

**The Doctrine of Heaven and New Heaven: coming to a doctrine of heaven and new heaven
through Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann's work on creation and eschatology**

**A Thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Theology**

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Abstract

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The doctrine of heaven is an over-looked aspect of the wider doctrines of creation and eschatology, whilst the doctrine of new heaven is underdeveloped to the point that it has barely been written on. Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann, however, have written on heaven in both their doctrines of creation and eschatology, showing the benefits of including heaven in theological explorations of creation and eschatology. Beyond writing on heaven Barth and Moltmann have also briefly written on the eschatological reality of new heaven and why heaven requires a new creation.

This thesis aims to highlight the doctrine of heaven and new heaven, using both Barth and Moltmann as a foundation to inform a wider systematic view of the doctrines. The two theologians conceive of four pillars to come to a doctrine of heaven: God is present in heaven, the kingdom is in heaven, heaven in creation and heaven eschatologically. These four primary points can also be seen in the wider disciplines of systematics, eschatology, and writings on heaven, which brings into consideration other theologians who have written on heaven, such as Cecilia Deane-Drummond, Paula Gooder, and Richard Middleton.

By highlighting the four foundational points above we can see more clearly what is required to come to a doctrine of heaven. This in turn demonstrates the key concepts behind new heaven. Because heaven is the abode of God and where the kingdom is present the question which then arises is why will there be a new heaven? Moltmann, along with others, would say that because heaven is created and sin is present in heaven, heaven also requires a new creation along with earth. This study tries to highlight the importance of the new heaven and the reasons behind it.

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1. Introduction

This thesis aims to incorporate Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann's writings on heaven to come to a deeper and richer understanding of heaven and new heaven. Both Barth and Moltmann have numerous works which provide a well-rounded analysis of heaven, along with this both theologians provide a foundation which is unmatched. From Barth and Moltmann's writings on creation and eschatology, we begin to see a fuller understanding of heaven, however this will be reinforced by research from contemporary theological works including systematicians, writings on eschatology and writings on heaven specifically. The Biblical section with which we will begin this thesis will provide the necessary basis for discussing doctrines of heaven and new heaven. When researching heaven four key sections became evident as foundations to a doctrine of heaven: God is present in heaven, the kingdom is in heaven, heaven in creation and heaven eschatologically. It is these four pillars of heaven which are used throughout this thesis as the sections for presenting the doctrine of heaven. These sections will in turn demonstrate the need for a new heaven, as it is from each section that we will be able to see a development to the question, why does heaven need a new creation?

The main question behind this thesis was why is there a need for a new heaven? It is a question which is rarely brought up with few writings on the matter. However, beginning to examine the research it became evident that first this research required a grounded exploration into the doctrine of heaven before moving on to the new heaven. This led to a study of Barth and Moltmann's writings on heaven, which, along with other theologians' works on heaven, provided sufficient answers to the question of why heaven required a new heaven. This does not come without dispute, as heaven is the mysterious realm so there is little possibility of being definitive. Nevertheless, the argument for the presence of sin in heaven is a persuasive one, and therefore heaven, along with earth, requires a new creation. The eschaton will bring creation into a new and fruitful relationship with God; creation will be free from sin.

We begin this research by looking at heaven in the Bible, a section that will provide the Biblical basis for this thesis along with relevant passages to support this research. This will lead to our first main theologian, Karl Barth, and his doctrine of heaven, which is mainly presented through his *Church Dogmatics*. After this, Jürgen Moltmann's work on heaven will be studied, which is found throughout his books *God in Creation* and *The Coming of God*. Once individually researched, we shall compare the similarities and differences between these two theologians' approaches to heaven. Subsequently we will examine other theologians and their doctrines on heaven, and these are split into three groups: systematicians, eschatological writings and writings on heaven. These will be compared to Barth and Moltmann's works on heaven, seeing where they agree and disagree and where there is development from our two theologians. All this research will bring us full circle to a doctrine of heaven and new heaven and why there is need for a new heaven.

2. Heaven in the Bible

We shall first look at heaven in the Bible before moving onto the systematics of heaven. In Hebrew שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) is translated as heaven, although this can either refer to the created heavens or the heavens of God. In Greek οὐρανός (*ouranos*) is translated as heaven, but this also carries a dual meaning as it could be translated as skies or universe as well as God's heaven.¹ These two understandings complicate the true meaning in the Bible. The Bible mentions heaven numerous times and in numerous circumstances, and is primarily used in reference to God, creation and heaven's future. These areas will be used as the headings for this section of the thesis, along with sin in heaven, which will be explored last. In this section we aim to introduce the biblical passages on heaven, which form the foundations for systematic research on the doctrine of heaven. These passages are the basis behind Barth's and Moltmann's understandings of heaven and therefore should be looked at first before we examine their perspectives.

2.1. God in Heaven

The first point which will be looked at is the presence of God in heaven, specifically, God's throne room in heaven. This is seen unambiguously in Rev 4:2 where we see that the throne "was located in heaven" (ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ).² Richard Bauckham writes on this verse that, '[John] sees the divine sovereignty as it is in heaven, where God's rule is perfectly accomplished.'³ Beyond Revelation, the throne of God is referred to as being in (or is) heaven in Isa 66:1; "Heaven is my throne," and in various other passages, (Pss 11:4, 103:19; Matt 23:22; Acts 7:49; Rev 20:11). This demonstrates that "God is in heaven" (Eccl 5:2); it is where His will is done, and where His work flows from (cf. Gen 19:24; Exod 16:4; Pss, 33:13f., 57:3). "The Lord looks down from heaven," (Ps 14:2) showing that it is *from* heaven where God works and rules over the rest of creation.

Because heaven is described as where God is present, it is also described as the abode of God, due to heaven being the throne of God it must also be understood as where He dwells, because He is there in a very real sense, (cf. 1 Kgs 8:49).⁴ Ps 33:13-14 describes heaven as the abode of God when the Psalmist writes "From heaven the Lord looks down ... from his dwelling place he watches," which reveals God resides in heaven. Various other verses in the Bible also comment on heaven being the abode of God and where He dwells, (2 Chr 30:27;

¹ Strong, James, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1990; שָׁמַיִם: Strong's Concordance, Hebrew, word 8064. οὐρανός: Strong's Concordance, Greek, word 3772.

² All biblical quotes are from the NIV.

³ Bauckham, Richard, 'Creation's Praise of God in the Book of Revelation,' *BTB*, 38 (2008) 55-63, 55. See also Gallusz, Laszlo, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014, 103.

⁴ Cf. Battle, Michael, *Heaven on Earth*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017, 19; Bauckham, Richard, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 31; Bird, Michael F., 'Tearing the Heavens and Shaking the Heavens: Mark's Cosmology in its Apocalyptic Context,' in Jonathan T. Pennington & Sean M. McDonough (eds.), *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, London: T. & T. Clark, 2008, 45-59, 49; Strange, Daniel, 'A Little Dwelling on the Divine Presence: Towards a 'Whereness' of the Triune God,' in T. Desmond Alexander & Simon Gathercole, *Heaven on Earth*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004, 211-229, 223; Sweet, John, *Revelation*, London: SCM Press, 1990, 113. All these references relate to heaven being the abode of God or where He dwells; heaven is where God is.

Pss 2:4; Eph 6:9; Col 4:1). However, God should also be understood as above heaven because “even the highest heaven, cannot contain you” (1 Kgs 8:27, Cf. 2 Chr 2:6, 6:18). God is therefore in heaven, and by extension in creation, but also above heaven because God should not be understood as limited to one place.

2.2. Heaven as part of Creation

God is present in heaven, showing God’s immanence to creation, specifically heaven, which as evidenced in Genesis 1:1 is a part of creation. Along with the prehistory of Genesis, heaven is also understood as a part of creation in the prophecy of Isaiah: “You have made heaven” (Isa 37:16 cf. 42:5, 45:18). It is also found in the poetry of the Psalms: “the Lord, the Maker of heaven” (Ps 115:15, cf. 102:25, 124:8). However, heaven is more than a creation, it is also a place, as seen in 1 Kings 8:49 and John 14:3. Both these verses show heaven not only as a place (Hebrew: שָׁמַיִם; Greek: τόπον), but more specifically as the created place where God is present. The understanding of heaven as a place is not only evident through the Bible but is also accepted in biblical scholarship.⁵ Myk Habets in his book on heaven writes that it must be understood as a place, for if the opposite were true then heaven could only be seen as ‘a sea of sentimentality, a shapeless void of self-imagination.’⁶ This has ties to the sea present in heaven, which will be explored more below (Rev 4:6, 13:1).

In the beginning both heaven and earth were created together, implying a duality between the two spheres of creation and, when both are mentioned, calls to the entirety of creation. The duality of heaven and earth is seen in various places, most explicitly in Genesis 1:1; in Psalms 134:3 “he who is the Maker of heaven” (cf. 115:15, 124:8); and in Isaiah 45:18 “he who created the heavens’ he is God”. Along with understanding the use of heaven and earth to mean the whole of creation, there is also a distinction drawn between the two, evoking an above and below duality.⁷ Steven Walton in his article on heaven in Luke-Acts presents the duality of heaven and earth as an above and below dichotomy, which is seen in ‘the expression “under heaven” (ὕπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν)’ (Luke 17:24; Acts 2:5, 4:12).⁸ This duality is also highlighted in Matthew by Jonathan Pennington, where we see ‘an elaborate heaven and earth theme’ (Cf. Matt 5:18, 6:10, 16:19 11:25, 24:35, 28:18).⁹ “Heaven and earth” appears in all the verses above in Matthew, and can be divided further: heaven and earth will

⁵ Habets, Myk, *Heaven*, Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018, 16; Mangina, Joseph L., *Revelation*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010, 75; Mauser, Ulrich, “‘Heaven’ in the World View of the New Testament,” *HBT*, 9 (1987) 31-51, 47.

⁶ Habets, *Heaven*, 16. Cf. John 14:2f.

⁷ Bauckham, Richard, *Living With Other Creatures*, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012, 73; Pennington, Jonathan T., ‘Heaven, Earth and a New Genesis: Theological Cosmology in Matthew,’ in Jonathan T. Pennington & Sean M. McDonough (eds.), *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, London: T. & T. Clark, 2008, 28-44, 34; Walton, Steve, “‘The Heavens opened’: Cosmological and Theological Transformation in Luke and Acts,” in Jonathan T. Pennington & Sean M. McDonough (eds.), *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, London: T. & T. Clark, 2008, 60-73, 61.

⁸ Walton, ‘Opened,’ 61. Here we also see heaven is described as above earth when talking about the ascension of Christ, Jesus goes up into heaven (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-11).

⁹ Pennington, ‘Genesis,’ 34.

“disappear” or “pass away” (Matt 5:18, 24:35), God being Lord of heaven and earth (Matt 11:25, 28:18) and the link between the kingdom of heaven and earth (Matt 6:10, 16:19).

Along with this we can see that, due to God’s presence in heaven, it is a very different sort of creation compared to earth (Cf. Col 1:16). Our understanding of heaven is, therefore, as the created place along with earth that is in closest relation to God; “you made the heavens, even the highest heavens,” (Neh 9:6 Cf. Pss 96:5, 102:25). Both heaven and earth must be understood as being created by God, and therefore both were originally very good (Gen 1:31). The dualism of heaven and earth should be understood as both sides of creation being good because both are from God (Gen 1:1), although a distinction between the two is clear since one is a *spiritual* inwardness and the other a *physical* outwardness (Col 1:16).¹⁰

2.3. Heaven Eschatologically

The doctrine of heaven is regularly attributed to the wider field of eschatology, or in biblical studies, apocalyptic literature. The main theme of apocalyptic literature is the seers ability to ‘pierce the vault of heaven and look upon the glorious world of God and his angels.’¹¹ The re-creation of creation is what we wait for as created beings, and along with the physical side of creation, heaven will also be recreated, this is primarily evidenced through various biblical passages (Isa 34:4, 65:17; Jer 4:28; Rom 8:21; 2 Pet 3:10, 13; Rev 21:1). As heaven and earth were brought into creation together so ‘God recreates or restores heaven and earth’ (Cf. Isa 51:6).¹² Due to the future creation being an inherent idea within the Bible, a great many scholars have undertaken to look at the new creation.¹³ Bauckham, in his book on Revelation, writes that new creation is required to take creation ‘beyond all threat of evil and destruction,’ so that we will live in perfect intimate relation with God, which is seen with the destruction of the sea in Rev 21:1.¹⁴

There is an ongoing discussion on whether creation will be destroyed and re-created or renewed in the eschaton, which also includes a disagreement about the scale of continuity and discontinuity between this creation and the next. The predominant place where this debate originates is from Rev 21:1; “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Cf. Matt 24:35;

¹⁰ Schenck, Kenneth, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 133. Schenck makes the point that the duality of the *physical* and *spiritual* in Hebrews ‘are not in opposition’ in the same way as the later Gnostics, showing that at the time Hebrews was written the idea of the spiritual being superior to the physical was not as prevalent as later in the church. Cf. Gilbertson, Michael, *God and History in the Book of Revelation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 55; Sweet, *Revelation*, 16.

¹¹ Rowland, Christopher, *The Open Heaven*, London SPCK, 1982, 78.

¹² Page, Ben, ‘Inaugurated Hyperspace,’ *Theo*, 4 (2020) 1-21, 8, Here Page writes in 8n24; ‘Biblical scholars disagree as to whether we should understand this as a destruction of the old heavens and earth with God creating new ones, or if this language should be more thought of as implying restoration of both the heavens and earth.’ See Stephens, *Annihilation*, for more detailed discussion on renewal or recreation.

¹³ Bauckham, *Book*, 49; Bruggemann, Walter, ‘The Hope of Heaven ... on Earth,’ *BTB*, 29 (1999) 99-111; Caird, G. B., *New Testament Theology*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, 49; Koester, Craig R., *Revelation & the End of All Things*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018, 188; Pennington, Jonathan T., *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, 326f.

¹⁴ Bauckham, *Book*, 49.

Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33: which all include “heaven and earth will pass away”).¹⁵ The word used to describe the newness of the new creation is *καινός*, which ‘connotes “new in kind” not just “another”,’ however, for Sweet this does not mean something brand new but instead a ‘radical renewal’ of creation (Rev 21:1; Cf. 2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 3:13: these show the new creation is what we look forward to).¹⁶ Therefore, we should understand the newness of the new creation as a renewal of creation into something completely new, not a new creation *ex nihilo* rather a new creation *ex aliqua*, meaning that we should also understand the new creation to have some continuity with the old, if it is of the old. As Anthony Thiselton writes in his book on eschatology, the new creation will have some ‘continuity with the old,’ which must also mean that there is to some degree a discontinuity with this creation.¹⁷ This becomes apparent in Rev 21:10: “the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,” which shows Jerusalem coming down, connoting continuity with this creation. Discontinuity is made clear by the fact that if the new creation is something radically new it will be quite different compared to this creation; the heaven now will then be renewed into a new heaven which is different in kind. Michael Gorman writes that the new earth is not an ‘*escape* from the material’ but instead it should be understood as ‘the very *fulfilment* of material existence,’ showing that the materiality of earth will not completely disappear or become spiritual but rather God’s purposes will be fulfilled in the material (Cf. 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1).¹⁸

2.4. Sin in Heaven

A point which is rarely discussed within biblical studies is the presence of sin in heaven, likely because the Bible does not explicitly talk about it. There is however biblical precedent for the idea of sin in heaven. This can be seen with the presence of the sea in heaven, which in Jewish tradition represents *primaeval* chaos, evil, which can be considered sin because it is without God (Ps 148:4; Dan 7:2f.; Rev 4:6, 13:1, 21:1).¹⁹ The new creation can be described as creation that is without sin, meaning that new creation will be without ‘sea, death, mourning, crying, and pain,’ as described by Edward Adams in his book on the eschaton (Cf. Rev 21:4).²⁰ Habets writes that the use of “no more sea” in Rev 21:1 is used symbolically to represent that there

¹⁵ This is widely debated in Biblical scholarship, those who believe creation will be re-created: Aune, David E., *Word Biblical Commentary*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998, 1117; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, London: SPCK, 2005, 523f.; Thiselton, Anthony C., *Life After Death*, London: SPCK, 2012, 198; Vinson, Richard B., ‘The Sea of Glass, the Lake of Fire, and the Topography of Heaven in Revelation,’ *PRSt*, 45 (2018) 127-138, 136; those who believe creation will be renewed: Backham, *Living*, 72; Gorman, Michael J., *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011, 163; Sweet, *Revelation*, 297. Aune also provides a list of those who are for the renewal of creation; ‘Caird, 260, 265-66; Prigent, 324-25; Bauckham, *Theology*, 49-50.’ Aune, *Revelation*, 1117.

¹⁶ Sweet, *Revelation*, 297. Cf. Smalley, *Revelation*, 524; Thomas, John Christopher & Macchia, Frank D., *Revelation*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016, 363. Thomas also describes this newness as ‘a newness hitherto unknown.’

¹⁷ Thiselton, *Life*, 198; Cf. Vinson, ‘Sea,’ 136; Adams, Edward, *The Stars will Fall From Heaven*, London: Continuum, 2007, 250.

¹⁸ Gorman, *Reading*, 163; Habets, *Heaven*, 19.

¹⁹ Adams, *Stars*, 249; Anderson, Bernhard W., *From Creation to New Creation*, Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1994, 237f.; Caird, *Theology*, 106; Habets, *Heaven*, 19n6; Sweet, *Revelation*, 113, 296.

²⁰ Adams, *Stars*, 249.

will no longer be any evil.²¹ However, it also shows that we are destined for a perfect place without chaos. It is because the beast comes “out of the sea” (Rev 13:1) that there is need for a new heaven along with a new earth. Caird writes that ‘the old tainted heavens’ also require a new creation, that there will be no more sea in heaven.²² For Caird, sin in heaven is primarily represented in ‘the figure of Satan,’ showing the presence of Satan in heaven still lingers there, this is seen specifically in Job 1-2.²³

In Luke 10:18, however, we see “Satan fall like lightning from heaven,” and so how can the demonic still be in heaven as seen in Eph 6:12; “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” It is clear from 2 Cor 12:2 that heaven has levels when Paul writes about someone he knows who “was caught up to the third heaven.” Janghoon Park describes a separation of heaven between the heaven of God, Christ and angels, and then the heaven of “evil spirits” and (or) Satan (Cf. Deut 10:14; 2 Cor 12:2).²⁴ This is reiterated by Sweet as he writes that because Satan had a place in heaven and the sea symbolizes heaven’s ‘ambivalences’ it too must be renewed.²⁵ We can therefore understand Satan’s expulsion from heaven as an expulsion of the highest heaven where God is present, however, he still resides in heaven, in the sea of chaos, which is why heaven requires a new heaven.

2.5. Barth and Moltmann’s Biblical passages

The two key theologians behind this thesis regularly use the Bible to inform their respective theologies of heaven. As can be seen above, heaven in the Bible can be split three ways: God in heaven, heaven is created, and heaven eschatologically, these definitions will also be seen in Barth’s and Moltmann’s work. The following are the biblical passages which both scholars use to develop their doctrine of heaven: Gen 1:1; Deut 10:14; 1 Kgs 8:27; Neh 9:6; Mark 13:31; 2 Cor 12:2; 2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet 3:13. What these verses show us is the wide range of biblical passages the two use as a base, these verses cover heaven as where God is present: Deut 10:14; 1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Tim 4:18; heaven as created: Gen 1:1; Neh 9:6; and the new heaven: Mark 13:31; 2 Pet 3:13. We see from the biblical passages used by Barth and Moltmann that they have a key foundation to their theology of heaven, however, as demonstrated above, they had missed some verses. This being said, the verses used by the two theologians provide a well-rounded view of heaven in the bible.

