

## **Creation in the Book of Revelation**

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The book of Revelation is known for its amazing and at times disturbing apocalyptic imagery which has triggered many different interpretations. Some people—particularly those who have been engaged with the book more thoroughly—are intrigued by its pervasive doctrine of God, Revelation’s rich Christology, and its strong ecclesiology. However, at first glance it may appear that John’s Apocalypse has not much to say about creation. So we have to take a closer look.

In addition, the question is being raised what creation means. This question relates to both, creation in the past as described in Genesis and other OT texts as well as the new creation found also in some OT texts but especially in the last chapters of Revelation. Is the creation theme in Revelation suggesting that God actually created the universe, heavenly beings, and earth and filled our planet with life as described in Scripture? Does John propose that God will physically remake this earth and its immediate environment and create paradisiacal conditions<sup>1</sup> or should his

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Jan Fekkes, “Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplementary Series* 93 (Sheffield: JSOT Press 1994), 229, states: “. . . the casual reader of 20.11-21.5 would certainly be left with the impression that a universal destruction and re-creation is in view. A closer look at the language and context does nothing to dispel this opinion.”

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statements be understood symbolically<sup>2</sup> in the sense that God is somehow the creator, but he uses and oversees a process such as evolution?<sup>3</sup> If the latter scenario was on his mind it could mean that over time life on earth would continue to improve to such an extent that conditions would be reached, which would resemble those described in Revelation 21 and 22.<sup>4</sup> Or life on earth would deteriorate more and more so that cynicism and despair would be humanity's only reasonable response.<sup>5</sup>

This article will explore how the creation theme is used in Revelation, how it relates to the Genesis creation account, and how it contributes to the theology of the Apocalypse today.

### **Revelation's References and Allusions to Creation**

In the Apocalypse John refers to creation repeatedly and uses

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., John Sweet, *Revelation*, New Testament Commentaries (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990) 297, writes. ". . . how can the new heaven and earth beyond space and time contain all the material and measurable elements of 2110ff.? Surely these belong to the millennial kingdom on earth and have been transposed."

<sup>3</sup> Gale Z. Heide, "What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (March 1997): 39, notes: "Some have interpreted the vision as physically representative of the planet earth and the sky above it. Others see it as a vision of political and spiritual import, with reference to physical realities being secondary of it all." John Court, *Revelation*, New Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 74, commenting on Revelation 21 and 22, comes to the conclusion: "The vision of hope that is set before them could be understood in terms of spiritual development and blessing for the individual believer. But it also clearly relates to an eschatological fulfillment and vindication that will be closely linked to the earthly facts of daily life in the churches." Carol J. Dempsey, "Revelation 21:1-8," *Interpretation* (October 2011): 402, suggest "that the transformation is already occurring even though it is part of a vision."

<sup>4</sup> Postmillennialism especially and Amillennialism to some degree suggest such a scenario. Eric Claude Webster, "The Millennium," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 935-942, provides a short description of amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism and shows how throughout history the concept of the Millennium was understood. On postmillennialism see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 1213-1215. Still millennial views do not necessarily deny Christ's second coming.

<sup>5</sup> See John E. Stanley, "The New Creation as a People and City in Revelation 21:1-22:5: An Alternative to Despair," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 60/2 (2005): 25-26. On page 32 he talks about "fatalism."

respective language. In addition, various allusions dominate the book.<sup>6</sup> We will begin with the clear references to creation and then move on to allusions and echoes.

### Explicit References to Creation

#### *Creation in Revelation 3:14*

Creation appears for the first time in Revelation 3:14: “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this . . . .”<sup>7</sup>

Allusions to creation are found throughout the messages to the seven churches, but here the noun “creation” (*ktisis*) is used directly.<sup>8</sup> *Ktisis* means “creation” but describes also everything that has been created, i.e., every creature.

Jesus calls himself “the beginning (*archē*) of God’s creation.” The designation *archē* has multiple meanings, for instance, “beginning” (Luke 1:2), “beginner”/“origin”/“first cause” (Rev 21:6), and “ruler”/“authority” (Luke 12:11).<sup>9</sup> In order to determine the correct meaning in a given case the context must be consulted. The most important shades of meaning are “beginning” and “ruler.”<sup>10</sup> In the Johannine literature the term appears twenty-one times and—apart from Rev 3:14—has always the meaning “beginning.” However, “beginning” can be understood actively or

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<sup>6</sup> Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation’s Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7-1*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series Vol. 11 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1987), 175-194, has dealt with echoes and allusions. He distinguishes between allusions and echoes on the basis that the former are intentional pointers by the author to previous material, while echoes “do not depend on the author’s conscious intention” (172). He has provided three criteria for allusions: “verbal parallels, thematic parallels, and structural parallels” and classified allusions into five categories from certain allusions over possible allusions to nonallusions” (193.)

