sources, sharpening up their message. Despite the distant parallels with the Alcestis legend and the like, the obvious pre-Christian evidence for resurrection belief is Jewish. But Paul's view is not simply derived from such strands. It has reshaped them in (at least) seven ways.

First, like eschatology itself, resurrection has moved from the periphery to the centre. It is not a central topic in Jewish writings. But in Paul it is.

Second, for Paul the event of 'resurrection' has split into two. It is no longer a single event for all God's people at the end. The Messiah is first; his people come later.

Third, it involves neither a resuscitation of identical bodies, as in 2 Maccabees, nor a kind of angelic body, as in *2 Baruch*, but a *transformed physicality*. It is still a body, but has different properties. It is animated by the Spirit. (The famous σῶμα πνευματικόν is a way of referring, not to the *composition* of the body but to its *animating principle*. When Aristotle speaks of wombs 'swollen with air', he calls them ὕστεραι πνευματικαί; when Vitruvius speaks of a machine that is 'moved by the wind' he calls it a πνευματικὸν ὄργανον. The womb, and the machine, are not *made of pneuma*; they are filled with it or driven by it.)

Fourth, the Messiah himself has been raised. This is new. No writings prior to Paul envisaged the Messiah dying. Nor, therefore, do they imagine him being raised. This is a clue to early Christian exegesis, as of 2 Sam 7.12. No Jews prior to Paul had read that text as a prophecy of the resurrection of David's son, but the Hebrew *vehaqimothi eth-zar'aka* was rendered by the LXX as καὶ ἀναστήσω τὸ σπέρμα σου. The early Christians exploited that opportunity.

Fifth, Paul uses the future resurrection within an ethical argument. Resurrection provokes a re-evaluation of present bodily behaviour. 'God raised the Lord and will raise us by his power . . . therefore glorify God in your body' (1 Cor 6.14, 20).

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Sixth, though resurrection was already a metaphor in Ezek 37, in Paul it acquires new metaphorical use. It signals what happens in baptism; and it is also used as a metaphor for Jewish restoration to faith in Rom 11.15.

Seventh, Paul describes what one colleague has called 'collaborative eschatology'. For Paul, the present work of the church is already part of the new world, and hence is 'not in vain'.

This brief summary highlights the fact that in Paul's view of future resurrection we are dealing (a) with a thoroughly *Jewish* view, unknown in the non-Jewish world except in rare poetical imagination, and (b) with a Jewish view *thoroughly reworked around the Messiah*.

What about 2 Cor 4 and 5? Despite many proposals, I believe Paul has not swapped his Jewish view of resurrection for Platonic theory. He uses the metaphor of the 'tent', cognate with his regular Jewish image of the believer as the temple of the Spirit. And his promise, as in 1 Cor 15.53–4, is that the future body, at present kept safe in the heavens where future purposes are in store, will be an immortal physicality, put on over the present mortal one. This is the 'eternal' state, at present unseen, to which he refers in 4.16–18. The language of Greek philosophy is here employed in order to contest its normal conclusions.

4. Paul: The Parousia

Paul's vision of the 'second coming' of Jesus is modelled on, and again transforms, a Jewish theme: the return of YHWH to Zion. The notion of 'eschatological delay' was frequent in the pre-Christian Jewish world long before it reappeared in 2 Peter 3. For Paul, as for the gospel writers, the 'return' has happened in the person and accomplishment of Jesus – and now the 'day of YHWH' has become 'the day of the Lord'. There is nothing like this in the Greek world. The Greeks did not tell a story about a god who had abandoned his people to exile but who would one day return in triumph.

Nevertheless, one of the famous words here is almost unknown in the LXX: παρουσία. (The five LXX uses are theologically innocuous, referring to the arrival or presence of a person or group; compare e.g. 1 Cor 16.17; Phil 1.26, etc.) In wider Hellenistic culture, παρουσία had the more specific meanings of (a) the arrival or presence of Caesar or some other high official, and (b) the appearance or manifestation of a deity. For Paul, it had both these connotations. When Jesus 'appeared' once more, this would be the arrival of the world's true Lord, the κύριος of the LXX. These are basically *Jewish* themes clothed in specifically *Greek* dress, stressing that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.

Conclusion

So to a brief conclusion. The central strands of Paul's eschatology exhibit an underlying Jewish *narrative* which, with one important exception, has no

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parallel in the Greek world. This is the narrative of creation and covenant, of Adam, Abraham, Exodus and Messiah, reshaped around Jesus and the Spirit. But that reshaping highlighted the scriptural theme, that Israel's coming king would be the lord, not of Israel only, but of the whole world. Paul was not constructing a private worldview away from wider culture and philosophy. The evidences of Greek ideas in his writings, including his eschatology, are signs, not that he was borrowing bits and pieces to stitch together a theological patchwork quilt, but that he was expressing his messianically reshaped Jewish narrative in such a way as to take every thought captive to obey the Messiah.

The one important exception shows that this was no mere intellectual or abstract philosophical exercise. Paul's eschatology entailed the confrontation between the fulfilled time of the gospel of Jesus and the fulfilled time of the gospel of Caesar.

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