2.6. Conclusion

The various verses above show the biblical view of heaven is one which is convoluted and complex, spanning the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This creates difficulties as heaven needs also to be understood in the context of two languages and various forms of literature. This section has demonstrated that heaven is where the throne of God is present,

²¹ Habets, *Heaven*, 19n6.

²² Caird, *Theology*, 106.

²³ Ibid., 107. Cf. Gao, Ming, *Heaven and Earth in Luke-Acts*, Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2017, 104f.

²⁴ Park, Janghoon, ‘Does Paul have “Heavenly Faith”? A Study on Paul’s Understanding of Heaven as Believer’s Dwelling Place,’ *한국개혁신학*, 66 (2020) 60-88, 65, translation mine.

²⁵ Sweet, *Revelation*, 296.

which in turn means it is where God is present in His majesty. Heaven should also be understood as a part of the created realm, as it was created along with earth in the beginning, which is made clear by Genesis 1:1. The new heaven will be heaven's new reality come the *Parousia*, which as seen above will be a renewal of the old heaven, therefore having both continuity and discontinuity with the old. We also explored the reason why a new heaven is required, because the presence of sin in heaven, which is represented by Satan and the sea still being present in heaven.

3. Barth on Heaven

Karl Barth's work on the doctrine of heaven, although concise, is dispersed throughout his *Church Dogmatics* (hereafter *CD*), specifically in *CD* III/1, III/3 and IV/3.2, that is the doctrines of creation (*CD* III) and reconciliation (*CD* IV).²⁶ This shows where Barth views the doctrine of heaven to belong in theology, Barth views heaven as a part of creation, heaven is a created place; and heaven is also a future place in the eschaton, that along with earth, creation is destined to become the new heaven and new earth. Heaven in Barth's work is most explicitly written about on the subjects of God and angels, however it is also widely found in his doctrine of creation and reconciliation.

Barth draws on important aspects of heaven, such as heaven being the throne of God, the concept of the kingdom of heaven, heaven being a part of creation and heaven in an eschatological sense. These features of Barth's doctrine of heaven will be used as the headlines for the sections in this thesis on Barth's approach to heaven. We will first establish Barth's use of saga, as this expands his methodological thinking behind heaven, before moving to the doctrine of heaven. Barth first writes about heaven in relation to the kingdom of God, or the kingdom's presence in heaven; one of the clearest aspects of Barth's work on heaven is as a part of creation, which includes heaven as the upper side of creation; Barth writes about heaven as a creature of God and heaven's creatures, that is angels. This will be followed by Barth's look at the Throne of God, which will include Barth's understanding of heaven as Christocentric. The final section will look at heaven eschatologically, that is the new heaven.

For Barth, looking at 'the sphere of the superfluous and uncertain, ... might also be equally dangerous and even corrupt,' this is likely because looking at the incomprehensible is often thought of as futile. However he goes on to write that 'it is illegitimate, and it might be equally dangerous and corrupt, if we allow a fear of failing to halt at this frontier to exclude from our dogmatic investigation.'²⁷ And therefore we should look at 'the remarkable sphere of the kingdom of heaven,' and we should not be 'ignoring and even denying it.'²⁸ Consequently it is important to look at the doctrine of heaven and have a grounded

²⁶ Within this thesis Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* will be specifically researched due to the vast amount of content found within this dogmatic collection.

²⁷ Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. III, part 3: The Doctrine of Creation*, G. W. Bromiley & R. J. Ehrlich (trans.), G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance (eds.), Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, 370.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

understanding of the sphere of the superfluous and uncertain as it is a sign and testimony to God.²⁹

3.1. Saga

Before looking at heaven proper, it is first important to first look at Barth's use of saga, which is 'an alternative both to taking the biblical news of heaven literalistically, as historical fact in a univocal sense, and to taking as a myth to be demythologized.'³⁰ Heaven should not be viewed in any way which takes it to literal, heaven is not something to be demythologized, it is the side of creation which is meant to have some mystery to it. 'Barth aims to reinforce an epistemic distinction as the context for his account of heaven by opening it with a discussion of the difference between biblical "saga" and "history."' ³¹ The difference between saga and history is primarily time, as history turns into stories, so heaven turns into the mysterious realm beyond comprehension, other than what is found in the Bible. This does not mean that we should demythologize heaven, it is to remain the mysterious realm for Barth. For Barth this line of thought is required in order to get to grips with even a slight concept of heaven, it is in fact 'Barth's creative thinking here ..., which shows his signature of combining biblical insight with dexterity of thought.'³² It can therefore be said that saga is the context in which heaven should be understood, that is, due to its incomprehensibility it cannot be understood literalistically and therefore requires a more fluid understanding. When looking at heaven, Barth incorporates a level of myth into his writing which maintains the ambiguity of heaven, whilst integrating his Biblical knowledge to allow for a grounded look at heaven.

3.2. The Kingdom of Heaven

The title of §51 in *CD III/3* is 'The Kingdom of Heaven' which encompasses both angels and heaven and is one of Barth's predominant sections on heaven. The phrase Kingdom of Heaven or ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, which can be used synonymously with the Kingdom of God, is found primarily in the Gospel of Matthew, and has one reference outside the Gospel in 1 Tim 4:18.³³ It is therefore true that 'God rules in the kingdom of heaven,' that is, as seen above, heaven is where God works from, it is where He is and therefore from where His actions

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 237.

³⁰ Morse, Christopher, *The Difference Heaven Makes*, London: T&T Clark, 2010, 41.

³¹ Green, Christopher C., *Doxological Theology*, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013, 218, Cf. *CD III/3*, 374; 'In saying this, we take consciously and expressly into account the fact that when the Bible speaks of angels (and their demonic counterparts) it always introduces us to a sphere where historically verifiable history, i.e., the history which is comprehensible by the known analogies of world history, passes over into historically non-verifiable legend'.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *CD III/3*, 433. We see 'in Matthew the phrase ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ is usually replaced by ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν,' however the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are interchangeable. Barth is also quick to say that 'this certainly does not mean that the existence, action and dignity of God as this royal person are pushed into the background, let alone denied.' Barth also states that in 'Matthew, therefore, heaven does not take the place of God,' Matthew simply uses more distinctive language compared to the other Gospels when talking about God's rule over creation, His rule can be described as heavenly. This also means 'that we are continually invited by these passages to consider that where God rules heaven is also involved,' thus saying heaven is where God is and where His kingdom originates.

come.³⁴ Heaven is also to be understood as ‘where God’s kingdom comes [from], so that the kingdom of God is also the kingdom of heaven,’ which points to a future coming down of the kingdom, along with the *Parousia* of Jesus.³⁵ Therefore, Geoffrey Bromiley is correct when he writes that ‘the coming kingdom of God is the kingdom of heaven,’ something which Barth makes abundantly clear throughout his works.³⁶ Heaven is the place from where the future Kingdom of God originates; it comes from heaven to earth;

The kingdom of God comes to earth as the kingdom of heaven, not at a single stroke, on a single note, or in a single shade or form, but in a concentrated multiplicity of revelations and declarations, of events and relationships, of individuals and societies, which have their constitutive centre in God Himself, namely, in Jesus Christ as very God and very man, but which all the same, or for this very season and in this very way—otherwise grace would not be grace—form this concentrated multiplicity addressed to the history and existence of the creature.³⁷

What we see from the above quote is that the kingdom of God is being inaugurated in heaven to earth, Jesus’ ministry continues in heaven and will be complete when He returns. Thus, it can be said that the goal of heaven is to reach earth, to bring God’s kingdom down to the rest of creation, and for God’s rule to come to earth. Walter Whitehouse is therefore also correct when he writes that, ‘His dominion over His creation, is therefore called “The Kingdom of Heaven,” because its claim is primarily and peculiarly upon the upper world,’ which shows heaven is where the kingdom originates and comes down to us.³⁸ This is what we look forward to here on earth, the future Kingdom of Heaven, when His “will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”.³⁹

3.3. Heaven as part of Creation

The chapter above – “The Kingdom of Heaven” – is found in Barth’s third book on the doctrine of creation, and it is therefore clear where Barth sees heaven to sit when considering doctrine more broadly. ‘It is fundamentally God’s creation, as earth is.’⁴⁰ However Barth continues to write that heaven is created ‘in the quite narrow, relative and figurative sense in which we can speak of creation within a created world.’⁴¹ For Barth heaven is first and foremost a created place, and ‘because creation concerns not only earth, but heaven as well’ it cannot be ignored.⁴² Heaven is therefore a very real place, but it also ‘represents the invisible

³⁴ Ibid., 441f.

³⁵ Clough, David L., ‘Creation,’ *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Barth*, Paul Dafydd & Paul T. Nimmo (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, 350. Cf. CD III/3, 461.

³⁶ Bromiley, Geoffrey William, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, Edinburgh: Clark, 1979, 153. Cf. CD III/3, 433.

³⁷ CD III/3, 448.

³⁸ Whitehouse, W. A., *Authority of Grace*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981, 35.

³⁹ Matt 6:10.

⁴⁰ Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. II, part 1: The Doctrine of God*, T. H. L. Parker, W. B. Johnston, Harold Knight, J. L. M. Haire (trans.), G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance (eds.), Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010, 266.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Clough, ‘Creation,’ 349. Cf. CD III/3, 371.

creation,' and therefore is a counterpart to earth which 'is all that is accessible, heaven is all that is inaccessible.' It is also true that if 'earth is all that is comprehensible, heaven is all that is incomprehensible.'⁴³ Heaven is also described as 'the higher cosmos because, although it is created, it constitutes that side of created reality which is much more closely related to God.'⁴⁴ Along with this, heaven is also described by Barth as the 'spiritual side of the reality.'⁴⁵ It is for this reason that heaven is not only the upper side of creation, but also the incomprehensible and spiritual side of creation.⁴⁶

There are those who argue that Barth's view here limits God's presence to heaven alone. H. Paul Santmire writes that for Barth, God is 'in the realm of the spiritual, with the angels, not on earth.'⁴⁷ Andrew Gabriel, on this point by Santmire, writes that this is 'a misunderstanding of Barth,' as while Barth affirms that God has a distinct place in creation 'these affirmations are made first of all in a metaphorical or ontological sense rather than a spatial sense.'⁴⁸ He goes on to write that, 'in order to say that creation is distinct from God and God exists without creation before God creates,'⁴⁹ that is to say, that heaven is a place which is distinct from God, it is also where God dwells in glory and majesty as He rules over all of creation. Barth disagrees with Gabriel as he writes, 'we cannot evade the recognition that God Himself is spatial.'⁵⁰ Going back to the original problem of God only being present in heaven, Barth also has this to say; 'He who possesses His own space (exclusively His own) is able to be the Creator and Lord of other spaces as well, and in the power of His own spatiality He can be present in these other spaces too.'⁵¹ It is therefore clear that, for Barth, God is both present in and out of heaven, and therefore both Santmire and Gabriel are incorrect as God is both spatial and present in and out of heaven. Heaven is to be understood as creation, not only as the side of creation, which is completely subservient to God, but heaven is also to be understood as where God is. It is for these reasons that heaven is both the upper side of creation and why heaven can be understood as a creature of God.

The Bible describes creation regularly as "heaven and earth" or in the form of a twofold dialectic, that heaven and earth are connected by the fact that they are both of God; heaven and earth are created by God and therefore are related. For Barth it is important that a distinction is made between these two places; 'there is a real distinction, and indeed a fundamental and essential distinction, and it consists in the fact that there is in the one cosmos an above and a below, and to that extent an upper and a lower cosmos.'⁵² Why, though, is it an upper and lower cosmos? What makes heaven the upper, and earth the lower

⁴³ Osborn, Lawrence, 'Entertaining Angels: Their Place in Contemporary Theology,' *Tyndale Bulletin*, 45 (1994) 273-296, 279, 279n19; 'K. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (tr. G.T. Thomson; London: SCM, 1949) 61.'

⁴⁴ *CD III/3*, 236.

⁴⁵ *CD II/1*, 474.

⁴⁶ *CD III/3*, 236.

⁴⁷ Santmire, H. Paul, *The Travail of Nature*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992, 154.

⁴⁸ Gabriel, Andrew K., *Barth's Doctrine of Creation*, Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014, 70f.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁰ *CD II/1*, 475.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *CD III/3*, 421.

sides of creation? ‘The answer which the Bible gives to this question is simply that within the one cosmos God is nearer to one of the spheres, i.e. heaven, than He is to the other, i.e. earth.’⁵³ Osborn points out that a danger with this metaphor can be that ‘there is a tendency for heaven to be displaced across the ontological divide between creature and creator; divorced from earth and assimilated to God.’⁵⁴ This is a problem for Barth too as he writes that ‘God and heaven are naturally not identical or of equal essence.’⁵⁵ This is because Barth enforces that heaven is to be understood as a part of creation rather than a part of the divine. Heaven is therefore the upper sphere because ‘God is nearer heaven and that heaven is prior to and higher than earth.’⁵⁶ Christopher Green agrees when he writes; ‘heaven is a predicate of the will of God, which distinguishes God’s movement toward the creature with an “above” and a “below.”’⁵⁷ Mark Lindsay is also right that ‘God is nearer to heaven than he is to earth – nonetheless heaven is part of God’s good creation,’ and continues with, ‘He rules there “as in a creaturely sphere”.’⁵⁸ This is why heaven is the upper of the two; it is where God rules and is therefore nearer to heaven; heaven is the place from where God’s work comes down to us.

Barth also brings this up again when talking about the kingdom of heaven, where we have another reason for heaven being the upper cosmos: it is from heaven that the kingdom of God comes to us, so that as such the coming ‘kingdom of God is also the kingdom of heaven.’⁵⁹ Therefore heaven is the upper and higher cosmos, because it is from where ‘He sallies with all the demonstrations and revelations and words and works of His action on earth.’⁶⁰ Because His will comes down from heaven and it is from where He is seated heaven should be considered above the earth. Heaven is also considered by Barth to be the counterpart to earth, as both are in relation to each other, and both spheres exist in participation with each other.⁶¹ This being said, Barth insists that ‘this counterpart of earth ... is the sum of all that which in creation is unfathomable, distant, alien and mysterious in creation,’ and therefore heaven is a distant place to humanity; we cannot go there even though it is earth’s counterpart.⁶² Thus Barth consequently states that ‘heaven is the epitome of the limit set for man,’ and later states that heaven is the ‘mysterious counterpart,’ the part of creation which is unknown to us.⁶³ It is true then when Barth writes that ‘they are both

⁵³ Ibid., 422.

⁵⁴ Osborn, ‘Entertaining,’ 290.

⁵⁵ CD III/3, 419.

⁵⁶ Noll, Stephen F., *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*, Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003, 23. Cf. CD III/3, 420.

⁵⁷ Green, Christopher, ‘“Worthy Is the Lamb”: Karl Barth’s Exegesis of Revelation,’ in Ben Rhodes, & Martian Westerholm (eds.), *Freedom Under the World*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019, 218, 218n20. Cf. CD III/3, 418-33.

⁵⁸ Lindsay, Mark, ‘The Heavenly Witness to God: Karl Barth’s Doctrine of Angels,’ *SJT*, 70 (2017) 1-18, 10, 10n49. Cf. CD III/3, 426, 447.

⁵⁹ CD III/3, 433.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 424.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 426.

creatures, but they cannot be interchanged or confused,' as although they are counterparts of the cosmos, they also remain different and unique to each other.⁶⁴

Barth makes a clear distinction between both heaven and earth, and heaven and God, by referring to heaven as a creature of God, for if we understand heaven as creature then it is created like earth and unlike God. God and heaven are two different essences; heaven is a part of creation and therefore is under the dominion of God as its creator.⁶⁵ 'Heaven with earth—and in this sense it is not different from earth—is the creature of God': because heaven is a part of creation with earth they can both be considered the creature of God, however it is important to remember there is still a distinction between heaven and earth; they are independent of each other but still a part of the same creation.⁶⁶ Later Barth goes on to remind us that heaven 'is certainly not a vacuum, however inconceivable it may be to us,' and therefore heaven is *something*, 'it is not nothing.'⁶⁷ It is also clear that 'God does not exercise his rule over creation in a vacuum,'⁶⁸ because 'something is done there' and 'this something is God's will.'⁶⁹ As said above, heaven is also the place of God, it is from where He rules, which tells us that 'whatever the manner of heaven, its being is an obedient being.'⁷⁰ Therefore, 'unlike earth, heaven is a morally unambiguous realm where God's will *is* done,' and it is for this reason that heaven is an obedient creature, as it does not stray from the will of God.⁷¹ Because 'the presence of God in heaven ... makes it necessary that He should find there the obedience of His creature,' and so due to God being in heaven, heaven is therefore loyal; Barth also goes on to say that this brings hope to earth.⁷² If heaven is an obedient creature due to God being there, then there is hope for earth in God's coming, thus it is 'necessary that God should find on earth the obedience of His creature; that His will should be done on earth too.'⁷³ Green elegantly writes that, due to heaven being the upper and the obedient sphere, it 'will "count" for, and will "stand in the place of" the disobedient creature on earth.'⁷⁴ Stephen Noll points out that; 'Barth speaks of both heaven and angels as *creatures* of God,' and continues to write that 'they are creatures in different modes,' it is dangerous to group things together which we do not understand, the same is for heaven and angels.⁷⁵ 'Heaven is a place or, better, a regime, a commonwealth (Phil 3:20), the holy alternative to the principalities of this age'; angels on the other hand, can be better understood as creatures that exercise God's will.⁷⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., 422.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 419.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 443.

⁶⁸ Mangina, Joseph L., *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004, 103.

⁶⁹ Bromiley, *Introduction*, 153. Cf. *CD III/3*, 443f.

⁷⁰ *CD III/3*, 444.

⁷¹ Pauw, Amy Plantinga, 'Where Theologians Fear to Tread', *MT*, 16 (2000) 39-59, 52. Cf. *CD III/3*, 444, 516.

⁷² *CD III/3*, 444.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Green, *Doxological*, 217. Cf. *CD III/3*, 444.

⁷⁵ Noll, *Light*, 198.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Heaven is more than where God is, it should also be understood ‘as the place where the angels are,’ and this expands on what it means for heaven to be ‘creaturely.’⁷⁷ Because angels are creatures of God, as they are not divine but still beings, heaven is creaturely. ‘The true service of angels, like that of all other creatures of God, is that of witness,’ angels are witnesses of God to earth, and to a greater extent angels are messengers of God.⁷⁸ This also means that by definition angels are also creatures; this being said, angels ‘lack autonomy and so their witness is pure, arising from seeing the face of God.’⁷⁹ Barth describes the role of angels as ‘the heavenly *entourage* of the God who acts from heaven to earth.’ This shows us that angels are tasked with bringing the word of God to earth.⁸⁰ Therefore with this understanding it can be said that angels as creatures who inhabit the heavenly creaturely realm are, witnesses of God in the heavenly realm and to earth. Lindsay correctly writes that angels ‘cannot be described or defined in abstraction, but only in relationship to the heavenly kingdom.’⁸¹ It can therefore also be said that to speak of angels is to speak of heaven as both are in close relation to God, although remain distinct from God.