<sup>7</sup> If not otherwise indicated, the NASB will be used for Bible quotations.

<sup>8</sup> *Ktisis* is not used in the Septuagint (LXX) but occurs nineteen times in the NT. Three times it is found in the Gospel of Mark and each time in the mouth of Jesus. Twice Jesus talked about the time “from the beginning of creation” (Mark 10:6; 13:19) and once about the proclamation of the Gospel to all creation, which means every creature (Mark 16:15). In Rev 3:14 he uses “beginning of God’s creation” as a self-designation.

<sup>9</sup> The word *archē* is found 55 times in the NT.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Liroy, *The Book of Revelation in Christological Focus*, Studies in Biblical Literature 58 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 130, suggests that the two meanings are complimentary.

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passively, namely “beginner” or “beginning.”

In Rev 21:6 the term *archē* is applied to God the Father. God is “the beginning and the end.” This does not mean that God has a beginning but that he is the originator of all things. The same is true for Jesus who likewise is called “the beginning (*archē*) and the end” (Rev 22:13). Rev 3:14 should be understood in this very sense: Jesus is the beginner, the originator of God’s creation.<sup>11</sup>

Beale argues that Revelation 3:14 is a development of Revelation 1:5 and that the OT background of this statement is Isaiah 65, the new creation. Therefore, “Jesus’ resurrection is viewed as being the beginning of the new creation . . .” “. . . Jesus as the inaugurator of the new creation is the focus.”<sup>12</sup> Koester disagrees: “Revelation uses ‘creation’ (*ktisis*) and related words (*ktizein, ktisma*) for the present created order (4:11; 5:13; 10:6) rather than for the new creation (cf. 21:1; Beale).”<sup>13</sup>

Only as creator does Jesus have the authority to deal with the secularized Laodicean church in judgment. That Jesus is the creator of all things is confirmed by other NT texts. As creator he is God (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:2). In Revelation he shares with God the Father divine titles such as “the beginning and the end” and “the Alpha and Omega” (Rev 21:6; 22:13) for the very reason that he is God.<sup>14</sup> As God the Father works

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<sup>11</sup> Some English translations prefer “ruler,” e.g., the *New International Version*. However, this does not seem to be likely due to John’s use of the term. The meaning “ruler” or “powers” is mostly found with Paul, e.g., in Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10,15; Tit 3:11, however, not in Hebrews (see, e.g., Heb 1:10; 2:3; 3:14; 5:12; 7:3). In addition, John seems to distinguish between *archē* and *archēn* (ruler, authority) in Revelation.

<sup>12</sup> G. K. Beale, “The Old Testament Background of Rev 3.14,” *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 136 and 144. Beale does, however, not rule out original creation as a secondary meaning (151).

<sup>13</sup> Craig R. Koester, *Revelation*, The Anchor Bible 38A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 336.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 56, states: “That a reference to Christ’s participation in God’s creation of all things is not out of place . . . is clear from 3:14, where the beginning of the message to the church at Laodicea calls him: ‘the origin (*archē*) of God’s creation.’ This does not mean that he was the first created being or that in his resurrection he was the beginning of God’s new creation. It must have the same sense as the first part of the title, ‘the beginning (*archē*) and the end,’ as used of both God (21:6) and Christ (22:13). Christ preceded all things as their source.”

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through Jesus to achieve final salvation and consummation, so he also has brought about creation and salvation here and now through him.

As mentioned elsewhere, the unique contribution of the NT to the theology of creation consists not only in affirming that God the Father is the Creator, but also and especially by pointing out that Jesus Christ is the Creator.<sup>15</sup> While in the Gospels and the letters of the NT the authors tell us plainly that Jesus is the Creator God, Revelation 3:14 contains a direct claim by the risen Lord that he is the originator of creation. The issue of creation is thus inseparably linked to what we think and believe about Jesus Christ.