3.4. Throne of God

A fundamental aspect of Barth’s understanding of heaven is that it is where the Throne of God is. The Throne of God can be better understood as a piece of heaven which is ‘God’s space alone’; ‘He does not share His throne with anyone.’⁸² The Throne of God ‘is to be found in heaven,’ which shows us that God’s presence in heaven is an intimate one for “the Lord has established his throne in heaven.”⁸³ For now it is important to simply remember that ‘God’s throne is part of His creation and should be distinguished from God Himself,’ that is to say that this part of creation is not God and should never be misunderstood as God.⁸⁴ Therefore Lawrence Osborn points out that ‘Barth stresses very strongly that heaven is not part of the divine being,’ and that there ‘is no place co-eternal with God within which God dwells.’⁸⁵ It is important then to remember that heaven and God are not the same and cannot be confused, as this would put a part of creation on par with God, which would also take away from God’s authority, heaven is where God dwells in creation.⁸⁶ This argument, as Joseph Mangina correctly points out, ‘is an implicit rebuke to the modern de-spatialization of God,’ as it goes against the idea that God cannot take up space within creation, which means that God is *in* heaven.⁸⁷ Barth’s understanding here then, is that the Throne of God is the location of God in heaven, it is the place in creation which is God’s alone, however it is not God. The

⁷⁷ Lindsay, ‘Heavenly,’ 10.

⁷⁸ CD III/3, 461. Ἄγγελος (angels) can be translated as messengers.

⁷⁹ Clough, ‘Creation,’ 350, cf. CD III/3, 461.

⁸⁰ CD III/3, 451.

⁸¹ Lindsay, ‘Heavenly,’ 10.

⁸² CD II/1, 474.

⁸³ Ibid. Cf. Ps 103:19.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Osborn, ‘Entertaining,’ 278.

⁸⁶ It is important to make a distinction between the different heavens which the Bible refers to, there are ‘three heavens one upon the other: the firmament above the stars; the heavenly ocean; the heaven in the true sense, in or above which is the throne of God.’ CD III/3, 448.

⁸⁷ Mangina, *Witness*, 103.

Throne of God is therefore ‘the principle of space itself, real space *par excellence*,’ this shows us that in the presence of God, the throne is creation in all that It is meant to be, this is not to say that all creation should be spiritual, it is where God is and rules as Lord of all creation, with the Son at the right hand of His Throne.⁸⁸ Jesus ascended physically to heaven at the right hand of the Throne, meaning that the Throne is still real space since Jesus is physical.

The Throne of God is in heaven, it is where it is present along with Jesus, who has ascended to the right hand of the Father physically, for Barth the answer to the question ‘where is this heaven?’; ‘it is where Christ is.’⁸⁹ ‘Christ is seated at the right hand of the throne of God,’ “he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven,” Jesus is clearly at the right hand of the Throne of God, which complies with what was said above as the Throne is still only occupied by God.⁹⁰ Christopher Green points to the resurrection as ‘what makes heaven not only real but also relevant,’ it is also ‘where God’s will to be God in Jesus Christ is vindicated in the resurrection.’⁹¹ It can therefore be said that heaven is affirmed by the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, however the scriptures also call to an upper sphere and the kingdom of heaven from where God rules.⁹²

3.5. Heaven Eschatologically

Barth’s work on the new heaven is not extensive, however, it is in depth, not just because of the insightful perspectives which he brings into the subject, but also from the detail which he brings into the doctrine of eschatology. Whilst talking about the *raqia*, that is the firmament in Genesis 1, Barth talks about the sea of glass, mentioned in Rev 4:6 and 15:2, which ‘will be completely removed, i.e. transformed, the upper sea becoming a sea of crystal in a new heaven, and therefore firm and transparent.’⁹³ This shows that, come the eschaton ‘the *raqia*’ will obviously become superfluous as a barrier and boundary,’ therefore the upper barrier that currently confines heaven and earth to their respective cosmoses will be broken.⁹⁴ What does this mean? First, it is important to understand Barth’s principles regarding the eschaton; for Barth, heaven ‘will perish with the earth as it came into being with it’ ... ‘and God will create both a new earth and a new heaven.’⁹⁵ Understanding this we can see that, like creation currently, the new heaven and earth will also be created, although in this new creation there will be greater unity between the two sides of creation. The new heaven will be ‘the manifestation of the heaven from which God not only rules the world but in so doing has turned and continually turns to it in loving-kindness,’ therefore creating a greater bond between the two creatures of God, as it is ‘in virtue of the loving-kindness with which God

⁸⁸ CD II/1, 475.

⁸⁹ CD III/3, 438.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 439. Heb. 1:3.

⁹¹ Green, ‘Worthy,’ 219f. Cf. CD III/3, 441.

⁹² For more on the ascension see Zwiggelaar, ‘Where’.

⁹³ CD III/1, 141.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ CD III/3, 420. Cf. Isa 65:17, Mark 13:31, Rev 21:1

turns to it, a new earth.⁹⁶ Therefore we can see from Barth's writing that the new heaven and new earth will be more connected, but like now a distinction must still be made between the new upper and lower cosmoses. The new creation will be united, ruled centrally by one God, as the firmament will become redundant; however, the difference between heaven and earth will remain, and heaven will remain the spiritual realm whilst earth will remain physical.

3.6. Summary of Barth on Heaven

Heaven first and foremost is where God is located, it is where His throne is and therefore where He sits in power, ruling in glory over the rest of creation. It can therefore be said that the throne of God is perfect creation as this is where God is with the Son. If heaven is the location of the throne of God, Jesus is the location of heaven, this is because Jesus ascended physically and therefore Jesus is the only thing that is physical in heaven. Heaven is more than where God (and Jesus) is, it is also from where the kingdom of heaven will come to earth, which is also synonymous with the kingdom of God. It is this kingdom that earth looks forward to in hope, the kingdom of heaven, which is in complete service to God. This is what earth will emulate when the new creation comes and when God's presence will pierce through all darkness.

Heaven for Barth clearly belongs in the doctrine of creation; this is not only because heaven is created, but also because heaven is the location of angels too, who are the creatures of heaven. Heaven must be understood as a created place, as otherwise it would be uncreated, like God, which would mean that heaven is on a par with God, and this cannot be true. However, God is also not limited to heaven, He is present beyond heaven because He cannot be limited to just one part of creation. God is present throughout all creation, although God is nearer to heaven than to earth. This comes down to heaven being where God is, and more than this, heaven is the place from where God's work comes down to us, which also brings out the relationship between heaven and earth. Heaven and earth, or the upper and lower sides of creation, are related as both are from God. It is important to remember that although they are counterparts of the cosmos, they also remain different and unique from each other. Heaven is obedient to God in the sense that heaven is the location where God's will is done and where His presence is accomplished, this is also what earth looks forward to in the eschaton. Angels are also, as said above, located in heaven, who are tasked with witnessing God to earth from heaven. It is true that to speak of angels is to speak of heaven as both are destined for earth. The last section that was looked at was heaven eschatologically, that is the new heaven, which will be renewed with the earth after judgment. In the new creation, Barth writes that the current barrier between the upper and lower sides of creation will be made superfluous, meaning there will be greater unity between the two, yet there will still be a distinction between the two.

⁹⁶ Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV, part 3.2: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, G. W. Bromiley (trans.), G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance (eds.), Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010, 709f.

4. Moltmann on Heaven

Jürgen Moltmann's work on the doctrine of heaven is found throughout his books and articles, although it is most notably in his *Doctrine of Creation*, where an entire chapter is dedicated to the subject. Moltmann also talks about the new heaven extensively, which comes through in various parts of his work. Moltmann writes about heaven in his doctrines of creation and eschatology, indicating where heaven fits in his theology. For Moltmann heaven is a part of the created world, it is the side that is invisible and incomprehensible, although heaven also has a future in creation. The new heaven is the future side of creation for both heaven and angels, and for Moltmann requires renewing and redemption.

For Moltmann heaven represents the location of God and angels, it is where the kingdom of heaven is prepared, heaven being a part of creation and heaven in an eschatological sense. These will be used to structure an understanding of Moltmann's heaven more fully in this section of the thesis. First, we shall explore Moltmann's theology of hope, which is the basis behind his theology. We shall then look at the concept of God in heaven, which will lead to Moltmann's understanding of heaven as Trinitarian. This section will also include Moltmann's understanding of angels as God's potencies and heaven being the place of God's potentialities. The kingdom is understood as in heaven for Moltmann as it waits to come down, and subsequently heaven as a part of the doctrine of creation will be covered. This will include Moltmann's identification of heaven being a threefold division, which will lead to the duality of heaven and earth and the doctrine of *zimzum*. Finally, the new heaven will be looked at, which will include Moltmann's view of sin in heaven.

Moltmann finds the sphere of heaven an ambiguous one: 'on the one hand it is the atmosphere above the earth; but on the other, it is transcendent compared with everything visible.'⁹⁷ However, although the sphere of heaven is transcendent and ambiguous this should not restrain us from looking at it. Heaven for Moltmann is also the 'invisible and unknowable spheres of creation in their relation to God.'⁹⁸ On this point, Cecilia Deane-Drummond writes that, 'even though heaven is "unknowable," Moltmann offers some specific suggestions as to the place and role of heaven in Christian theology.'⁹⁹

4.1. Promise of Heaven

It is important to first look at Moltmann's view of God's promise of heaven, where 'the future is perceived' and 'even more importantly and as a consequence, the way the present is engaged.'¹⁰⁰ Heaven is the place of hope for the earth because it is where God is present and therefore is where His kingdom is, which we see being inaugurated here on earth presently. Moltmann views heaven as a promise to come down to earth in the eschaton, this

⁹⁷ Moltmann, Jürgen, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1985, 149.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁹⁹ Deane-Drummond, Cecilia, 'Jürgen Moltmann on Heaven', Anthony N. S. Lane (ed.), *The Unseen World*, Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1996, 49-64, 50. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 159.

¹⁰⁰ Morse, *Difference*, 46. See also Veldman, Meine, 'Secrets of Moltmann's tacit tradition: via covenant theology to promise theology,' *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 4 (2010) 208-239.

understanding of heaven provides a future based on commitment and hope. For Moltmann this hope of heaven 'creates the experience of history,' because 'a promise creates a new reality in the present by instituting a relationship to the future that would not otherwise be the case.'¹⁰¹ The promise of heaven relies on the future consummation of heaven and earth, but this promise is also founded in the past, from Jesus' ministry and His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Heaven is also a reason for hope because it is the space of the possible, which 'hints more at mysticism' compared to anything concrete.¹⁰² Therefore, heaven in Moltmann's methodology of hope is where hope originates and will come down to earth in the eschaton, however, because it comes from heaven there is an air of mystery around it.

4.2. God in Heaven

The relationship between heaven and God (the Father) is key to understanding the foundations of Moltmann's doctrine of heaven. For Moltmann God is in heaven, it is where He sits in power. Moltmann writes that 'heaven is the 'place' of God's glory, and his 'dwelling', and 'it is 'from heaven' that God acts on earth.'¹⁰³ Because God is in heaven it is from where He acts to the rest of creation, although heaven is not the location of God for Moltmann, instead 'it is God who defines where heaven is.'¹⁰⁴ This creates a problem for Moltmann as heaven is then 'related solely to God,' which means 'surrendering the dual creation for the sake of the illusion of a unified, homogeneous world of unlimited transparency.'¹⁰⁵ Heaven cannot be assimilated into God, even if it makes heaven similar and more conceptual. Therefore, 'if heaven is pushed out of the doctrine of creation, it becomes difficult to go on interpreting the earth as God's creation at all,' because heaven and earth are intrinsically linked together. If heaven is torn out of the doctrine of creation it would mean the doctrine would collapse.¹⁰⁶ This point is recognised by Deane-Drummond who writes on the above point that, 'once heaven and God are equated, the world is no longer a dual world,' and that 'the identification of heaven and God paves the way for atheism, a rejection of heaven amounts to a rejection of God.'¹⁰⁷ If God is in heaven, this can create the idea that heaven is equated with God, compared to what heaven should be understood as, which is the relative transcendence of creation.¹⁰⁸ How does Moltmann solve this problem? Heaven must remain a part of creation and a distinction must be made between heaven and God. For Moltmann this distinction comes in the form of transcendence: 'it is therefore wrong to confuse this relative transcendence of heaven with the absolute transcendence of God.'¹⁰⁹ Therefore when we talk about God in heaven it is important to remember that God is Creator of heaven and earth, and that heaven cannot be equated with God. When it comes to God in

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 47. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

¹⁰² Deane-Drummond, 'Heaven,' 53.

¹⁰³ Moltmann, *Creation*, 149.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Deane-Drummond, 'Heaven,' 55.

¹⁰⁸ Moltmann, *Creation*, 174.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 182.

creation it is also important to remember that if heaven and God must be kept distinct then angels and God also must remain distinct. Along with this Moltmann also stresses creation as a trinitarian process.

Moltmann understands 'creation as a trinitarian process,' that is, 'the Creator, through his Spirit, dwells in the "whole" of his creation as well as in every created being, keeping this whole together.'¹¹⁰ 'The Father creates through the Son and the Holy Spirit,' and 'the created world is therefore created 'by God', formed 'through God' and exists 'in God'.¹¹¹ In other words, 'creation is from God (created by the Father), through God ("formed" by the Son) and in God (exists in the Spirit).'¹¹² For Moltmann 'the created world' also consist of heaven, which shows that along with earth, heaven is created, formed and exists in God.¹¹³ This brings an interesting perspective because, as seen above, God the Father dwells in heaven, and with this point the Spirit must also be present in heaven; therefore, along with the Son who has ascended to heaven, heaven is currently the location of all three persons of the trinity.¹¹⁴ This point is an important one because with the trinity all in one location, in heaven, there is a shared lordship over all of creation. For Radek Labaj, 'if God, his creation and its goal is understood in a trinitarian sense, it follows that we can see a cosmos permeated with the energies of the Spirit of God.'¹¹⁵ This would mean seeing creation in loving connection with God, instead of 'the Father as Lord over against his creation.'¹¹⁶ This relates to another important point, that in the *Parousia*, Jesus will leave heaven and rule on earth once more, therefore meaning a new immanence of God as Jesus will be with us in the new creation.

Heaven is not limited to God; it is also a creaturely place as angels are its inhabitants, which is why Moltmann calls them 'the heavenly beings'.¹¹⁷ Moltmann considers angels 'God's potencies in the realm of his potentialities,' God's realm of potentialities being heaven. It is for this reason 'we can call heaven the relative transcendence of the earth, and earth the relative immanence of heaven.'¹¹⁸ In the same way that humans represent the physical universe, because we are physical and inhabit this realm, so angels represent heaven; therefore, if heaven is the relative transcendence of earth, so are angels. Moltmann describes angels as being God's 'finite but immortal creatures,' in comparison to humans which are 'finite and mortal creatures,' and so 'heaven can also be called a finite but immortal creation.'¹¹⁹ Angels are in God's presence which means they might be almost completely absorbed by this immaculate presence they still hold a distinction from God.

¹¹⁰ Labaj, Radek, 'Alexei Nesteruk's 'Cosmic Theology' in Dialogue with Jürgen Moltmann,' *CV*, 58 (2016) 207-225, 208. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 9.

¹¹¹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 9.

¹¹² Labaj, 'Cosmic,' 208.

¹¹³ Moltmann, *Creation*, 159.

¹¹⁴ See Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, London: SCM Press. 1990, 331ff. for more on Christ in heaven.

¹¹⁵ Labaj, 'Cosmic,' 208.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Moltmann, *Creation*, 163.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

God's potentialities references the potentiality in which God creates the physical universe and from where God's power is.¹²⁰ Therefore, in relation to heaven and earth, 'earth means the reality of the world which is knowable because it is real, and definable because it is definitive; whereas heaven means God's potentiality *for* the earth, which is unknowable and indefinable but defining.'¹²¹ God's potentialities can also be understood in both the passive and active sense: '*out of* his potentialities God creates reality, and he creates this *in* his potency or power'. Heaven is then understood not only as God's potentiality but also God's potency, this is a reflection of God in heaven.¹²² These potentialities and potencies of heaven 'are not the potentialities and potencies of his eternal essence *per se*,' they should instead be understood as 'the potentialities and potencies of the God who designated himself to be the Creator of a world different from himself.'¹²³ Heaven is the location of the potentialities and potencies of God, heaven is not divine and therefore not the same as God. Moltmann puts the relationship of heaven and God's potentialities and potencies as follows;

Heaven is, as it were, the preparing and making available of the potentialities and potencies of the world's creation, redemption and glorification. That is why this heaven is called God's dwelling. The God who is present in heaven has so direct a relationship to his potentialities and potencies that these acquire almost no form of their own which could be defined; for – as has rightly been said of the angels – they are totally absorbed in the contemplation of God and in his service.¹²⁴

It is for this reason that we on earth can live in hope, as we await God's will to be done on earth as in heaven, not to say that we will lose our definition, we will instead be in intimate relation to God.¹²⁵ Deane-Drummond is correct when she points out that 'heaven means God's potentiality for the earth, it is the storehouse of the possibilities for the earth in both time and space.'¹²⁶ This shows us that heaven is where God's power is currently present, which shows us that God has greater purposes for us on earth; heaven is where God's kingdom is restored.

4.3. The Kingdom in Heaven

A distinction has to be made first between the Kingdom of Heaven (or God)¹²⁷ and the place of heaven where God and angels reside, since the Kingdom cannot be viewed 'as 'something purely spiritual' and 'not of this world',' which would reduce 'the rule of God to a beyond which is totally unrelated to earthly, bodily and historical life.'¹²⁸ We cannot misunderstand the Kingdom of Heaven, 'heaven is now the place of God's presence, but it is not yet the arena

¹²⁰ Ibid., 165.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 166. Italics his.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 166f.

¹²⁶ Deane-Drummond, Cecilia, *Creation Through Wisdom*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, 149. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 164-8.

¹²⁷ Moltmann, *Creation*, 159; 'Matthew likes to talk about the kingdom of God, in reticent circumlocution, as "the kingdom of heaven" (βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, first in Matt 3.2).'

¹²⁸ Moltmann, *Way*, 98.

for the kingdom of glory,' whilst the 'kingdom of glory embraces not merely heaven but earth too, and presupposes the creation of 'a new heaven' and 'a new earth', and is therefore for the future of creation.¹²⁹ Douglas Meeks also brings light to this point, 'Heaven, ..., must be distinguished from the kingdom of God,' reiterating what Moltmann writes above.¹³⁰ This point is also picked up by Raymond Hausoul when he writes that 'the kingdom of God is therefore not a kingdom localized in heaven, but a kingdom "like in heaven on earth".'¹³¹ It can therefore be said that the kingdom of heaven is prepared in heaven, in the presence of God who will be its king, and it is from heaven where this kingdom of glory will come down to encompass all of creation.¹³² It is for this reason that Petr Macek writes, 'heaven is now the place of God's presence,' and 'we must uphold the duality and clearly distinguish between heaven and the kingdom of God.'¹³³

It is clear then that the kingdom for Moltmann is an important aspect of the doctrine of heaven which must be comprehended clearly to gain a richer understanding of heaven. To add another dimension to this Moltmann writes that, 'understood in terms of time, his heavenly presence is his eschatological presence,' and therefore God 'is present in his kingdom, and this kingdom is the future of the earth, because it comes to earth.'¹³⁴ More of his thought on eternity will be examined below, but for now it is important to say that heaven's eternity is due to God's presence in heaven, which gives heaven power over time. This power over time is the control of time in any direction, although, this power is God's and heaven only participates in this power. It can therefore be said that the kingdom is and is not present in heaven, because the kingdom is God's presence, but God's kingdom has not yet come. In other words, the kingdom is present wherever God is present and therefore – because God is present in heaven – the kingdom of glory which awaits earth can be understood as in heaven, in God.

4.4. Heaven as part of Creation

One of the contexts in which Moltmann describes heaven is as part of the doctrine of creation, which, 'if heaven is reduced to God himself, it ceases to be a part of creation, and is as uncreated and eternal as God himself.'¹³⁵ It is therefore imperative that heaven is understood as a part of creation as, 'a heaven divinized in this way contains the potentiality for creation – and the potentiality for creation's destruction.'¹³⁶ Deane-Drummond points this out in Moltmann's work as well: 'the idea that heaven is part of God's creation, based on Genesis 1:1, is paradigmatic for Moltmann's theology of heaven.'¹³⁷ This again reiterates the warning

¹²⁹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

¹³⁰ Meeks, M. Douglas, 'Jürgen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions to Theology,' *RelSRes*, 22 (1996) 95-102, 100. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 182f.

¹³¹ Hausoul, Raymond R., *The New Heaven and New Earth*, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2020, 122.

¹³² Moltmann, *Creation*, 149.

¹³³ Macek, Petr, 'The Doctrine of Creation in the Messianic Theology of Jürgen Moltmann,' *CV*, 49 (2007) 150-184, 168.

¹³⁴ Moltmann, *Creation*, 149.

¹³⁵ Moltmann, *Creation*, 181.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Deane-Drummond, 'Heaven,' 49.

from Moltmann that heaven has to be understood as a part of creation, although heaven also has to be understood as God's direct environment: 'heaven is the milieu nearest to God.' Therefore, a distinction must be made between heaven and God; they are not the same.¹³⁸ Heaven is to be understood as the side of creation which is 'open' to God, the part of creation which is encompassed by God as it is where He dwells and where His kingdom is formed.¹³⁹ What is clear is that the relationship between heaven and God is special. Heaven, as Moltmann so eloquently puts, 'is the forecourt for the whole of creation pervaded by God.'¹⁴⁰ This means that God's relationship to creation is not limited to heaven, God must also be related to earth, but before looking at the duality of heaven and earth, it is important to make a clarification on heaven in creation.

Moltmann makes a threefold distinction between heaven, which he finds in the Bible: the heaven of the sky, the heaven of space, and the transcendent heaven of God. The first distinction is the heaven of the sky – which, when used in the Bible is meant when 'heaven, earth and sea' is used.¹⁴¹ The heaven of the stars and space is another heaven which is often thought of: 'if this region is meant, the writers generally talk about 'heaven and earth'.'¹⁴² The last way heaven can be understood is as the higher world where the angels and where God is present. When talking about this heaven, 'the heavens of the air and the stars come together with the earth, closing up to 'this visible world'.'¹⁴³ Here Moltmann reiterates that a distinction needs to be made between heaven and God, 'it is part of the created world' ... 'but as part of the created world it has to be distinguished from the visible world.'¹⁴⁴ It is in this threefold division of heaven where we see clear boundaries between not only what the Bible considers heaven, but also between the created world and the visible and invisible worlds. This created world for Moltmann is described as 'heaven and earth,' although this can be divided between the visible and invisible worlds; the visible world is the earth along with the heavens of the sky and space, whilst the invisible world is the inconceivable heaven where the Creator dwells along with the heavenly creatures. There is still a clear link between heaven and earth, as both are the creation of God, and can therefore be described as a part of the created world, that is, all that is created.

The created world can be described as heaven and earth, as both are created and sustained by God, and this is the key to understanding the created world. The world consists of both things visible and things invisible: 'by this is meant the differentiable strata of being in the one created reality,' that is to say, reality holds together both the physical and the spiritual in tandem.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, as Meeks writes, 'Moltmann argues that God's creation is necessarily the double world of heaven and earth.'¹⁴⁶ William Kay also identifies this in

¹³⁸ Moltmann, *Creation*, 149.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁴⁰ Moltmann, *Way*, 333.

¹⁴¹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 158. Cf. Ps 104, Gen 1, 2 Cor 12:2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁴⁵ Moltmann, Jürgen, Margaret Kohl (trans.), *Science and Wisdom*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 2003, 79.

¹⁴⁶ Meeks, 'Systematic,' 100.

Moltmann's work when he writes that, "heaven" represents the 'beyond' of the world, the possibility of transcendence and the sphere of God's creative potentialities towards the world.¹⁴⁷ What this shows us is that heaven is the storehouse of God's power towards earth. 'In other words, heaven is the transcendence of earth, but this transcendence is expressed in terms of potentialities, rather than hierarchies,' which presents a clear distinction between heaven and earth as heaven is where earth's potential lies.¹⁴⁸ From the points above we can see the unity between heaven and earth, which also 'gives us an overall picture of an earthly visible universe, and a heavenly, invisible multiverse.'¹⁴⁹

Where does the distinction between heaven and earth lie apart from substance if they are both a part of the created world? Time. The earthly visible universe's time is *chronos*, 'the irreversible temporal structure of becoming and passing away,' whilst the heavenly invisible universe's time is *aeon*, 'the reversible temporal structure of cyclical time,' which is a reflection of eternity.¹⁵⁰ The eternity of heaven, Moltmann describes, is due to God's indwelling of heaven: 'the sphere of creation that is open to God, the sphere which the eternal God already 'indwells' and which therefore already partakes of his eternity.'¹⁵¹ For Moltmann eternity is not 'end-less time' or 'timelessness,' instead it 'means power over time.' This is the influence of God in heaven; God has power over time, which means earth in the new creation will also have this power over time.¹⁵² 'His eternity surrounds the time of the created worlds from every side, and by doing so confines it to finite time.'¹⁵³ Therefore, the duality of heaven and earth should be understood as the entire created world, although there is a greater distinction than the visible and invisible sides of the world. They have different *times*, one being irreversible and the other reversible, heaven and earth do occupy the same space.

The doctrine of *zimzum* (צמצום) 'means concentration and contraction, and signifies a withdrawing of oneself into oneself.'¹⁵⁴ When applied to God and creation, the doctrine of *zimzum* means that 'God withdraws into God's self in order to allow finite creation space for its own being', therefore providing space for heaven and earth.¹⁵⁵ The space that God creates however is empty space, 'or *nihil*,' and it is 'due to the existence of this *nihil*, that creation is incomplete and directed at its future completion.' This is because this *nihil* means "'God-forsakenness, hell, absolute death," which threatens the current creation.'¹⁵⁶ It is also within

¹⁴⁷ Kay, William K., 'God in Creation: A Reflection of Jürgen Moltmann's Theology,' *RT*, 3 (2005) 75-84, 81.

¹⁴⁸ Deane-Drummond, 'Heaven' 51.

¹⁴⁹ Moltmann, *Science*, 79.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Moltmann, *Way*, 332.

¹⁵² Moltmann, *Science*, 80. In the original German power over time is '*Zeitmächtigkeit*.'

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Moltmann, *Creation*, 87. 87n25; Scholm, 'Schöpfung aus Nichts un Selbstvershränkung Gotts,' op. cit., pp. 155ff. The *zimzum* idea also plays a leading part in the Yiddish novels of Isaak Bashevis Singer, especially in *The Slave*, ET New York 1962, London 1963. He uses it in the form of biblical metaphor: 'God hides his face.' *Zimzum* or *TzimTzum* originates in Lurianic Kabbalah which is a Jewish mystical and esoteric tradition.

¹⁵⁵ Edwards, Denis, *Christian Understanding of Creation*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017, 235. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 87.

¹⁵⁶ Hausoul, Raymond R., 'An Evaluation of Jürgen Moltmann's Concept of Time and Space in the New Creation,' *JRT*, 7 (2013) 137-159, 149. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 87f.

this 'chaos or *nihil*, in which God realized this creation (*creatio in nihilo*).' However, it is also 'because of this *nihil*, creation is imperfect and focused on its future completion.'¹⁵⁷ When applied to the doctrine of heaven, *zimzum* provides an interesting perspective into the relation between God and heaven and heaven in creation. As this *nihil* is the space in which creation is made, it is also the location of heaven, and in turn God is also present there, although if this *nihil* is to be understood as an opposite to God why is this also the location of all of creation? Yes, God self-restricts to create space for creation, taking upon Himself 'the form of a servant.'¹⁵⁸ However it can be understood that creation fills in this emptiness, and is especially occupied as God is present in creation. As seen above, this *nihil* makes creation imperfect and incomplete, because the eschaton has not yet come; with this in mind, heaven and the kingdom therewithin can be understood as the opposite of death. Therefore, we await God's full return in the eschaton.

4.5. Heaven Eschatologically

One of the other contexts in which Moltmann describes heaven is as part of the doctrine of eschatology. Heaven is understood as the place of God's presence now, which is distinct from the kingdom to come, as heaven 'is not yet the arena for the kingdom of glory.'¹⁵⁹ It is for this reason that the new creation also includes a new heaven: 'heaven requires a new creation too,' along with earth,¹⁶⁰ because 'both heaven and earth have a future in the glorious future kingdom.'¹⁶¹ Moltmann is criticised by David Wilkinson for 'not taking heaven seriously' in the context of eschatology in terms of being anthropocentric, however, heaven in Moltmann's eschatology is referenced throughout his work.¹⁶² It could also be said that eschatology is anthropocentric because heaven is not our destination as we are creatures of flesh and blood, in contrast to angels who are heavenly, instead we aspire to an earthly future. Moltmann writes that 'earth, like heaven, may become God's dwelling,' and that God will reign on earth as in heaven, which will 'reconcile these two spheres of creation again with one another, so that there can be a fruitful exchange of heavenly and earthly energies.'¹⁶³ It is for this reason that Moltmann writes that, 'the Creator will come to his dwelling place in his creation, and to his rest.'¹⁶⁴ The kingdom will '*renew heaven and earth,*' and '*heaven and earth will become God's dwelling,*' therefore bringing the presence of God down to earth.¹⁶⁵

Moltmann is clear, however, that heaven and earth will not merge: 'it does not mean that the difference between heaven and earth will be ended: the earth will not become

¹⁵⁷ Hausoul, *New*, 107.

¹⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Creation*, 88.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Deane-Drummond, 'Heaven,' 58. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

¹⁶² Wilkinson, David, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, London: T&T Clark, 2010, 61. Wilkinson does not provide any reference to Moltmann's work when he writes this.

¹⁶³ Moltmann, *Way*, 333.

¹⁶⁴ Moltmann, Jürgen, 'Is the World Coming to an End or Has Its Future already Begun? Christian Eschatology, Modern Utopianism and Exterminism,' in David Fergusson & Marcel Sarot (eds.), *Future As God's Gift*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, 129-138, 138.

¹⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Creation*, 183. Italics his.

heavenly, and heavenly will not become earthly.¹⁶⁶ What this will mean is ‘that both these spheres of creation will enter into unhindered and boundless fruitful communication,’ and therefore in the presence of God heaven and earth will unite whilst still remaining unique.¹⁶⁷ The resurrection of the dead will take place on earth, instead of the resurrection leading to heaven, which for Moltmann would be ‘closer to Plato than to Jesus and the NT.’¹⁶⁸ Moltmann is therefore correct when he writes that, ‘eschatology must be broadened out into cosmic eschatology, for otherwise it becomes a gnostic doctrine of redemption, and is bound to teach, no longer the redemption of the world but a redemption from the world.’¹⁶⁹ It is clear then that the redemption of humanity requires a new heaven and a new earth, a renewal of all of creation is required as humanity is conjoined with the world.¹⁷⁰ ‘The resurrection of the dead will happen on earth,’ as the kingdom of glory comes down from heaven, ‘heaven opens for them, it is heaven on earth.’¹⁷¹

An interesting perspective Moltmann has is that there is sin present in heaven, which are demonic and satanic forces present in the heavenly sphere.¹⁷² The solution to these ‘dimensions of evil’ ... ‘means the restoration of the good in earthly potentialities for living *and* in the heavenly potencies which make these potentialities possible.’¹⁷³ Another reason for the new heaven is the restoration of these evils, perversions and demonic forces; the new creation will restore and make all things like new, as in before sin existed. ‘Moltmann insists, however, that these evil forces are not outside the redemptive love of God’¹⁷⁴ ... ‘for their power is created power, and is as such good,’ and therefore ‘it is only their power of destruction that was evil.’¹⁷⁵ Because all that God created was good, it will be made good again, for all things will be redeemed and made as new, which is why a new heaven along with a new earth is needed.

4.6. Summary of Moltmann on Heaven

Moltmann’s work on heaven ranges through various aspects in theology such as creation and eschatology, with interesting insights given into each part of his thought on heaven. It is important to first register that heaven is where God sits in power, and it is for this reason that it is God who defines where heaven is. God and heaven are not the same, since heaven is created by God, and they can therefore not be on a par with one another. This is an important point when we remember that for Moltmann creation is a Trinitarian process of being from, through and in God, which means that all three persons of God are in heaven. Heaven is also

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 184.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Moltmann, Jürgen, *Sein Name ist Gerechtigkeit: Neue Beiträge zur christlichen Gotteslehre*, München: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008, 73. Translation mine. Moltmann, Jürgen, ‘The Resurrection of Christ and the New Earth,’ *CV*, 49 (2007) 141-149,’ 147.

¹⁶⁹ Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 2005, 259.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 260.

¹⁷¹ Moltmann, ‘Presence,’ 587f.

¹⁷² Moltmann, *Creation*, 169.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Deane-Drummond, ‘Heaven,’ 54. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 169.

¹⁷⁵ Moltmann, *Creation*, 169.

where angels dwell, and so angels represent heaven in a similar way as humans represent earth, which is why when Moltmann writes that angels are finite but immortal creatures, the same is true of heaven. Due to angels being in close relation to God, Moltmann describes them as God's potencies, in a similar way, because heaven is from where God creates and where His power comes from, it can be described as God's potentiality. Heaven is also from where God prepares His kingdom, which we await here on earth, and it is for this reason that the kingdom of heaven and heaven itself need to be understood as different from one another; heaven is the current location of the kingdom because it is the current location of God. God's presence in heaven means that heaven has power over time, heaven participates in God's eternity, which earth also looks forward to in the eschaton.

It is important for Moltmann that heaven is understood as a part of creation, as this makes a clear distinction between heaven and God. Whilst looking at heaven in the context of creation, Moltmann first makes a distinction between the heaven of the sky, the heaven of space, and the transcendent heaven of God, found in the Bible. Moltmann makes a distinction between the visible and invisible worlds, that is, that the visible world consists of earth along with the sky and space, whilst the invisible world is the inconceivable heaven where the Creator dwells along with the heavenly creatures. Because the visible and invisible worlds are part of the created world they have a special relationship, although, like most aspects of heaven, a distinction must be made. Heaven and earth are different, not only in substance but also in time, as heaven is eternal and spiritual. When discussing Moltmann and creation it is important to mention the doctrine of *zimzum* as this provides an interesting perspective into the relation between God and heaven and heaven in creation, his *nihil* makes creation imperfect and incomplete, because the eschaton has not yet come. Moltmann explicitly writes that, 'heaven requires a new creation too.' There are two main reasons for this: first, creation is incomplete because of this *nihil*; and second, sin is present in heaven. The new creation is the perfecting of creation, both earth and heaven, because both are imperfect now, and so we await the perfect presence of God.

5. Comparison

From the above two sections there are noticeable similarities between the two theologians, this is aided by the subtitles which are purposefully alike to demonstrate the parallel of the two approaches. There are a few differences between Barth and Moltmann's methods of dealing with the inconceivable side of creation which will be looked at. The similarities between the two theologians are seen in the basic facts on heaven such as it is where God is, where the kingdom and angels currently are, how it is a part of creation and its future in creation. The dissimilarities are mostly the difference in method and Moltmann's development of the doctrine past Barth's doctrinal basis.

5.1. Similarities between Barth and Moltmann

The similarities between the two approaches include the idea that God is present in heaven along with the kingdom of heaven. Both Barth and Moltmann consider the doctrine of heaven to belong in the broader doctrine of creation as it is created and is a creaturely place being

the abode of the angels. Heaven also has a place in eschatology for the two, as there will be a new heaven. In the beginning of the sections on Barth and Moltmann there are comments from the two on the perspective that looking at heaven is arbitrary, however both write that it is still important to understand this upper and invisible sphere due to it being a testimony to God.

5.1.1. God in Heaven

For both Barth and Moltmann an important point to understanding heaven is that God is present there, it is from where He acts and where He sits in power presiding over all of creation. Barth does make a distinction between the throne of God—that is, God’s space alone—and the rest of heaven where God is also present along with the angels, whereas Moltmann does not make this distinction as explicit as Barth. Moltmann does however write that heaven is ‘related solely to God,’ showing that heaven is also God’s space in creation alone.¹⁷⁶ Heaven should also be understood as the part of creation where God is wholly present, a point which is brought forward by both theologians, as it not only shows that heaven and God are not the same, but it also shows where God fully dwells in creation.

Heaven and God can therefore not be confused as it limits the possibilities of theology, a confusion of God and creation restricts God to also be created. Both Barth and Moltmann are quick to make this distinction between God and heaven, for if the opposite is true then heaven and God would have to be considered as equal. Not only would the entire doctrine of creation collapse, but so would the doctrine of God. Heaven must be understood as a part of creation, although Barth and Moltmann go about this with slightly different approaches. For Barth the throne of God is God’s space alone, which makes it ‘real space *par excellence*,’ due to God’s presence there, it is still space compared to God.¹⁷⁷ Moltmann compares the transcendence of heaven and God saying that it is ‘wrong to confuse this relative transcendence of heaven with the absolute transcendence of God.’¹⁷⁸ We can therefore see that heaven is God’s dwelling, heaven is not God and cannot be confused regardless of both being transcendent.

5.1.2. The Kingdom of Heaven

Barth and Moltmann point out the comparison between the “kingdom of heaven” and the “kingdom of God,” or ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν and ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, as this is an important distinction made by Matthew. As seen above, “kingdom of heaven” is referenced in the Gospel of Matthew and has one reference outside the Gospel in 1 Tim 4:18. Both theologians comment that the two phrases are interchangeable and mean the same thing. It is important to say that Matthew is not replacing God with heaven when talking about the

¹⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Creation*, 173.

¹⁷⁷ CD II/1, 475.

¹⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Creation*, 182.

kingdom, rather Matthew is simply using more distinctive language 'in reticent circumlocution.'¹⁷⁹

The kingdom is also to be understood as coming from heaven to earth, it is not fixed there, its future is also for earth to join the fold. This is an important point made by both theologians, not only because of its eschatological significance, but because it has implications for God and heaven too. For Moltmann the 'kingdom of glory embraces not merely heaven but earth too, and presupposes the creation of 'a new heaven' and 'a new earth', and is therefore for the future of creation.¹⁸⁰ As Barth writes, 'the kingdom of God comes to earth as the kingdom of heaven,' meaning that God's rule will come down to earth, showing Barth is making a very similar point to Moltmann.¹⁸¹ The kingdom is not limited to heaven but will instead also come down to the rest of creation. Moltmann develops the kingdom in an eschatological manner by saying that, 'understood in terms of time, his heavenly presence is his eschatological presence,' however Moltmann's view on eternity and heaven will be looked at below.¹⁸² What Moltmann's point boils down to is the kingdom is present wherever God is present and it is for this reason that the kingdom is present in heaven. This is a point that Barth would not in essence disagree with as he writes that the kingdom is 'the royal speech and action of God which commences in heaven,' meaning that it is His presence rather than the place of heaven.¹⁸³ Barth would also say that the kingdom is present in heaven because it is a part of the created world and heaven is where the kingdom originates rather than being there because God is there.