***Creation in Revelation 4:11 and 5:13***

“ . . . the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created (*ktizō*) all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created (*ktizō*)’” (Rev 4:10-11).

“And every created thing (*ktisma*) which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever’” (Rev 5:13).

These are two of the seven hymns found in the seal vision. Five of them occur in Revelation 4-5 and two in Revelation 7.<sup>16</sup> Revelation 4-5 is the introductory scene to the vision on the seven seals which runs from Revelation 6:1 to Revelation 8:1. At the same time it is found right in the beginning of the apocalyptic part of Revelation and may therefore also set the tone for whatever is found in Revelation 6:1-22:5.

The main topic of Revelation 4 is the throne. Although the one who sits on the throne is not directly identified as God, it is more than obvious that

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<sup>15</sup> See Ekkehardt Mueller, “Creation in the New Testament,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 15/1 (2004): 57-59.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen N. Horn, “Hallelujah, the Lord our God, the Almighty Reigns: The Theology of the Hymns of Revelation,” in *Essays on Revelation: Appropriating Yesterday’s Apocalypse in Today’s World*, edited by Gerald L. Stevens (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010 ), 42, explains how hymns can be recognized.

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John is talking about God the Father.<sup>17</sup> The throne motif is a major theme in Revelation. Although it is broader than the circumlocution “he who sits on the throne,” the circumlocution by itself “is most prominently featured in the heavenly temple scenes, but it also appears in contexts elaborating the day of wrath, the cosmic conflict, the millennial judgment and the new creation.”<sup>18</sup> This is important to notice: creation as well as new creation (Rev 21-22) are associated with the divine throne and therefore with the person of God.

Revelation 4 focuses on God, his “majesty and sovereignty”<sup>19</sup> and on his activities. The rainbow around the throne (Rev 4:3)—reminding of God’s covenant with Noah and all of humanity (Gen 9:9-17)—points to the “creator’s fidelity to his creation.”<sup>20</sup> The two hymns toward the end of this chapter are addressed to the one sitting on the throne and should be understood as informing each other.

The first hymn is presented by the four heavenly beings around the throne: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8). God is praised for who he is. God’s holiness is stressed as a foundational divine quality. “The ‘holiness’ of God here points to his separation from the created order. He is the ‘Wholly Other,’ standing above this world and soon to judge it.”<sup>21</sup> Along with the threefold “Holy” come three different names for God.<sup>22</sup> They stress his covenant faithfulness, his omnipotence, and the fact that in God there is no beginning

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<sup>17</sup> No other New Testament book mentions the throne more frequently than the Book of Revelation, and no other chapter employs the term as often as does chapter 4. The throne is found there fourteen times and refers to God’s throne twelve times.

<sup>18</sup> Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, Library of the New Testament Studies 487 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 116.

<sup>19</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002), 236.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Moo, “The Sea That is No More: Rev 21:1 and the Function of Sea Imagery in the Apocalypse of John,” *Novum Testamentum* 51 (2009): 167.

<sup>21</sup> Osborne, 237.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1997), 307, who also suggests that in Rev 4:8 “the threefold repetition of ‘holy’ is connected, perhaps by design, to three characteristics of God.” See also Stephen Smalley, *The Revelation of John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 123.

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and end. God is pictured as transcendent,<sup>23</sup> the potentate of the universe. He is almighty and powerful and out of reach of humans unless he chooses to come close and reveal himself. One can only prostrate before him and worship him.<sup>24</sup>

In the second hymn (Rev 4:11) God is praised for his work, namely creation. Twice in verse 11 the verb *ktizō*, “to create,” “to make” is being used. This term clearly refers to creation but does not occur in the Septuagint (LXX) of Genesis 1 and 2. There the more general term *poieō* “to do,” “to make” is employed. Still *ktizō* is twice found in Genesis 14 (LXX). In verses 19 and 22 God is called “God Most High, who has made heaven and earth” (LXX).<sup>25</sup> The reference is clearly the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. This is also the case in Revelation 4:11.

“You created all things	A
and because of Your will/for the sake of your will they existed,	B
and were created.”	A’

This statement contains a number of important points. First, the “you” is emphatic. An extra personal pronoun—“you”—is being used, although the Greek verb form contains already the second person singular. This device stresses and highlights God as the Creator and the one who is worthy to be praised. Stevenson claims: “This is not just a description of what God has done in the past, but a statement of divine identity. . . . Creation is a fundamental component of who God is.”<sup>26</sup>

Second, God created all things. This includes all living beings and all inanimate things. But God is not part of creation. There is a marked difference between creator and creation, although they relate to each

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Horn, 44-45.