5.1.3. Heaven within Creation

Heaven must be understood as a part of creation according to Barth and Moltmann, it is the upper side of creation, for if it were not then it would be on a par with God. Barth and Moltmann both write about heaven in the context of their doctrines on creation, Barth in *CD III/3* and Moltmann in *God in Creation*. It is imperative that heaven is understood as created by God and therefore along with earth is a part of the created sphere, a point stated by both Barth, 'it [heaven] is fundamentally God's creation, as earth is,'¹⁸⁴ and Moltmann, "'heaven' is the term for the side of creation that is open to God.'¹⁸⁵ This brings forth a distinction between heaven and God again: because heaven has to be understood as created there is a clear difference between heaven and God. Both Barth and Moltmann also say that God is not limited to heaven because God cannot be limited, and therefore God must also be related to earth as well as heaven. For Moltmann, heaven is the side of creation which is 'open' to God and is encompassed by God, showing that God's connection to heaven is much closer compared to earth's, because God is there.¹⁸⁶ Barth shows a similar line of thought when he

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 159.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 183.

¹⁸¹ *CD III/3*, 448.

¹⁸² Moltmann, *Creation*, 149.

¹⁸³ *CD III/3*, 443

¹⁸⁴ *CD II/1*, 266.

¹⁸⁵ Moltmann, *Creation* 163.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 182.

writes that, 'it [heaven] constitutes that side of created reality which is much more closely related to God.'¹⁸⁷

Both Barth and Moltmann refer to the threefold division of heaven, that is the heaven of the sky, the heaven of space, and the heaven of God. Barth talks about the threefold division briefly when he writes, 'the firmament above the stars; the heavenly ocean; the heaven in the true sense, in or above which is the throne of God.'¹⁸⁸ Moltmann makes reference to this division more explicitly in his section on heaven, going into more detail than Barth.¹⁸⁹ Although both theologians use metaphorical language when commenting on the divisions of heaven, it is clear that the separations made by the two are the same. Moltmann talks about the third heaven still being a part of creation and uses these distinctions as boundaries between the visible and invisible worlds.

Heaven and earth are created by God and therefore related, which means that the world consists of both things visible and things invisible. For Barth heaven is the counterpart to earth, as both are in relation to each other, and both spheres exist in participation with each other.¹⁹⁰ It can therefore be said that the created world is the duality of heaven and earth, although Moltmann would also bring time as a distinction, along with the visible and invisible worlds, between heaven and earth, which will be seen in greater detail below. Both Barth and Moltmann then make a clear distinction between heaven and earth when talking about the duality as although they are counterparts of the cosmos, they also remain different and unique to each other.¹⁹¹

5.1.4. Angels

Both theologians write about angels when discussing heaven, and this is the reason why both talk about heaven as being a creaturely sphere, since angels are its inhabitants. Both scholars also talk about angels and heaven as being semi-synonymous, *semi* because there is still a difference between angels and heaven: heaven is the home of angels, it is where they live, whereas angels are spiritual creatures or heavenly beings.¹⁹² Therefore, in the same way that humans can be described as representing the physical universe, angels can be seen as representing the spiritual realm. What do we learn from this? Moltmann describes this best when he writes that angels are God's 'finite but immortal creatures,' in comparison to humans which are 'finite and mortal creatures,' which is also why 'heaven can also be called a finite but immortal creation.'¹⁹³ This is a point which Barth would agree with since he sees heaven as being immortal along with God. It could be said that we only understand heaven as immortal due to the unknowability of the spiritual realm and can therefore not distinguish between the place heaven and the creatures angels.

¹⁸⁷ CD III/3, 236.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 448.

¹⁸⁹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 158f.

¹⁹⁰ CD III/3, 424.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 422.

¹⁹² CD III/3, 461; Moltmann, *Creation*, 163.

¹⁹³ Moltmann, *Creation*, 163.

5.1.5. Heaven Eschatologically

Barth and Moltmann both say that heaven 'will perish with the earth as it came into being with it,' 'and God will create both a new earth and a new heaven.'¹⁹⁴ Above we see heaven as immortal creation although it will perish, how can heaven perish, heaven's immortality is due to God's presence, and therefore calling heaven immortal is an admission of God's presence in heaven.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, the new creation also includes a new heaven, 'heaven requires a new creation too,' along with earth.¹⁹⁶ Both theologians say this because all of creation will need renewal and since heaven is a part of creation it too will be a part of the new creation, which will also bring earth under the fold of the kingdom of heaven. As seen above, the kingdom of heaven will come down to encompass earth, meaning that under God all of creation will be united in a new way, with greater unity between the visible and invisible sides of creation, whilst each remains unique. This greater unity will be the result of the barrier between the physical and spiritual disappearing, meaning that creation will be unified under God. This shows that the new creation will become a united creation, with a tighter relationship between the physical and the spiritual. The difference between heaven and earth will still remain: heaven will remain the spiritual realm whilst earth will remain physical.

5.2. Differences between Barth and Moltmann

There are also differences between the two theologians, which come in the form of differing methods and Moltmann's development of the doctrine. The different methods and development contain the different methods used behind their theologies of heaven, Moltmann's criticism of Barth's analogy between the upper and lower spheres and God and humanity, and Moltmann's development on the doctrine of heaven incorporating time, space and sin, that is, Moltmann's use of eternity, *zimzum* and the presence of sin in heaven. Many of these differences come from Moltmann's development and innovative perspective on the doctrine of heaven, developments that Barth could have made but did not. The differences between the two do not reinvent the doctrines of creation and eschatology, but demonstrate original insights into a doctrine which is rarely looked at and as such should always be analysed constructively.

5.2.1. Methodology

Barth and Moltmann use different methods when looking at heaven, Barth uses saga to describe heaven whilst Moltmann has his theology of hope as a backdrop to his theology of heaven. For Barth heaven is the mysterious side of creation which is the context which we should understand heaven in. Moltmann views heaven in the framework of a theology of hope, which has strong eschatological connotations behind the heaven of hope. Here we already see the different ways of viewing heaven, as a mysterious realm beyond comprehension, or primarily as the future hope of earth. This at first glance does not look like such a difference, however, both are related to history in different ways, which informs their

¹⁹⁴ CD III/3, 420. Cf. Isa 65:17, Mark 13:31, Rev 21:1.

¹⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Science*, 80.

¹⁹⁶ Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

understanding of heaven. Saga is different to history as saga is ‘historically non-verifiable legend’ and therefore the myth side of history, beyond complete understanding.¹⁹⁷ A theology of hope, on the other hand, ‘creates the experience of history’ as the hope which is brought forth by heaven relies on the historical ministry of Jesus, which has happened.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, for Barth heaven should be understood as historical myth, whilst for Moltmann, heaven is historically verified through the gospels as historical reality in the eschaton. Moltmann does not however deny heaven as the mysterious realm, both theologians view heaven as a mystical place, the difference in method lies in the different starting points on heaven. The key difference being their interpretations of heaven in history and the contexts in which they understand heaven, whether as historical myth or historical reality.

5.2.2. Moltmann’s criticism of Barth

Within Moltmann’s work there is an instance where he talks about Barth’s work on heaven, specifically the upper and lower sides of creation, heaven and earth, concerning which Moltmann agrees with Barth. God is closer to heaven and can therefore be considered in the upper sphere of creation, ‘God ‘dwells’ in heaven and ‘acts’ on earth from heaven.’¹⁹⁹ Moltmann’s criticism of Barth is in the relationship between heaven and earth as upper and lower as an analogy for the relationship between God and humanity. For Moltmann it would be wrong to use the relationship of God and heaven as an analogy for God and humanity. Barth bases his analogy ‘on the sovereignty of God, who rules from above downwards,’ which is the core of the disagreement. Barth expresses God’s rule over creation in his doctrine of creation.²⁰⁰ Moltmann believes that, ‘the object of love cannot have a ‘below’ or a ‘later’, let alone a ‘less’.’ God loves all his creation, and therefore Moltmann holds that Barth’s analogy is wrong, whilst his doctrine on the duality of heaven and earth – heaven as being upper because it is where God is present – can still be understood as true.²⁰¹ Therefore, ‘we can only speak of a complementation’ when we talk about heaven and earth, ‘we cannot think of the one as over against or superior to the other.’²⁰² For Moltmann heaven and earth were created equally and have no superiority between the two sides of creation, on the other hand Barth describes heaven as being higher than earth, creating a hierarchy between the two. For Barth heaven is above and higher than earth because it is where God is present, ‘of heaven and earth; of the superiority of the former to the latter.’²⁰³ This is a clear difference between the two theologians views on heaven and earth, whether heaven was created equally alongside earth or not.

¹⁹⁷ CD III/3, 374.

¹⁹⁸ Morse, *Difference*, 47, Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

¹⁹⁹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 161. Here Moltmann footnotes Barth, CD III/3, 422.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 162n11; ‘Barth (ibid., p. 426) talks explicitly about the ‘hierarchy in the relationship between heaven and earth’.’

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ CD III/3, 426f.

5.2.3. Moltmann's use of eternity

An interesting aspect which Moltmann brings into the doctrine of heaven is his understanding of eternity, which he describes as 'power over time' in comparison to 'end-less time' or 'timelessness.'²⁰⁴ Eternity for Moltmann is not a characteristic of heaven, but instead comes from God's presence and influence in heaven; it is because God is in heaven that heaven has power over time. The heavenly invisible universe's time is *aeon*, 'the reversible temporal structure of cyclical time,' which reflects eternity. It can therefore be seen that eternity is described as the potential to reverse time, time in this sense is recurring.²⁰⁵ For Moltmann this is what is happening in heaven, time does not go in one direction but there is a power to go back in time too.

Barth on the other hand does not talk about the relationship between time and heaven. This being said we can glean from Barth's writings on eternity and God in *CD II/1*: 'God's time, past, present, and future are seen as a *simultaneous* unity or as *nunc aeternitatis*,' which shows a form of timelessness where all time for God is happening at the same time, meaning God is outside of earth's time.²⁰⁶ From this analysis we can see the difference between the two approaches to time: for Moltmann, time is a reversible construct which God has power over; for Barth, all time is happening before and in God that has 'a direction which is irreversible.'²⁰⁷ Barth's view therefore means that time is always happening for God, this time is irreversible because it is all happening before God, it is beyond direction in this sense. Compared to Moltmann who writes that time is reversible and therefore is not always happening, but has a direction which can be altered.

5.2.4. Moltmann's use of *zimzum*

Another aspect that Moltmann brings into the conversation is his use of *zimzum* when talking in relation to heaven, that is, God's self-restriction to create space for creation, which opens to nothingness or *nihil*. This *nihil* means "'God-forsakenness, hell, absolute death," which threatens the current creation,' and therefore needs to be removed in the eschaton when the kingdom of heaven comes in its fullest form.²⁰⁸ Interestingly Barth writes that 'nothingness is a falsehood,' although 'it exists' because 'it founds and organises its own kingdom,' which exists in opposition to heaven.²⁰⁹ Barth also does not speak of *zimzum* and therefore it is difficult to make a comparison. However, he does speak about nothingness, which is now *something* because it has turned into this opposition to and of heaven. The kingdom of nothing is the place which God has passed over, as such it is 'that which God does not will' and therefore without hope, grace, and love.²¹⁰ It can be seen then that there is a

²⁰⁴ Moltmann, *Science*, 80. In the original German power over time is '*Zeitmächtigkeit*.'

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁰⁶ Brom, Luco Johan van den, 'Time and eternity in Christian God-talk,' *ZDT*, 4 (2010) 38-66, 49, Cf. *CD II/1*, 608ff. Italics his.

²⁰⁷ *CD II/1*, 639.

²⁰⁸ Hausoul, 'Evaluation,' 149. Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 87f.

²⁰⁹ *CD III/3*, 527. For more on Barth and Nothingness see Lindsay, 'Radical'.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 351ff.

similarity between both theologians approaches to nothingness/*nihil*, in that this is a threat to creation and will be demolished come the eschaton; the difference comes in the understanding of what this nothingness is. For Barth, this nothingness has now become the kingdom of demons and evil; on the other hand, Moltmann would only go as far as to say this *nihil* is an emptiness where God is not present. For Moltmann, new creation is required because this nothingness is a threat to creation, which as seen above includes heaven, therefore come the eschaton when Jesus will come down in full glory and establishes His rule over creation, which will be the end of this nothingness. This is not a ground-breaking difference, but it does show how both scholars see heaven's opponents, and thus, in a roundabout way, God's relationship to creation: it is where God is present, since anywhere without God is not of God.

5.2.5. Sin in Heaven

The last clear difference between Moltmann's work on heaven and Barth's is that Moltmann states that there is sin present in heaven. This is how Moltmann explains where demonic and satanic forces are currently present, in the upper heavenly sphere, which is one of the reasons why heaven will be renewed into a new heaven, to purge the upper sphere of these evils.²¹¹ For Barth, as seen in the section above, the demonic forces are present in the kingdom of nothingness, not in heaven, as he makes a clear distinction between these two places; although the satanic sphere mimics the heavenly, they are not the same. This point also shows a clear reason for Moltmann why there is a need for a new heaven, to redeem and make all things as new. Barth does not present a cohesive argument concerning why there will be a new heaven, he simply accepts that there will be one, referring to various biblical passages, and pursues this no further. It could be said that for Barth the new creation is required to bring both the visible and invisible into closer relationship, however this is an outcome, not a reason. As seen in the biblical section above on sin in heaven, sin is present in the sea of heaven, the place of chaos and evil. This matches closely with what is seen in Moltmann's work and shows how sin in heaven can persist when in the presence of God, for they are in different levels of heaven.²¹²

6. The Doctrine of Heaven by other Theologians

Within this chapter the chosen works are contemporary theological works in which heaven is specifically written about, to gain a better understanding of the present concepts of heaven a wide range of texts will be considered, from the academic to more popular writings. This section distinguishes between three forms of literature in which the doctrine of heaven is found: heaven in systematic works, which is larger overarching theological works where a section is dedicated to heaven; heaven in works on eschatology; and lastly, specific works on heaven. After all three of these have been examined we will then be able to compare the

²¹¹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 169.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 159, here Moltmann talks about the various levels which heaven has, citing 2 Cor 12:2, and continues to write that 'it is not clear whether by this he means the angelic heaven beyond the heaven of the air and the stars.' He also says that 'under the influence of Jewish conceptions, some of the church Fathers talked about 'seven heavens'.'

views found therein to Barth and Moltmann's works on heaven, noting where the differences and similarities lie between these two theologians and the wider field of theology on heaven.

6.1. Heaven in Systematics

The systematic works present in this section of the thesis include larger systematic works which cover broad stretches of doctrine, however, beyond these works dictionaries and encyclopaedias are also included. There were three major sections where heaven was discussed. The first section in which heaven is discussed is heaven being the abode of God. Heaven is also found in sections on creation because heaven should be understood as a part of the doctrine of creation. Finally, heaven is found in eschatology, which is typically where the doctrine of heaven is found, however this is beginning to change. Michael Welker points out that, 'a developed doctrine of heaven can help give us a better grasp of the political and cosmic dimensions of the Christ-event and the differentiated unity of the work of the triune God,' which shows the validity of looking at heaven.²¹³

6.1.1. God in Heaven

Heaven as the abode of God is one of the four pillars to understanding heaven. Thomas Oden points out that 'Scripture speaks of heaven as the abode of God.'²¹⁴ Heaven should also be understood as the place of God as the Bible teaches 'us to think of heaven as a place;' heaven needs to be understood as a part of creation in which God dwells, it is a real place.²¹⁵ More than this, Wayne Grudem writes that, 'heaven is a place.' Grudem provides the example of Jesus' promise, "I go to prepare a *place* for you" (John 14:2), which he uses 'to conclude that heaven is even now a place—though one whose location is now unknown to us and whose existence is now unable to be perceived by our natural senses.'²¹⁶ Jesus ascends to heaven to prepare a place for us, and therefore we should understand heaven as the place where Jesus is.²¹⁷ Neil MacDonald points out that 'unless "heaven" is identified with "God's place" meaning an uncreated place ... rather than a created place, then heaven or "the heavenly city" is not a "continuing place",' and continues with 'if it is not a "continuing place" it could not constitute a place where humankind could eternally *be*.'²¹⁸ MacDonald's point is flawed because heaven is the place of God in creation and therefore cannot be God, for otherwise God would be present in a place which is Him. God 'must have his own place within creation if he is not simply to absorb the creature within himself.'²¹⁹ God's presence in heaven is God's

²¹³ Welker, Michael, 'Heaven,' in *The Encyclopaedia of Christianity*, Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 506-507, 507.

²¹⁴ Oden, Thomas C., *Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, The Living God*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing Company, 2008, 239. Here Oden provides a couple of examples of heaven being God's abode; 'Moses prayed that God would "look down from heaven, thy holy dwelling-place" (Deut 26:15). Jesus prayed to "Our Father in heaven" (Matt 6:9).'

²¹⁵ Berkhof, Louis, *Systematic Theology*, London: Banner of Truth, 1958, 350.

²¹⁶ Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000, 1159f.

²¹⁷ For more on Jesus' ascension see Zwiggelaar, 'Where'.

²¹⁸ MacDonald, Neil B., *Metaphysics and God of Israel*, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006, 82. Italics his.

²¹⁹ Jenson, Robert W., *Systematic Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997-1999, 120.

immanence to creation, this place also provides God a space which is His alone, meaning the rest of creation is not engrossed by Him.²²⁰

6.1.2. Heaven in Creation

God is the creator of both heaven and earth, for Paul Jewett ‘the phrase “heaven and earth” means simply “everything”,’ and it can therefore be said that ‘starting with nothing, God created heaven and earth: he created everything that is.’²²¹ This not only shows a duality between heaven and earth as the two sides of creation, but heaven is also clearly a part of creation in Jewett’s theology. ‘Heaven is created with the earth as earth’s boundary by mystery,’ meaning heaven is the mysterious side of creation beyond earthly understanding.²²² Although heaven is a part of creation and is related to earth, there is still a distinct difference between the two and we can only relate them in the sense of both being created by the Creator. James McClendon is therefore correct when he writes that, ‘heaven is the creation that is inconceivable to us,’ heaven is beyond our understanding, not just because it is where the infinite God is found.²²³ We are also of a different substance, earth is physical whilst heaven is spiritual, therefore adding to the incomprehensibility of heaven, as the spiritual is mysterious. Jewett puts the duality of heaven and earth well:

Though heaven is not earth and earth is not heaven, both are part of one and the same creation; both are given their reality by the will of God. The difference between heaven and earth is a real difference, yet it is not an ultimate but only a penultimate one. It is difference-in-likeness, ordinarily, to be sure, we think of the difference rather than compares with it.²²⁴

This shows that heaven and earth, as the two sides of creation, are all from one God. The difference between heaven and earth, as a difference in likeness, is that both resemble one another.