<sup>24</sup> Bauckham, 45, describes false worship, namely the worship of the beast as “false precisely because its object is not the transcendent mystery, but only the mystification of something finite.”

<sup>25</sup> The Hebrew text is typically translated as “Possessor of heaven and earth.”

<sup>26</sup> Gregory Stevenson, “The Theology of Creation in the Book of Revelation,” *Leaven* 21/3 (2013): 140. Noel Due, *Created for Worship: From Genesis to Revelation to You* (Geanis House: Mentor, 2005), 220, suggests: “The particular focus in Revelation 4 is on his nature as Creator (4:11).”

other.<sup>27</sup>

Third, creation by God is expressed twice in this verse, once in the indicative mood—“God created”—and once in the passive—“they were created.” The passive is a divine passive. The phrase is formulated in the third person plural, possibly indicating that no being can claim that it does not exist as a result of divine creation.

Fourth, creation is not an accident or a mere coincidence. Creation is rooted in the will of God.<sup>28</sup> It is possible to translate “because of your will” or “for the sake of your will.” Smalley suggests that “both meanings appear to be present. Creation came about by the operation of God’s will; but the universe came into being through him precisely so that his holy purposes for humanity could be accomplished. His is the ultimate and gracious power, in creation and salvation.”<sup>29</sup>

Fifth, while the order of the verbs “created”—“existed”—“were created” is strange, having the term “existed” prior to the second mention of “created,” it is not a denial of the fact that creation precedes existence. Rather this arrangement seems to be a literary device. In this case, the stress would be on God sustaining creation.<sup>30</sup> God is “active in the world, which he created. . . . The world is God’s world.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, The New American Commentary 39 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2012), 159, writes: “The contemporary religious scene tends to regard God as somehow a part of the created order or perhaps the created order as a part of the ‘body or being of God.’ Over against this is the stark declaration of Scripture that God has no beginning and that he is to be kept clearly distinguished from his creation, which owes its initiation and continuance totally and completely to his sovereign will.” See also Koester, 371, and Steven Grabiner, *Revelation’s Hymns: Commentary on the Cosmic Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 94.

<sup>28</sup> Grabiner, 94, talks about “intentionality” and “the global dimension of creation.”

<sup>29</sup> Smalley, 125.

<sup>30</sup> The strange order of verbs has triggered a number of suggestions, among them that God planned creation in his mind before executing it. See, e.g., Robert H. Mounce, “The Book of Revelation,” revised edition, *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 127. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 335, proposes that the meaning of lines 2 and 3 is: “they continually exist and have come into being.” Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 312, suggests “an instance of hysteron-proteron, i.e., the inversion of events, which sometimes occurs in Revelation . . .” On the other hand, Osborne, 242, suggests an ABA pattern, a chiastic pattern, in which creation is being restated without implying a chronological order.

<sup>31</sup> Smalley, 126.



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At this time, we have to return to the preceding hymn. The two hymns are not independent of each other. They occur in the same immediate context of worship. It is the holy God, who sits on the throne, the Lord God Almighty, the one who was and is and is to come, who is the Creator God. In other words, the divine designations in verse 8 have to be understood as descriptions of the Creator God. Beasley-Murray comments on “who was and is and is to come,” in Revelation 4:8 and continues by saying, “The Lord of creation is also Lord of the ages.”<sup>32</sup> At least from chapter 4 onward the divine names and titles carry with them the notion that God is to be understood as the Creator. Therefore, the creation motif is more pervasive in Revelation than it appears at first sight.

For instance, the term “Almighty” is a translation of the Greek *pantokratōr*. The one who has created all things (*ta panta*) is the ruler of all (*pantokratōr*), also rendered as All-Powerful and Omnipotent.<sup>33</sup> Even if the Almighty is involved in judgment, he has the right and power to do so because he has created all things.