Heaven has three distinct meanings: the heaven of the sky or atmosphere, the heaven of the stars and space, and the dwelling place of God and the angels. First, the sky and atmosphere as heaven, ‘heaven may be used to describe the troposphere—the space surrounding the earth,’ as Paul Enns points out, ‘since the necessities for life on earth—dew, rain, snow, wind—come from “heaven,” it is a reminder that they are the gracious gift of God.’²²⁵ Hays states that this ‘heaven refers to the physical sky of birds, clouds, wind, and rain,’ and also writes that ‘the Hebrew idea of the physical heavens also embrace the heavenly

²²⁰ I therefore disagree with MacDonald as if all parts of creation are destined to be renewed, that is both heaven and earth, then neither are continuing places. Therefore, humanity’s future will not be on a “continuing place,” rather a future continual place, creation still needs to be renewed, which will happen in the future.

²²¹ Jewett, Paul K., *God, Creation & Revelation*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, 467.

²²² Jenson, *Systematic*, 120.

²²³ McClendon, James William, *Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, Doctrine*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 87.

²²⁴ Jewett, *Systematic*, 467f.

²²⁵ Enns, Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Chicago: Moody Publishing, 2014, 390. Here Enns notes, 390n11; ‘Smith, “Heaven,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, 3:61.’

bodies such as the sun, moon, stars, and planets.²²⁶ This is the second understanding of heaven, the celestial heaven, 'God created the universe (Gen 1:1; Ps 33:6), placing these lights in the heaven (Gen 1:14).'²²⁷ The second heaven is beyond earth's sky and environment, it could be considered the dark matter which holds creation together, the second heaven is the created universe. The third heaven can be understood as the heaven of God, where He sits enthroned in power: 'from heaven God renders judgment' and 'God's blessings also come from heaven,' if it is from heaven where God's will comes from, it should be understood that God is in heaven.²²⁸ Therefore, as has also been seen above, 'the Bible refers to "heaven" as the dwelling place of God and his angels.'²²⁹

The third heaven should also be understood as the creaturely realm. This is also a point that Louis Berkhof ascribes to: 'heaven is represented in Scripture as the dwelling place of created beings (angels, saints, the human nature of Christ)', and then continues to say that these created beings 'are all in some way related to space; only God is above all spatial reason.'²³⁰ Heaven is therefore a creaturely place because, as angels are creatures, so heaven is creaturely, heaven is also their abode. Wolfhart Pannenberg would agree with Berkhof that heaven is for other created beings as he writes that, 'the biblical testimonies relate angels to the heaven in which God dwells and from which he is present and at work in his earthly creation.'²³¹

6.1.3. Heaven Eschatologically

The new heavens and new earth 'point to the fulfilment of reconciliation and to the everlasting life in depth of fellowship with the triune God.'²³² MacDonald is wrong when he writes that, 'when Jesus says, in Matthew 24:35, "heaven and earth will pass away" he is speaking of the *created* heavens seen from the earth,' which MacDonald distinguishes from the heaven of God.²³³ Michael Svigel writes that the term "pass away" does not refer to 'elements, atoms, or molecules, but the evil order of things: death, wickedness, grief, suffering, pain, degeneration, and deterioration that had long held all of these physical and spiritual elements in bondage.'²³⁴ This gives a clearer understanding of what the new creation will look like, 'the present creation is bound for regeneration and redemption, *not* annihilation and re-creation *ex nihilo*.'²³⁵ There is a continuity between this creation and the

²²⁶ Hays, J. Daniel, & Duvall, J. Scott, & Pate, C. Marvin, *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007, 200.

²²⁷ Enns, *Handbook*, 390.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Hays, *Dictionary*, 200.

²³⁰ Berkhof, *Systematic*, 350. Berkhof also writes that 'the laws that apply in heavenly space may differ from those that apply in earthly space.'

²³¹ Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (trans.), *Systematic Theology: Vol. 2*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994, 107.

²³² Migliore, Daniel L., *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004, 349.

²³³ MacDonald, *Metaphysics*, 81. Italics his.

²³⁴ Svigel, Michael J., 'Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition—Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Crete It *Ex Nihilo*?' *BSac*, 171 (2014) 401-17, 416.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 416n45.

next, the new heaven will be a redemption of the old. Oden writes that ‘the new heaven and the new earth are not alien to the old heaven and the old earth but a fulfilment of it, a continuation and fulfilment of God’s original purpose in creation,’ which is the conclusion of creation, to be made like new again, *all* of it.²³⁶ MacDonald’s method needs revision, the heaven of God is created, otherwise this would mean it is divine along with God, and therefore it has an end, like earth; the renewal of creation is creation’s end and new beginning, which is also when *all* things will be eternal in the light of God. Therefore, the question is not *which* heaven will be renewed, as all creation needs renewal, rather it is *why* all of creation needs to be renewed, as heaven is already in the presence of the perfect God. N. T. Wright is right, up to a point, when he writes that, ‘heaven is essentially that of the eschatological realization of the presence and power of God, and the final elimination of sin,’ which also brings more questions when considering heaven and new heaven.²³⁷ From above, however, we have already seen the presence of sin in heaven, in the form of demons, are present in the heavenly sphere. This also provides an answer to the question why heaven will need to be renewed: sin is present in heaven and earth, therefore heaven and earth will be renewed and sin will be no more.

6.2. Heaven in Eschatology

Within this section, eschatological works are works on the last things (i.e. the *eschaton*) and new creation. Works on eschatology are typically where the doctrine of heaven is found, and although there is a growing consensus that heaven belongs in the doctrine of creation rather than eschatology, there is still a clear link between heaven and eschatology. The first place where heaven is found is in relation to God, however, heaven is not heavily discussed in relation to creation, instead there is a concentration on heaven’s relation to angels. The new heaven is a core part of heaven’s relation to eschatological works due to the genre of eschatology. Richard Middleton first describes heaven as being understood in two ways: ‘heaven is understood as a transcendent realm beyond time and space’, and ‘heaven is characterized primarily by fellowship with and worship of God’.²³⁸ Keith Mathison also points to two uses of heaven from the Bible when he writes that heaven ‘can be used, for example, to refer to the transcendent dwelling place of God (e.g., Heb 8:1)’ and ‘it can also be used to refer to that part of creation distinct from earth, namely, the sky (e.g., Matt 8:20; Heb 11:12).’²³⁹

6.2.1. God in Heaven

According to Hans Schwartz heaven should only be understood in relation to its ‘relationship to God.’²⁴⁰ Although heaven can be understood in relation to the kingdom of heaven, creation and eschatology, these also have to be understood in relation to God, that is to say, when looking at heaven it is important to relate all things back to God. Heaven is, as Wright writes,

²³⁶ Oden, *Living*, 243.

²³⁷ Wright, N. T., *Christian Theology*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, 482.

²³⁸ Middleton, J. Richard, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014, 23.

²³⁹ Mathison, Keith A., *From Age to Age*, Philipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2014, 462.

²⁴⁰ Schwartz, *Eschatology*, 401.

‘God’s dimension, if you like,’ and continues to write that ‘God made heaven and earth; at the last, he will remake both.’²⁴¹ Not only does this show God’s immanent relation to creation is in heaven, but that He also has His space in creation, heaven is His. ‘Heaven is also the realm—in contradistinction to earth—where God’s will is perfectly accomplished prior to the eschaton.’²⁴² Therefore although heaven is the abode of God and there is a part of heaven that is God’s alone, heaven is not God and a distinction has to be made between the creator and creation. Tony & Patricia Higton make the important point that ‘since God is Spirit (John 4:24), it is unlikely that he requires ‘place’ as we understand it.’²⁴³ Heaven is spatial but not in our sense of spatial, spirit does not require the same space as us and therefore heaven is spatial in a different way to earth and the rest of physical creation.

6.2.2. Angels in heaven

When looking at heaven in the context of eschatology many refer to angels, however it is first important to remember that ‘God is also present in the angelic heavens.’²⁴⁴ As Higton and Higton said above, God is spirit, however so are angels, ‘but of a lesser order (Heb 1:14)’ because they are not divine, ‘but were created to minister to God.’²⁴⁵ Higton and Higton write that, ‘angels of God inhabit a universe of a different order from the one we know, which interacts with the space-time universe, in ways which are largely hidden from our knowledge.’²⁴⁶ Paul Raabe points out that ‘heaven is the place created by God where God dwells and manifests his presence and majesty directly and immediately to angels.’²⁴⁷ This other space-time is still a part of the created order, heaven therefore ‘refers to that aspect of creation understood to be more transcendent (the realm beyond ordinary human access).’²⁴⁸ Angels can then be called creatures of heaven, of a different sort of space which is spiritual and filled with God’s presence.

6.2.3. Heaven Eschatologically

Within the field of eschatology there is much dispute and speculation on the place of heaven in the eschaton. Karl Rahner writes, in his section of the resurrection of the body, that the new creation ‘does already exist as a result’ of the ascension but distinguishes between heaven (and therefore new heaven also) and the new creation. He writes that ‘we will not find it impossible to conceive (not: ‘to imagine’) that this spatiality and the heavenly ‘kind of space’ are in themselves essentially different and incommensurable quantities.’²⁴⁹ Contrast

²⁴¹ Wright, Tom, *Surprised by Hope*, London: SPCK, 2007, 26.

²⁴² Middleton, J. Richard, ‘A New Heaven and a New Earth: A Case for a Holistic Reading of the Biblical Story of Redemption,’ *JCTR*, 11 (2006) 73-97, 90.

²⁴³ Higton, Tony & Higton, Patricia, *I Believe in Heaven on Earth*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999, 24.

²⁴⁴ Bloesch, Donald G., *The Last Things*, Dowers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004, 137. The angelic heavens should be understood as the heavens of God, for both are present in the same place.

²⁴⁵ Higton, *Believe*, 24.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Raabe, Paul R., ‘Christ’s Ascension and Session,’ *CJ*, 45 (2019) 67-76, 71.

²⁴⁸ Middleton, *New*, 72.

²⁴⁹ Rahner, Karl, in *Theological Investigations, Vol. II: Man in the Church*, Karl-H. Kruger (trans.), London: Darton, Logman & Todd Ltd., 1969, 215.

this to when Joseph Ratzinger writes that heaven ‘must first and foremost be determined christologically,’ meaning, ‘one is in heaven when, and to the degree, that one is in Christ,’ is where we can see dispute arising.²⁵⁰ Ratzinger later writes that ‘heaven is in itself eschatological reality,’ again disagreeing with Rahner who would hold a distinction between the current heavenly reality and the future new creation.²⁵¹ The larger question therefore is whether heaven is in fact new creation, as Ratzinger would say, or whether heaven and new creation are two different realities. For Bloesch the new creation is already present, however he writes that the ‘eternal heaven is at the same time the new heaven, which includes the new earth.’²⁵² For Bloesch the new ‘heaven-earth’ always exists for it ‘exists for eternity,’ and therefore it must already exist as and in heaven.²⁵³ Christ is the new creation because He resurrected as something new, and has now ascended to heaven, and so it can be said that the new creation is in heaven, although it would be going too far to say heaven is this new reality. Middleton would agree with Rahner as he writes that ‘creation will be redeemed,’ and that the ‘full redemption is a future hope, not yet a present reality,’ therefore saying we await the *Parousia*, and in turn reinforces inaugurated eschatology.²⁵⁴

The debate on inaugurated or realised eschatology has long been raging, with many scholars debating which is the correct interpretation of when the end times began (if it has). The two can easily be described as follows: realised eschatology is the view that the eschaton has already begun, supported by C. H. Dodd and Rudolf Bultmann; whilst inaugurated eschatology proposes that the eschaton has already come but still awaits its final consummation. ‘In other words, as Jesus said, the Kingdom of God, and thus the age to come, has *already* dawned on earth with his birth, death and resurrection, but followers of Jesus do *not yet* experience the Kingdom of God and the age to come in their respective fullness.’²⁵⁵ Realised eschatology can also be described as ‘the beginning of eternal life in the present,’ compared to inaugurated eschatology which ‘holds present and future aspects of Jesus’ end-times teachings in proper tension.’²⁵⁶ Alexander Stewart puts it best when he writes that ‘the fulfilment of God’s eschatological promises had been inaugurated but not yet

²⁵⁰ Ratzinger, Joseph, *Eschatology*, Michael Waldstein (trans), in Johann Auer & Joseph Ratzinger (eds.), *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 9, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988, 234.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 236f.

²⁵² Bloesch, *Last*, 137.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Middleton, *New*, 212.

²⁵⁵ Powell, Scott C., *An Environmental Ethic for the End of the World*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019, 79ff.

²⁵⁶ Köstenberger, Andreas J., ‘Heaven in John’s Gospel and Revelation,’ in Christopher W. Morgan & Robert Peterson (eds.), *Heaven*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2014, 141f., here Andreas Köstenberger points to other scholars who are proponents of inaugurated eschatology; ‘George R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 1-14; Beasley-Murray, “The Eschatology of the Fourth Gospel,” *EvQ* 18 (1946): 97-108; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 320-23; Darrell L. Bock, “The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology,” in *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 32-33.’ Köstenberger, ‘Gospel,’ 142n11.

consummated.²⁵⁷ Ben Page has also done work with inaugurated eschatology and describes it as ‘the view that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has in some way and to a certain extent brought about the end times.’²⁵⁸

Heaven is not our final destination, we are destined to ‘being bodily raised into the transformed, glorious likeness of Jesus Christ.’²⁵⁹ In Christ we see the new creation already manifest, He has been resurrected into what we look forward to. ‘What a new heaven means we can hardly say, but certainly it must mean that all spiritual evil utterly disappears and all spiritual relations are born again and have their being in an absolutely pure environment.’²⁶⁰ T. F. Torrance also writes that ‘this much, too, is clear that God’s original creation will be fully restored in redemption.’²⁶¹ Where the speculation comes is the future relationship of heaven and earth, most scholars agreeing with Bloesch’s statement that the ‘new heaven or the new heaven-earth will be a new cosmic reality.’²⁶² The new creation will become a new cosmic reality because all things will be made new, with a greater communion between heaven and earth. Along with this, ‘heaven will come down to earth, and earth will be taken up into heaven,’ therefore the goal of creation is ‘a heavenly life on a new earth.’²⁶³ Wright points out that heaven and earth ‘are two different dimensions of God’s good creation’, showing that the kingdom of God comes down from one dimension to another, therefore, the future communion of the two sides of creation.²⁶⁴ ‘The coming of heaven to earth means a radical transformation of all that exists here,’ meaning that ‘heaven will fully and finally pervade earth.’²⁶⁵ Matthew Erickson is correct to caution that ‘when we conflate heaven with the post-resurrection realities ... we run the risk of exchanging the life-giving promise of resurrection with a generic mythology of something better down the road.’²⁶⁶ We therefore need to understand the eschaton in its proper context, the new creation ‘is a creation that has continuities as well as discontinuities with the present one.’²⁶⁷ This is also present in John Polkinghorne’s work when he writes that there is some ‘*continuity and discontinuity* between this world and the world to come.’ We know very little of the new creation and therefore

²⁵⁷ Stewart, Alexander E., ‘The Temporary Messianic Kingdom in Second Temple Judaism and the Delay of the Parousia: Psalm 110:1 and the development of Early Christian inaugurated Eschatology,’ *JETS*, 59 (2016) 255-70, 256.

²⁵⁸ Page, ‘Inaugurated,’ 2, in 2n3 he also says ‘if one reads the phrase, ‘now but not yet’, inaugurated eschatology is what biblical scholars are referring to.’

²⁵⁹ Wright, *Surprised*, 180.

²⁶⁰ Torrance, T. F., *The Apocalypse Today*, London: James Clarke & Co. Limited, 1960, 176.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁶² Bloesch, *Last*, 229. Cf. Rev 21:5.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Wright, *Surprised*, 122.

²⁶⁵ Finger, Thomas N., *Christian Theology, Volume One: An Eschatological Approach*, Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019, 158.

²⁶⁶ Erickson, Matthew L., ‘The New Jerusalem Is No Heaven,’ *WW*, 40 (2020) 172-179, 173.

²⁶⁷ Russell, Robert John, ‘Resurrection, Eschatology, and the Challenge of Big Bang Cosmology,’ *Int*, 70 (2016) 48-60, 51f.

commenting on this is a shot in the dark.²⁶⁸ I would therefore agree when Douglas Moo writes that 'the continuity between this world and the next one is difficult to determine.'²⁶⁹

6.3. Works on Heaven

The final selection of works which was looked at were specific works on heaven, here again we see from the headings the key points that are found in works on heaven. These are: God in heaven, a staple to understanding heaven; the kingdom of heaven, which is currently in heaven; and the future of heaven and the rest of creation come the eschaton. David Calhoun makes the interesting point that 'heaven is beyond our understanding but not our comprehension'.²⁷⁰ Francis Rossow critiques modern conceptions of heaven as he writes that 'we think of heaven as something ethereal, "vapory," cloud nine stuff, such substance as dreams are made of,' therefore 'our view of heaven may be too abstract, anemic, diluted, and namby-pamby,' and later writes that 'we regard heaven as a sort of vacuum, a depository of paradoxically pleasant emptiness,' which is wrong because heaven is not a vacuum.²⁷¹

6.3.1. God in Heaven

Heaven must be understood as the place of God, it is the part of creation which is in direct relationship to Him, it is where He is present in His fullest within creation. Heaven must also be understood as 'the spiritual realm and abode of God that presently exists alongside the created world.'²⁷² W. Whitehouse writes that because heaven is understood as the higher dimension of creation, 'then heaven can be God's dwelling place, even though the highest heavens cannot contain God.'²⁷³ It is for this reason that 'heaven cannot be equated with God,' which is true, however, heaven should not be understood as God's dwelling because we perceive it as the higher dimension.²⁷⁴ As seen in Moltmann and Barth, heaven is the higher dimension because God is there, rather than it is the higher dimension so that God *can* be there, heaven is the place of God because it is spiritual and God chose it. Heaven however must be understood as 'the mysterious dwelling place of God, out of our reach and beyond our understanding,' and so going beyond saying heaven is where God is, would be speculation.²⁷⁵ It should also be understood that God is not limited to heaven, as Paula Gooder writes: 'it must be possible for God to dwell somewhere other than heaven.'²⁷⁶ She later also gives a reason for God's presence in heaven: '[heaven] is to provide somewhere

²⁶⁸ Polkinghorne, John & Welker, Michael, 'Introduction,' in John Polkinghorne & Michael Welker, *The End of the World and the Ends of God*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000, 1-13, 2. Italics his.

²⁶⁹ Moo, Douglas J., 'Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,' *JETS*, 49 (2006) 449-88, 464.

²⁷⁰ Calhoun, David B., 'The Hope of Heaven,' in Christopher W. Morgan & Robert Peterson (eds.), *Heaven*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2014, 255f.

²⁷¹ Rossow, Francis C., 'Heaven is Reality Itself,' *CJ*, 38 (2012) 304-307, 304.

²⁷² Köstenberger, 'Gospel,' 140.

²⁷³ Whitehouse, W. A., 'New Heavens and a New Earth,' in *The Christian Hope*, London: SPCK, 1970, 83-101, 133.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Bray, Gerald, 'The History of Heaven,' in Christopher W. Morgan & Robert Peterson (eds.), *Heaven*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2014, 195.