The one God is defined as the One who brought all things into existence. As Creator, he alone has ultimate power over everything. As creator, to whom all creatures owe their very being, he alone is to be worshipped . . . The understanding of God as Creator was not only integral to Jewish and Christian monotheism; it was also essential to the development of Jewish and Christian eschatology.<sup>34</sup>

While Revelation 4 portrays the transcendent God, Revelation 5, the second part of this sanctuary scene, depicts Jesus in his self-condescension and sacrifice as the immanent Lord. The third hymn (Rev 5:9-10) as well as the fourth hymn (Rev 5:12) are addressed to Jesus. Both of these hymns stress his sacrificial death. The first of the two talks about salvation for humans, the new status of believers, and the future reign of the saints,

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<sup>32</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 118.

<sup>33</sup> The title *pantokratōr* occurs nine times in Revelation: 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22 and only once more in the NT (2Cor 6:18). In Revelation it refers only to God the Father. Most frequently it appears in the vision of the seven plaques and in other judgment scenes.

<sup>34</sup> Bauckham, 48.

which points to their millennial reign (Rev 20:4, 6) and their eternal reign in the new creation (Rev 22:5).<sup>35</sup> Thus, the second hymn of the five in Revelation 4 and 5 praises God as the Creator (Rev 4:11); the third, called a new hymn, addresses the work of salvation (Rev 5:9-10).

The fifth hymn is directed to God the Father and the Lamb. It concludes and summarizes the worship in the entire throne room scene of Revelation 4 and 5. In this context direct creation language occurs again: “. . . I heard every creature (*ktisma*) in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them . . .” (Rev 5:13, ESV). The noun *ktisma* refers to “creatures” and “everything created.” It occurs also in Revelation 8:9, the second trumpet, where a third of the sea creatures dies. Here, however, God’s creatures include “every creature in the universe.”<sup>36</sup>

“The added phrase ‘and all that is in them’ stresses that no living creature failed to join in the great and final hymn of praise (cf. Phil 2:9-11).”<sup>37</sup> Osborne lists those included, “angels, humans, demons, as well as all birds, animals, and fish . . .”<sup>38</sup> Creation surpasses our world and is not limited to this earth and the solar system. There are created beings in heaven whose creator God is. Consequently, the NT teaches that God created the earth, its surroundings, and life on this earth, but also extraterrestrial life forms, which are not part of the creation we encounter and to which we belong.

The throne scene in Revelation 4 and 5 emphasizes the importance of creation and salvation. For the author of Revelation these two concepts belong together and are inseparable. One cannot have one without the other unless one creates logical and biblical inconsistencies. Without creation no salvation! Without salvation no new creation! “Where faith in God the Creator wanes, so inevitably does hope for resurrection, let alone the new creation of all things. It is the God who is the Alpha who will also be the Omega.”<sup>39</sup>

#### ***Creation in Revelation 10:6***

“. . . and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Osborne, 260-261; Smalley, 564.

<sup>36</sup> See Beasley-Murray, 128.

<sup>37</sup> Mounce, 138.

<sup>38</sup> Osborne, 264.

<sup>39</sup> Bauckham, 51.

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and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer” (Rev 10:6).

Whereas Revelation 3:14 is part of the messages to the seven churches and therefore of the first septet of Revelation and Revelation 4:11 and 5:13 are part of the second septet of Revelation, the seven seals, Revelation 10:6 occurs in the third septet of Revelation, the seven trumpets. We have already mentioned Revelation 8:9, a text that talks about the death of a third of the creatures of the sea. This text belongs also to the trumpet vision. That means that so far all major visions of Revelation clearly contain creation language, not to speak about allusions.

Revelation 10:6 occurs in the expansion of the sixth trumpet. The sixth trumpet portrays the demonic army of two hundred million beings that are opposed to God’s people<sup>40</sup> and kill a third of humankind (Rev 9:15-16, 18). But repentance on the part of the survivors did not happen (Rev 9:20-21). The seventh trumpet describes the Second Coming, divine judgment, and the reign of God. The expansion of the sixth trumpet in Revelation 10-11a—placed between the sixth trumpet proper and the seventh trumpet—deals with the time of the last events and the role of God’s Word and his people during this time.<sup>41</sup> The message is that the divine promises regarding the end of this evil age will be fulfilled.<sup>42</sup>

The strong angel of Revelation 10 is probably Jesus. This angel is clothed with a cloud; a rainbow surrounds his head; his face shines like the sun; and his feet resemble pillars of fire (Rev 10:1). The last two characteristics remind the audience of Jesus in Revelation 1b. The cloud was mentioned in Revelation 1:7 in connection with Jesus, while the rainbow in Revelation 4:3 is linked to the throne of God. Furthermore, the angel resembles the heavenly being of Daniel 10-12, especially of Daniel

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<sup>40</sup> In the parallel section of the seal vision, God’s “army” is pictured as 144,000 people (Rev 7:4).

<sup>41</sup> Revelation 10 portrays John as eating a scroll which tastes sweet first but later turns out as a bitter experience. The chapter ends with a call to mission. Revelation 11a refers to the measuring of the temple and the experience of the two witnesses. The last part of Revelation 11 contains the seventh trumpet that describes the fact that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, second edition (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 333.

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12:7.<sup>43</sup> Beale mentions that the angel has divine attributes and therefore is either Christ or the angel of the Lord,<sup>44</sup> who again would be Jesus.<sup>45</sup> Other scholars admit the similarity of this angel with Jesus in Revelation 1b, but avoid identifying the angel with Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

This angel from heaven placed first his right foot on the sea and then his left on the earth (Rev 10:2), swearing an oath by the One who lives eternally who is also the Creator God.<sup>47</sup> Here the elements of creation found in verse 6 are already present. Stevens points out that the order is decisive. According to the next vision (Rev 11:19-14:20) the first beast of Revelation 13 comes out of the sea, while the second beast comes from the earth. The mighty angel's legs like pillars of fire standing on both sea and land is an image that symbolizes God's authority over the major characters to arise in the second half of the Judgment Cycle to come. This authority over sea and land further is affirmed in the oath taken by the mighty angel, who swears by the creator God who made sea and land (10:6a).<sup>48</sup>

The phrase "who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it" reminds Bible students not only of Genesis 14:19, 22 (LXX) but also and even more so of Nehemiah

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Jim Hiner, Jr., "Is the Angel of Revelation 10 a Divine Being?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 (1997): 106-119.

<sup>44</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 522: "If he is an angel, he is an extraordinary one, since he is described in a majestic way, unlike any other angel in the Book. He is given attributes that are given only to God in the OT or to God or Christ in Revelation. Therefore this heavenly being is either the divine Christ himself or the divine angel of Yahweh . . ." Beale discusses the angel extensively on pages 522-526. Cf., Jacques B. Doukhan *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 91; and Francis D. Nichol, (ed.). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 7:797.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 525.

<sup>46</sup> So Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 308-309; Mounce, 201-202; and Osborne, 393. Mounce admits: "The phrases by which he is described are elsewhere used of deity" (201).

<sup>47</sup> While most commentators would understand the oath to be sworn to a person other than the angel himself (e.g. Patterson, 232), Nichol, 7:798, suggests that the angel "swears by himself." This makes sense, if the angel is Christ. Even in the OT God would swear by himself, having no one greater one to swear by (Deut 32:40).

<sup>48</sup> Gerald L. Stevens, *Revelation: The Past and Future of John's Apocalypse* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 415.

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9:6; Psalm 146:6, Acts 4:24; 14:15 and the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:11, emphasizing God's universal creatorship and therefore his universal authority.<sup>49</sup> The threefold repetition of the phrase "and the things in it" heighten the stress on the Creator's power and sovereignty.<sup>50</sup> The Sabbath commandment is of special importance because it does not only have a literary connection to creation, but the seventh-day is also an element of creation. The Creator and Lord of the Sabbath "precedes all things, and he will bring all things to eschatological fulfillment. He is the origin and goal of all history. He has the first word in creation. He has the last word in the new creation."<sup>51</sup>

The contribution of Revelation 10:6 to Revelation's creation theology is that it links protology to eschatology.<sup>52</sup> It is the Creator God who controls the events on earth and ushers in the end in the form of judgment and new creation.<sup>53</sup>

***Creation in Revelation 14:7***

"Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters" (Rev 14:7).

This text is part of the central vision of Revelation, which after a short introduction in Revelation 11:19 begins with the birth of the Messiah and his ascension to God (Rev 12a). It describes the persecution of God's true church (Rev 12b) and focuses on last events related to the faithful remnant (Rev 12:17; 13:1-18). While the remnant have to face economic boycott and a death decree (Rev 13:15-17) and everything looks hopeless, they are presented as the victorious 144,000 that are with Jesus on Mount Zion. This

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<sup>49</sup> There is also a connection to Revelation 5:13 discussed above.

<sup>50</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 538, states: "This emphasis is intended to connect God's universal sovereignty over the beginning of creation to Christ's absolute rule . . . over creation in the latter days of the church age and of the coming new creation."