²⁷⁶ Gooder, Paula, *Heaven*, London: SPCK, 2011, 10.

closely associated with earth for God,' because heaven is everywhere.²⁷⁷ God's presence in heaven is God's immanence in creation, although God should be understood as beyond creation, God is also present everywhere. Pennington would go so far as to say that heaven is 'the place of God's dwelling, and by extension, God himself,' however, a distinction has to be made between heaven and God, therefore, heaven is not God himself as heaven is created.²⁷⁸ Pennington's claim is not unfounded: 'heaven as the dwelling place of God is employed as a way to refer to God himself' (Matt 21:25; cf. Mark 11:30-31; Luke 20:4-5); 'here *heaven* clearly serves metonymically to refer to God,' and so heaven should not be confused with God, rather heaven and God are closely associated whilst remaining different.²⁷⁹ Heaven will be renewed come the new creation and it is therefore true that 'God is permeant and everlasting but heaven is not.'²⁸⁰

6.3.2. Kingdom of Heaven

The kingdom of heaven is rarely written about in books on heaven, possibly because people may associate the kingdom more with the kingdom of God. However, we have seen that it is still relevant to heaven as it is the location of the kingdom now. This is because 'the world does not recognize Him as King,' and so the kingdom 'is a hope for the future' as it remains in heaven whilst creation awaits Christ's return; it can therefore be said that it 'is itself the *eschaton*.'²⁸¹ The kingdom is destined for earth, and is the presence of God, the kingdom is the *eschaton* because in the *Parousia* when Jesus comes down to bring His rule on earth. The kingdom is the presence of Jesus and His rule, as He comes again the kingdom will be brought down to earth. Pennington uses a synonymous relationship between the kingdom of heaven and God as 'another example of the metonymical use of *heaven* to refer to God.'²⁸² As seen above, any similarity made between heaven and God should also include a distinction so that the Creator and creation are not confused, which seems to be Pennington's mistake: the kingdom of heaven is not God although it comes from God and is wherever God is.

6.3.3. Heaven Eschatologically

It is important to remember 'God's ultimate purpose being a new heaven and new earth.'²⁸³ Heaven is not used to describe 'the final state of believers or the place where they will spend eternity.'²⁸⁴ Gerald Bray writes that 'heaven is our ultimate goal,' which is a misunderstanding of heaven, it is not our ultimate goal because we are destined for a new earth, which also shows a misunderstanding of the fuller goal of the Bible.²⁸⁵ Bray makes a larger point here that we should not invest in the earth long term because 'we live in this world as strangers

²⁷⁷ Ibid., Cf. CD II/1, 474.

²⁷⁸ Pennington, Jonathan T., 'Heaven in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts,' in Christopher W. Morgan & Robert Peterson (eds.), *Heaven*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2014, 66.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Gooder, Paula, *Where on earth is Heaven*, London: SPCK, 2015, 7f.

²⁸¹ Dodd, Charles Harold, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, London: Fount Paperbacks, 1978, 30.

²⁸² Pennington, 'Synoptic,' 69.

²⁸³ Craston, Colin, *Heaven, Science, and the Last Things*, Eugene: Resource Publications, 2011, 52.

²⁸⁴ Köstenberger, 'Gospel,' 156.

²⁸⁵ Bray, 'History,' 202.

who belong elsewhere,' which has its own problems.²⁸⁶ On the foremost point, we have been called to look after the earth, in order to look after creation we must look towards future problems which will damage and destroy creation. This means that regardless of whether we are going to heaven it is a ridiculous argument to say we should not do our jobs of caring for God's creation. On the second point, we are made to look after creation and come the eschaton, creation will be renewed and we will live eternally in the new creation, not the heavens because although it is now corrupted, creation was and still is good. Heaven is not our final destination and we need to move away from this eschatological Gnosticism, which diminishes the purposes of God and creation, we are for the new earth.²⁸⁷ 'Books on Heaven often fail to distinguish between intermediate and the eternal states, using the one word—Heaven—as all-inclusive,' whereas heaven should be understood as 'a temporary residence' because the new earth 'is our true home.'²⁸⁸ After death we do go to heaven as we are with Jesus in His ascended glory. 'When a believer dies they go to Heaven ... But Heaven is not our final destination,' it can therefore be said that heaven should be understood 'as a prelude to the resurrection and the new heavens and the new earth.'²⁸⁹ Whitehouse makes the point that we still 'need to be careful to distinguish between God and new creation.' We will not become divine come the new creation, and God's transcendence needs to be understood as 'something always greater than the created order of both creation and new creation.'²⁹⁰

What this new creation will look like is another matter. Few have embarked on this speculative side of eschatology, but some theologians have come to conclusions on the new creation. Randy Alcorn is one such theologian who has explored the new creation. For Alcorn, 'Heaven and Earth will forever be united in the new physical universe.'²⁹¹ Alcorn continues to write that we will 'live as resurrected beings' and that 'the wall that separates Heaven and Earth will also be forever demolished.'²⁹² These have echoes from what we have seen above, as he writes that 'God's plan is to abolish the gulf between the spiritual and physical worlds.'²⁹³ The abolition of the gulf still means there will be a difference between the new heavens and the new earth, therefore Alcorn goes too far later when he writes that, 'there will be one cosmos, one universe united under one Lord.'²⁹⁴ For Alcorn the new heavens will be 'a new celestial universe of stars and planets,' and backs this up by writing 'scripture is clear on this point,' but provides no examples. There will be a new universe, which will include the re-created earth, although the new universe should not be understood as the new heavens.²⁹⁵ Gooder is correct when she writes that 'our resurrection bodies will be bodies,

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Eschatological Gnosticism can be described as an over spiritualised eschatology with the view that we will leave our physical universe behind and spend eternity in the heavenly realm in contrast to holistic eschatology which is a focus of both a spiritual and physical eschatology.

²⁸⁸ Alcorn, Randy, *Heaven*, Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008, 3f.

²⁸⁹ Habets, *Heaven*, 13.

²⁹⁰ Whitehouse, *Christian*, 133.

²⁹¹ Alcorn, *Heaven*, 45.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 71.

even if they are transformed.²⁹⁶ This is a different interpretation to Colin Craston who writes that the Bible ‘speaks of us receiving a spiritual body,’ and goes on to write that this ‘must be a vehicle of our spirit made perfect and fit for the heavenly realm.’²⁹⁷ Andreas Köstenberger writes that ‘little harm is done by the popular usage of the word *heaven* to describe where believers go when they die.’²⁹⁸ Harm is done because although we might go to heaven before returning to the new creation many people mistake heaven as our final destination, which creates an eschatological Gnosticism that diminishes the Biblical message of a new creation.

6.4. Agreement with Barth and Moltmann

6.4.1. God in Heaven

There is very little disagreement with the statement “heaven is the abode of God”. Heaven in Barth and Moltmann’s work is clearly understood as where God is present, it is God’s part of creation where He is fully present, within which is God’s space alone. Heaven is where God is fully present in creation, therefore making it ‘real space *par excellence*’; it is important to remember that this is because God is present there, not because heaven is God.²⁹⁹ This is why heaven is called God’s ‘present abode’, however heaven is also ‘the spiritual realm and abode of God that presently exists alongside the created world.’³⁰⁰ Moltmann writes that ‘heaven is the ‘place’ of God’s glory, and his ‘dwelling’,’ and ‘it is ‘from heaven’ that God acts on earth.’³⁰¹ Because of this heaven can be described as ‘the mysterious dwelling place of God,’ the place beyond the material universe where God is present within creation.³⁰² ‘It must be possible for God to dwell somewhere other than heaven,’ a point which Gooder and many others would agree with.³⁰³ This is because ‘the highest heavens cannot contain God.’³⁰⁴ In Barth’s words; ‘God is exalted above the heavens.’³⁰⁵ Berkhof also makes the point that ‘only God is above all spatial reason,’ which is important to remember because God is present throughout creation however God cannot be contained within creation.³⁰⁶

God is present in heaven, therefore saying that God has space in heaven, meaning that heaven and God are both spatial. Higton makes the good point that because God and heaven are spirit they do not require ‘place’ as we understand it.³⁰⁷ Although we might not understand the nature of heaven, we should still understand it as a spatial place, a point which many theologians adhere to. Both Berkhof³⁰⁸ and Grudem³⁰⁹ describe heaven as a place and

²⁹⁶ Gooder, *Heaven*, 89. Cf. 2 Cor 15; Rev 21:1

²⁹⁷ Craston, *Heaven*, 56.

²⁹⁸ Köstenberger, ‘Gospel,’ 141.

²⁹⁹ *CD II/1*, 475.

³⁰⁰ Köstenberger, ‘Gospel,’ 140.

³⁰¹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 149.

³⁰² Bray, ‘History,’ 195.

³⁰³ Gooder, *Heaven*, 10.

³⁰⁴ Whitehouse, ‘New,’ 133.

³⁰⁵ *CD III/3*, 420. Cf. Ps 57:5.

³⁰⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic*, 350.

³⁰⁷ Higton, *Believe*, 24.

³⁰⁸ Berkhof, *Systematic*, 350.

³⁰⁹ Grudem, *Systematic*, 1159f.

Wright describes heaven as God's dimension.³¹⁰ This is seen in Barth's work; 'we cannot evade the recognition that God Himself is spatial.'³¹¹ And in Moltmann's writing we see 'God's presence is understood spatially as being located in heaven.'³¹² We should therefore understand heaven as a spatial place, a place where God is present within creation, and a place which is above the rest of creation.

As far as we can understand the relationship of God and heaven, it should be noted that God and heaven are not the same, that heaven is created whilst God is the Creator. When Barth and Moltmann both write about the relationship between God and heaven the distinction between Creator and created is always in the background, this is because if God and heaven are equated then there would be a lack in the distinction between what we understand as transcendent creation and a transcendent God. Mislabelling both heaven and God as just transcendent (as seen in Moltmann's work) leads to a confusion between the two, and we should therefore distinguish between 'the relative transcendence of heaven with the absolute transcendence of God.'³¹³ Different theologians make different distinctions between heaven and God, however, it is clear that a distinction must be made.³¹⁴ Therefore, heaven and God cannot be confused as being the same, regardless of both being transcendent, God is above and beyond anything spatial whilst heaven is a spatial place which God inhabits fully.

6.4.2. Kingdom of Heaven

The phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God," or ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν and ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, are interchangeable and have the same meaning behind them.³¹⁵ For Pennington the kingdom of heaven and God can be described as 'another example of the metonymical use of *heaven* to refer to God.'³¹⁶ This needs to be avoided as heaven and God are not synonymous. The kingdom of heaven is rarely talked about in systematic theology due to its nature both as an eschatological reality (therefore putting it in eschatological research) and as an exegetical issue in biblical theology. This leads to a problem for this research since, when the kingdom is pushed into these corners, heaven is squeezed out of the theology of the kingdom, which also leads to the term "kingdom of God" being used more than its counterpart. However, both Barth and Moltmann do consider the kingdom as an important aspect of the doctrine of heaven, because the kingdom comes down from heaven to earth come the eschaton.³¹⁷ The kingdom is currently present in heaven (because it is where God is present) as this is where it originated, although the kingdom is for all of creation, showing that it is an eschatological concept as it waits for history to be fulfilled. C. H. Dodd brings this

³¹⁰ Wright, *Surprised*, 26.

³¹¹ CD II/1, 475.

³¹² Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 182.

³¹⁴ Cf. Pennington, 'Synoptic,' 66.

³¹⁵ CD III/3, 433; Moltmann, *Creation*, 159.

³¹⁶ Pennington, 'Synoptic,' 69.

³¹⁷ CD III/3, 461; Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

a step further when he writes that the kingdom 'is itself the *eschaton*.³¹⁸ This is not a groundbreaking statement because the eschaton is the *Parousia*, which will bring forth the kingdom.³¹⁹ These are all future events and concepts, and therefore we should be weary of going beyond what we cannot understand.

6.4.3. Heaven in Creation

Heaven along with earth was created in the beginning, presenting a duality between heaven and earth. Heaven is the part of creation that is inconceivable to us, it is 'earth's boundary by mystery.'³²⁰ Heaven is considered that side of creation that is beyond understanding, the spiritual realm which is God's abode. As seen above, heaven is understood as created and so it is important to distinguish between the Creator and creation, this is important not only for Barth and Moltmann but for wider systematics also because it underpins the doctrines of both God and creation.³²¹ Heaven cannot be understood as divine because it is a created place, in the same way, God cannot be understood as created because He is Creator.

It is important to make a threefold distinction between the heaven of the sky or atmosphere, the heaven of the stars and space, and the dwelling place of God and the angels. As can be seen above, the threefold division of heaven fall under very similar themes. Moltmann uses these distinctions to distinguish between the visible and invisible heavens.³²² That is, the distinguishment between the visible, or physical heavens, and the invisible, or God's heaven, which is used by other systematians.³²³ Barth uses these distinctions in a similar way, although he extends the top heaven to include or have a higher heaven, that is the throne of God.³²⁴ These distinctions are essential in understanding which heaven we are talking about as there is a clear difference in the visible heaven and the heaven of God and angels.

Heaven should also be understood as a creaturely sphere, as was seen in Barth and Moltmann's writings but also in eschatological writings, this is because heaven is also the abode of angels along with God.³²⁵ Angels are similar to heaven however they must be understood as different, this is because angels are neither divine nor a place in that sense.³²⁶ It would be like confusing humans, earth and Jesus, as said above angels and heaven are semi-

³¹⁸ Dodd, *Parables*, 30.

³¹⁹ This brings forth an interesting question of what the relationship between the *Parousia*, the eschaton and the kingdom of God/heaven is, are they in essence the same concepts or should they be understood as entirely different. In a way yes, they are the same, because all promise the return of Jesus to bring forth God's true reign over all of creation. In another way no, because they do all mean different things; the *Parousia* is of course Christ's victorious return to earth; the eschaton is the end of this space-time and the bringing forth of new creation; and the kingdom as we have seen above is God's true rule over creation (which currently is in heaven). Therefore, these concepts are all in essence similar however they can still all be separated further.

³²⁰ Jenson, *Systematic*, 120.

³²¹ CD II/1, 266; Moltmann, *Creation* 163; Jewett, *Creation*, 467; Jenson, *Systematic*, 120; Wright, *Surprised*, 122.

³²² Moltmann, *Creation*, 158.

³²³ Enns, *Handbook*, 390; Hays, *Dictionary*, 200.

³²⁴ CD III/3, 448.

³²⁵ CD III/3, 451; Moltmann, *Creation*, 163.

³²⁶ Highton, *Believe*, 24.

synonymous, this is because they are both spiritual however still different. A similar conclusion can be drawn when comparing the relationship of God and angels, however they are not the same. Angels have a special role in heaven, they worship and minister directly to God, however they also interact in our space-time as they can minister to humans too.³²⁷ Angels along with heaven are also created and can be described as creatures of the spiritual realm, the spiritual creaturely realm.

6.4.4. Heaven Eschatologically

Heaven in eschatology brings a confusion between heaven and the new creation, or as Alcorn puts it: 'books on Heaven often fail to distinguish between intermediate and the eternal states.'³²⁸ This eschatological Gnosticism clearly creates a problem, especially in the church, as people then begin to believe we go to heaven for eternity and live as spiritual beings with the angels and God. As seen above, this understanding is incorrect because our real destination is the new creation where we will spend eternity with God on the new earth along with all that was good to begin with. The goal of creation therefore is a new heaven and a new earth, which is advocated by many theologians, as seen above, along with Barth and Moltmann.³²⁹

It gets a bit more complicated when we take another step into the unknown and ask what the new creation will look like and what a difference between the new heavens and new earth might be? The new creation will be a new cosmic reality, a united creation when heaven comes down to earth, bringing the kingdom of heaven and God's full presence, this is the goal of creation, for all things to be made as new. We have already begun to explore what the new creation might look like above in Alcorn's work, although in parts he goes too far, on the whole there is merit in his work. 'God's plan is to abolish the gulf between the spiritual and physical worlds,'³³⁰ which matches what Moltmann writes; 'both these spheres of creation will enter into unhindered and boundless fruitful communication.'³³¹ From these two quotes we see the two spheres of creation; the physical and spiritual worlds, will be in closer communion come the eschaton. Although Moltmann does also write that the boundaries between heaven and earth will not completely disappear come the eschaton, there will still be a difference between the new heaven and new earth.³³² The physical universe will remain physical and the spiritual will remain spiritual and therefore there will be a new heaven and new earth.³³³ As said before, there needs to be a distinguishment between the two sides of creation because God originally made all things good, which includes heaven and earth as spiritual and physical, therefore why would this duality disappear when God is making all things like new. This is the problem with the view of eschatological Gnosticism, an over

³²⁷ CD III/3, 461; Raabe, 'Session,' 71.

³²⁸ Alcorn, *Heaven*, 3f.

³²⁹ CD III/3, 420. Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

³³⁰ Alcorn, *Heaven*, 45.

³³¹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 184.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ CD IV/3.2, 709f.; Moltmann, *Creation*, 184.

spiritualisation of the eschaton takes away from what God originally intended for creation because physical creation is good.

6.5. Disagreement and Development from Barth and Moltmann

6.5.1. God's Spatiality

One of the areas which Barth would clearly disagree with other theologians is about God's spatiality, with Barth advocating for God's spatiality and denouncing any contradictions to this view. We have seen this problem crop up in a couple of places, predominantly when scholars talk on the relationship of God and heaven and how it should be understood that God is beyond spatiality.³³⁴ A confusion arises that because God must be above spatial understanding, He can therefore not be spatial at all, which is a very limited view of God's capabilities. Of course God can be both spatial and remain transcendent above all spatial reasoning, He is God, He can do all things including being both in heaven and above heaven. This means that God can be in all places, He is above all creation, however He is also spatial within creation, the abode of God himself,' which according to Donald Bloesch 'is identical with his [God's] being.'³³⁵ As seen above Barth would clearly disagree with this statement, as he himself writes, 'God's throne is part of His creation and should be distinguished from God Himself.'³³⁶ The Father is also spatial in heaven, not in the exact way as Jesus on earth, rather He is spatial in a spiritual sense in heaven, as Highton points out above. At this point it is also important to make a distinction between God and heaven on a deeper level, this has been a constant battle throughout this thesis because it is imperative that heaven and God remain distinct from one another.

6.5.2. Heaven is Perfect now

As said above Moltmann would disagree with Wright when he writes that, 'heaven is essentially that of the eschatological realization of the presence and power of God, and the final elimination of sin.'³³⁷ Wright here is saying that the new creation will be without sin, which is clear from the Bible, however continues to say that there is currently no sin in heaven. Moltmann on the other hand would say that there is still sin present in the heavenly sphere in the form of demonic and satanic powers, it is for this reason that heaven needs to be renewed in the eschaton, to purge these evil powers from the upper sphere.³³⁸ When comparing the argument of the presence of sin to wider theology, there is serious disagreement with the concept. This is likely because heaven has always been seen as the upper holy and pure sphere of God's imputable presence, which is affirmed by Craston as he writes 'the picture of heaven are all of perfection, glory, harmony, and peace.'³³⁹ This

³³⁴ From above we have already seen Santmire, Gabriel and Berkhof say that God is not spatial. Moltmann would agree with Barth as he says; 'God's presence is understood spatially as being located in heaven.' Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

³³⁵ Bloesch, *Last*, 137.

³³⁶ *CD II/1*, 474.

³³⁷ Wright, *Theology*, 482.

³³⁸ Moltmann, *Creation*, 169.

³³⁹ Craston, *Heaven*, 54.

therefore makes it impossible to conceive of sin being in the presence of God. Middleton is one theologian who would strongly agree with Wright as he writes that ‘Heaven is also the realm—in contradistinction to earth—where God's will is perfectly accomplished prior to the eschaton.’³⁴⁰ Here we have echoes from the previous chapter on Sin in heaven when Barth and Moltmann’s work was compared, this shows that Moltmann’s work is slightly alternative when it comes to advocating that there is sin in heaven. In the section on heaven in the Bible we see a consistent argument for the presence of sin in heaven, affirming Moltmann’s position. This perspective does present a cohesive argument for why the heavens need to be renewed into the new heavens, therefore making all things good like they were originally.

6.5.3. Continuity and Discontinuity

Other theologians talk explicitly about the continuity and discontinuity between creation now and the new creation in the eschaton, which is not talked about explicitly by Barth. Moltmann, however, does mention continuity and discontinuity briefly when he writes that ‘the hoped-for future makes of the remembered past its own prehistory, and confers retroactive continuity as it were.’³⁴¹ He then goes on to write that ‘by creating what is new, God reverts in faithfulness to what is old.’³⁴² This shows there will be some continuity and discontinuity between this imperfect creation and the new creation, this is because God originally made creation perfect, however sin has made it imperfect. Therefore, the new creation is ‘a creation that has continuities as well as discontinuities with the present one.’³⁴³ As Moo said, ‘the continuity between this world and the next one is difficult to determine.’³⁴⁴ Determining these differences and similarities is difficult, we could probably say that the new heaven will remain spiritual and will be completely without sin, but there is little evidence to go beyond this.³⁴⁵ It is also important to point out that the entirety of creation needs renewal and therefore there is a difference between heaven and the new heavens. ‘The terms *new creation*, or *new heaven and new earth*, ... indicate that there are continuities between the creation and the so-called eschaton,’ the language used indicates ‘*continuity and discontinuity*’ between this heaven and earth and the next.³⁴⁶ Therefore, when looking at the new creation we can look at this creation to see a glimpse of what is to come.

7. Coming to a Doctrine of Heaven

In this last section of the thesis we will explore the doctrine of heaven systematically, through the lens of Barth and Moltmann’s contributions to a fuller understanding of heaven.

³⁴⁰ Middleton, ‘Holistic,’ 90. Middleton, in his book also writes that ‘Since this transcendent part of the created order is pictured as the location of God’s throne room and the source of his reign over the cosmos, heaven is also viewed as the realm, in contradistinction to earth where God’s will is perfectly accomplished prior to the eschaton.’ Middleton, *New*, 72.

³⁴¹ Moltmann, *Creation*, 121.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Russell, ‘Eschatology,’ 51f. Cf. Köstenberger, ‘Gospel,’ 145.

³⁴⁴ Moo, ‘Nature,’ 464.

³⁴⁵ It can also be said that there will be a difference between earth and the new earth, however again other than saying that the new earth will be physical it is not the place of this thesis to go further.

³⁴⁶ Polkinghorne, ‘Introduction,’ 2.

Throughout this thesis we have seen that there are four pillars behind the doctrine of heaven. These are that God must be understood as present in heaven; the kingdom is currently present in heaven; that heaven is a part of the created order; and heaven will have a new beginning when Jesus comes again in the eschaton. The subsequent section will look at new heaven, with the research formed by Barth and Moltmann's work will give the appropriate framework to deliberate new heaven.

7.1. Doctrine of Heaven

7.1.1. God in Heaven

When talking about God in heaven it is important to begin with discussing the throne of God. The throne of God can be described as God's space alone, it is where He is primarily present in creation and it is creation *par excellence*, this is to say that the place where God is fully present is creation at its most perfect.³⁴⁷ God's throne should also be understood as His space alone, this place in creation is above all others because it is God's alone, God's presence extinguishes all sin and chaos.³⁴⁸ Therefore, this space is God's abode, His home, it is where He dwells. What this shows us is that within the created order God's throne is the place and space where God's perfect presence is manifest, meaning that we can look to the throne of God and begin to understand what the future of creation will entail.³⁴⁹

Heaven should then be understood as a very real place where God is present,³⁵⁰ this means that God is present in heaven spatially.³⁵¹ God is present in heaven in a very real way, we need to understand God's spatiality to understand more fully the immanence of God in creation. Of course, God's spaciality is spiritual, not physical, and for this reason needs to be understood in a different way compared to our spatiality or even Jesus' spatiality whilst He was in our space-time.³⁵² The spirituality of heaven needs to be understood as a different side of creation compared to our physical creation. Therefore, the presence of God in heaven is a spiritual spaciality, which is still spatial just not in our sense of the concept. The spirituality of God and heaven are still very real, even if they are above our reasoning and perception, in the same way Jesus was spatially present on earth, so God is spatially present in heaven.

Jesus ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father; at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus' ascension shows that heaven is also spatial in a physical sense, although, this is due to the physicality of Jesus, heaven is not a physical place.³⁵³ On a physical level Jesus is the only way of locating heaven due to Him being the only physical being in heaven, all else, e.g. angels and the Father, are spiritual.³⁵⁴ The fact that Jesus is sat at the right hand of the Father does not exclude what was said above, the throne of God is still God's

³⁴⁷ CD II/1, 475. Cf. Bauckham, 'Creation's,' 55.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 474; Moltmann, *Creation*, 173.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 475.

³⁵⁰ CD III/3, 371; Moltmann, *Creation*, 149.

³⁵¹ CD II/1, 475; Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

³⁵² Highton, *Believe*, 24.

³⁵³ CD III/3, 438; Moltmann *Way*, 331ff.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 439; *ibid.*

alone because Jesus is also God. It can be said that within the most perfect part of creation is the most perfect human to ever live, therefore not corrupting God's perfect place. What this shows us is that God's presence in heaven is on two levels, spiritual and physical, and until Jesus returns in the eschaton Jesus will remain in heaven, preparing a place for us in the new creation.³⁵⁵ The Holy Spirit is also present in heaven, due to the Spirit being present throughout creation and heaven is a part of the created order. The presence of all three persons of the Trinity is in heaven, the throne of God is the throne of the Trinity as the three persons share a lordship over creation in the part of creation which is above all creation.³⁵⁶ This being said, God is above all creation, He is also beyond creation because He cannot be limited.

Creation was a trinitarian process, because it was created by the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. This includes heaven, as it was created in the beginning along with the earth. This shows us that, because heaven is the place where God is present, it should also be understood as where His actions come from.³⁵⁷ Heaven is not the divine, therefore heaven is not what creates, it is only the place from where God's action comes from.³⁵⁸ One action which cannot be attributed as coming from heaven is creation, although new creation will come from heaven in the *Parousia* along with God's glorious kingdom.

7.1.2. Kingdom of Heaven

When talking about the kingdom of heaven it should first be said that there is no real distinction between this and the kingdom of God; both imply the same thing.³⁵⁹ The kingdom of heaven was simply used by Matthew to convey a more distinct understanding of the kingdom. The kingdom is currently present in heaven, which is another reason why Matthew might have addressed it as "of heaven," and we can understand it as in heaven because God is in heaven. A distinction needs to be made between the kingdom of heaven and heaven itself: the kingdom is God's presence manifest, it is wherever God is present.³⁶⁰ Therefore, heaven is not God's presence manifest, that is the kingdom, heaven instead needs to be understood as the spiritual side of creation. The coming kingdom is being prepared in heaven; it is not yet ready but will be soon.

The kingdom of heaven is to come down from heaven to earth in the eschaton. It can therefore be said that the goal of the kingdom of heaven is to reach earth, that is when the kingdom will be complete.³⁶¹ This brings forth another distinction between heaven and the kingdom of heaven: the kingdom is not entirely spiritual, the kingdom is earthbound. However, as we await the *Parousia*, we can already see glimpses of His kingdom shining through into our reality today. This is the view of an inaugurated kingdom, it comes through

³⁵⁵ Moltmann, *Creation*, 149. Cf. Grudem, *Systematic*, 1159f.

³⁵⁶ Cf. Moltmann, *Creation*, 159; *CD III/3*, 439.

³⁵⁷ Moltmann, *Creation*, 166.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *CD III/3*, 433; Moltmann, *Creation*, 159.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; Moltmann, *Way*, 98.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 461; Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

bit by bit, it shines through His people the church.³⁶² The kingdom of heaven should therefore be understood eschatologically, we await God's full presence here on earth when Jesus returns in His full glory. It is for this reason that the kingdom can be considered *the* eschaton, because the kingdom is God's presence manifest when it comes down from heaven to earth the kingdom will be realized.

7.1.3. Heaven is Created

As has been seen clearly throughout this thesis, heaven must be understood as a part of the doctrine of creation: heaven is created.³⁶³ In the beginning heaven was created along with earth, and it is because of this that we can understand the created order as a duality of heaven and earth. Both heaven and earth were created by God, meaning that like monozygotic twins they were brought into existence together. The duality of heaven and earth usually refers to *everything*, all creation was made in the beginning, things visible and invisible. Therefore, we can say that creation is a twofold dialectic, it is the physical and the spiritual in tandem with one another.³⁶⁴ What we can also glean from this is that heaven should be understood as the above or upper side of creation compared to the below or lower side, earth.³⁶⁵ This is not for any gnostic hierarchy where the spiritual is higher because it is purer or because the physical is unclean; heaven is the above because God is present there, it is the upper side of creation because it is His abode. The language of above and below or upper and lower comes from the hierarchy of God and humanity: God is above humanity because He is good and holy, whilst humanity is sinful.³⁶⁶ There is a danger here of saying that all of heaven is pure and holy like God, which is untrue.

There is another difference between heaven and earth other than spiritual and physical; time. Heaven, being the place of God, has a different time compared to earth, because of God's presence heaven has power over time. God's eternity surrounds and encompasses heaven, which means that heaven is a part of God's time.³⁶⁷ This distinction is needed because this means that both space and time are different for the two sides of creation. Heaven is an entirely different space-time compared to earth, it is the spiritual side of creation (in contrast to earth physicality) and is encompassed in God's eternity (compared to earth's time). It is the eternity of God which humanity looks forward to in the eschaton.

When looking at the doctrine of heaven it is important to make a distinction between the different types of heaven, as seen above, there are three clear heavens.³⁶⁸ This threefold distinction of heaven comprises of the heaven of the sky, the heaven of space, and the heaven of God. The heaven of the sky or the firmament is the heaven of clouds and the atmosphere, as such it can be described as the physical heavens. The second heaven is that

³⁶² Ibid., 448; Moltmann, *Science*, 101.

³⁶³ CD II/1, 266; Moltmann, *Creation*, 181.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 419; Moltmann, *Science*, 79.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 421.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 422, 433; Moltmann, *Creation* 182.

³⁶⁷ Moltmann, *Way*, 332; Moltmann, *Science*, 80.

³⁶⁸ CD III/3, 448; Moltmann, *Creation*, 158f.

of space, where the stars and planets lie in the universe, these celestial heavens are also physical however they are beyond our reach. The third heaven is the heaven of God, the spiritual realm where the angels also reside. Beyond this there is also president for multiple spiritual heavens; the throne of God, the heaven of angels, and the heavenly ocean or the heaven of evil spirits, this will be explored in more detail below.

Heaven is also to be understood as a creaturely sphere, along with God it is also the abode of the angels and all heavenly hosts. Considering this, heaven should also be understood as where angels witness to God in service and worship.³⁶⁹ In the same way we are physical and earth is where we live, so the same can be said of the relationship between angels and heaven, angels are spiritual and are in heaven. However, of a lesser order than God, angels are also created and therefore they exist to serve God in a similar vein to us. It can be said that angels and heaven are semi-synonymous because both are of the spiritual space-time; the same can be said of humans and earth, we are semi-synonymous with the physical because we are part of it.³⁷⁰

Heaven is a created place; it is where God resides fully in creation in His full immanence. It is a place, not only is it where God resides but it is where God resides spatially. It is something, it is a somewhere even if the only physical way of locating it is through Jesus; heaven was created and therefore must be something. All things that were created must be described as something, otherwise creation is nothing and therefore is not created. Heaven is therefore not a vacuum, it is not some empty space which is devoid of creation, there is substance to heaven because it is a real place.³⁷¹ If heaven were not a real place, then it would have to be considered nothing, it would be chaos because it would be without God.

7.2. Development

7.2.1. *Zimzum*

The concept of *zimzum* is that God limited Himself to create nothing, God created the *nihil* that space-time and creation could fill. Because *zimzum* means God withdraws within Himself, this *nihil* which is created needs to be understood as without God's presence.³⁷² As God restricts Himself for creation so He also 'creates' place without His presence, this is the origin of evil and chaos.³⁷³ This *nihil* is a threat to creation, it is where sin originates, as it is in opposition to God. Therefore, creation is incomplete because this *nihil* is still present in defiance to God. Because creation is within this *nihil*, creation is also currently imperfect, sin infested this creation so that it was no longer good as it was in the beginning.³⁷⁴ In the context of heaven, because heaven is created it is also within this *nihil*, and therefore imperfect and incomplete to a degree. It is for this reason that a new heaven is needed, to destroy the evil

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 461.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.; Moltmann, *Creation*, 163; Lindsay, 'Heavenly,' 10.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 443.

³⁷² Moltmann, *Creation*, 87.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 87f.; CD III/3, 527.

and sin in creation, and to make all things like they were intended. This *nihil* can be described as hell and where evil resides because it is the place without God, anywhere where God is not present can be understood as where sin is present. However, God is also therefore present in this *nihil* for He is present in heaven (and earth), and so this nothingness is filled with something, but not all this nothingness is filled.³⁷⁵ Creation, and therefore heaven, is present in this *nihil*, and so sin is also present in creation.

7.2.2. Sin in Heaven

As we have explored briefly above, there is sin in heaven. This is seen in the presence of the sea of heaven, which in Jewish and early Christian thinking represents chaos and evil.³⁷⁶ This is seen specifically in Rev 13:1 where we see the dragon arising from the sea, this symbolism of the sea and the beast makes it clear that the sea has negative connotations. If the sea is considered chaos or evil then it is not a big leap to compare it to the *nihil* which comes from God's *zimzum*, both imply an imperfect and chaotic place without God. If the sea and *nihil* are the same, we can see that not only is sin present in heaven, but that this is a clear reason for the renewal of the heavenly sphere. The presence of the kingdom of nothingness which is in opposition to God's kingdom of everything is a clear reason for the renewal of all things, the sin which comes from this opposition to God needs to be destroyed.³⁷⁷ Therefore, it becomes slightly clearer on the presence of sin in heaven, this also sheds some light on the demonic presence in heaven.

Satan's presence in heaven can be explained through the sea in heaven since this is where he comes from in Revelation. Of course the presence of sin in heaven means different layers to heaven, since sin cannot be present in the presence of God there can be no sin in God's throne or where the angels are present, primarily because all the demons were cast out. We can therefore split heaven into three clear sections, there is the throne of God, the heaven of angels and the sea of heaven.³⁷⁸ It is for this reason that heaven must also be renewed, as in Rev 21:1, the sea will be no more. The heavens along with the earth is tainted by sin, which cannot stand in God's plan for creation and is against His purposes and will. Therefore, there will be no more sin throughout creation.

8. Coming to a Doctrine of New Heaven

We therefore see that heaven also requires a new creation to destroy *all* evil and sin in creation.³⁷⁹ This will be along with earth, as both sides of creation require renewal when the presence of God comes in full glory. The destruction of evil in the eschaton will bring forth a new creation which will bring the duality of heaven and earth into closer relationship, which will bring greater unity between the two sides of creation.³⁸⁰ There should, however, be a

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 169.

³⁷⁷ CD III/3, 527.

³⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Creation*, 159.

³⁷⁹ CD III/3, 420; Moltmann, *Creation*, 183.

³⁸⁰ CD III/1, 141; CD IV/3.2, 709f.; Moltmann, *Way*, 333.

distinction between the new heaven and new earth, the new creation does not mean that earth will become spiritual, and heaven will not become earthly.³⁸¹ This is best represented by Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Jesus came out of that cave as a new creation, as a new human which is clearly different to Jesus in some ways and the same in others. When the *Parousia* happens we will see the new creation reflect Jesus' new being, this is represented by creation being remade out of the old (*ex aliqua*). The new creation will be ruled by God in His full glory, no sin can exist in His intimate presence. This will come when the kingdom of heaven is inaugurated in its full manifestation, there will be no other kingdom or principalities standing in the way because God's light will pierce all darkness.

Heaven is also not our final destination; we are for an earthly eternity with Christ at our side. An over-spiritualisation of eschatology or eschatological Gnosticism means we do not fully comprehend our future with God, we are physical creatures and will spend eternity with God materially. The eschaton will be the fulfilment of creation to the way it was intended from the beginning, all things will be made as new, however, it is the new *creation*, it is still creation.³⁸² Therefore, the eschaton means the fulfilment of the material as well as the spiritual, both will be without sin in the end. An over-spiritualisation of the new creation is too far because the material was originally made good. It is important to move away from any form of Gnosticism which puts the spiritual above the physical, and therefore new earth will be physical whilst new heaven will be spiritual. This will mean that there will be some continuity, but also some discontinuity, with the current creation, the new creation will not be some alien place which is unrecognisable to us.³⁸³ It should therefore be understood that the new heaven is needed because heaven is currently tainted by sin, the sea will be destroyed, and all creation will be lifted from the curse of sin.

9. Conclusion

From Barth and Moltmann's works on creation and eschatology we have demonstrated that their doctrine of heaven has four foundations; God is present in heaven, the kingdom is in heaven, heaven in creation and heaven eschatologically. This is reinforced by our research into biblical writings on heaven, systematians, writings on eschatology, and writings on heaven specifically. Heaven must be understood as created, otherwise heaven is confused with God, it was created in the beginning along with earth. Heaven and earth are the twofold dialectic of creation, they are the spiritual and physical sides of creation. They are not the same space-time; heaven is spiritual and has a different time to earth. Heaven is also where God and the angels are present in creation, making heaven a creaturely realm. God is present in heaven in a very real spatial sense, which is spiritual just as heaven is spiritual, although this should still be understood as spatial, just not in our physical understanding of spatiality. Within heaven there is also the throne of God, which is God's space alone and therefore creation *par excellence*. The kingdom is also present in heaven, that is God's presence is present in heaven, therefore the kingdom is not heaven but where God's presence is

³⁸¹ CD IV/3.2, 709f.; Moltmann, *Creation*, 184.

³⁸² Moltmann, *Coming*, 260.

³⁸³ Moltmann, *Creation*, 121; Moltmann, *Coming*, 259.

prepared for earth. The kingdom will bring heaven and earth into greater unity come the eschaton, however, there will still be a difference between the two in the new creation.

Barth and Moltmann's work begin to differ with Moltmann's development in his writings on creation and eschatology, however, Barth can be seen to approach these topics but not specifically write about them. These developments are specifically his incorporation of the concept of *zimzum* and the presence of sin in heaven. *Zimzum* means God limited Himself to create nothing, providing *nihil* for space-time to exist. This *nihil* is without God's presence and can be described as sin or chaos, which means creation is incomplete and requires a new creation. The presence of sin in heaven is the other reason heaven requires a new heaven, which is primarily represented by the sea in heaven. Both *nihil* and sin in heaven need to be cleansed out, all creation will therefore be renewed come the *Parousia*.

To answer the question driving this thesis; why there is a need for a new heaven? It is to bring an end to the presence of sin in heaven and destroy the *nihil* which was brought about through *zimzum*. Through Barth and Moltmann's doctrines of heaven we have a basis for coming to a systematic doctrine of heaven, which informs a doctrine of new heaven. The new heaven will therefore come when Jesus returns in the eschaton, inaugurating the kingdom, and all sin in creation is destroyed. The sea in heaven will be no more, as will the beast which comes out of the sea, it will be turned to crystal, annihilating sin throughout creation. Although we look forward to a future on new earth, we can rejoice because the new heavens will also be without sin.

10. Bibliography

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