<sup>51</sup> Larry L. Lichtenwaller, "Creation and Apocalypse," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15/1 (2004): 127. Cf. Sweet, 178: ". . . it is God the Creator, who made the world according to his will, whose final will is to be done" (emphasis by author).

<sup>52</sup> See Stevens, *Revelation*, 386.

<sup>53</sup> Mounce, 206, points out: "To speak of God as creator underscores his power to accomplish that which he set out to do. For the Seer it means that the One who brought all things into being can carry them through in fulfillment of his redemptive purpose. The end of history, as was the beginning, is under the sovereign control of God."

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faithful remnant proclaims God's last message for humanity (Rev 14:6-12) just prior to Christ's second coming (Rev 14:14-20). The text that contains the creation reference is part of the first angel's message, the message which is to be proclaimed in the last days of earth's history in conjunction with the other two messages.

The two creation texts, Revelation 10:6 and Revelation 14:7, appear in a parallel context, namely shortly before Christ's second coming. They are quite similar and yet different.

- While Revelation 10:6 uses the verb *ktizō* to describe creation, Revelation 14:6 uses the broader term *poieō*. However, *poieō* is employed in Genesis 1 and 2 (LXX) as mentioned above.<sup>54</sup> *Poieō* means "to do" or "to make" and does not need to refer to creation. However, here as well as in Genesis 1 and 2 it does. By using *poieō* instead of *ktizō* the connection of Revelation 14:7 to Genesis 1 and 2 is even more clearly established, even if it is through Exodus 20:11.
- While the former text enumerates three spheres of creation plus "what is in them" (heaven, earth, sea and what is in them), the present text contains four elements (heaven, earth, sea, and springs of water). But both contain the first three elements in the same order, and both refer to the Sabbath. Yet, even the connection to the Sabbath is clearer in Revelation 14:7<sup>55</sup> because the context refers also to the Decalogue.<sup>56</sup> Those who live on earth in the last days need to acknowledge the Creator by respecting him and his will and by recovering the true Sabbath that he as instituted at creation and has asked humanity to observe (Exod 20:8-11).

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<sup>54</sup> Applied to God's creative acts *poieō* is found in Genesis 1:1, 7, 16, 21, 25, 26, 27 (three times), 31; 2:2 (twice), 3, 4, 18. According to Genesis 3:21 God made garments for Adam and Eve.

<sup>55</sup> See Jon Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 9/1-2 (1998): 179-186.

<sup>56</sup> Revelation 11:19 mentions the ark of the covenant which contained the Ten Commandments (Exod 25:21; Deut 10:1-2). Observance of the commandments occurs in Revelation 12:17; 14:12, rejection in Revelation 12:4, 15 and 13:15 (killing); 13:4, 8, 12, 14, 15 and 14:11 (idolatry); 13:6 (blasphemy).

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- While contextually both texts are dealing with final events, Revelation 10:6 describes the action of the strong angel, whereas Revelation 14:7 is an appeal to humanity to make right choices. In Revelation 13-14 the issue of whom to worship reaches its point of culmination. “All the world is encouraged to worship the true creator (4.11) rather than his idolatrous shadow (13.15).”<sup>57</sup> While Revelation 10:6 points out the sovereignty of God, Revelation 14:7 calls people to commit themselves completely to the Creator. In mentioning that judgment has come, the second text contains also an indirect warning about the choices made here and now.
- The conflict in Revelation 13-14 culminates in true and false worship pitched against each other.

In addition to these similarities and differences, Revelation 14:7 is introduced by verse 6. In this verse the message of verse 7 is designated and confirmed as eternal gospel.<sup>58</sup> In other words, the eternal gospel appears here in the context of divine creation. This reminds the audience of the interdependence of creation and salvation in Revelation 4 and 5. Creation, salvation, and judgment (eschatology) are interdependent. One cannot have one without the other. The proclamation of the gospel presupposes and

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<sup>57</sup> Smalley, 363.

<sup>58</sup> It has been argued by various scholars that the term “gospel” has to be understood in a restricted sense pointing primarily to judgment. See, e.g., Mounce, 270-271; Smalley, 361; and Kistemaker, 407. G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 182, disagrees: “For whether it has an article or not, the word euangelion can only mean ‘good news’, and it is improbable that John should have thought of using it in a cynical sense. Moreover, he says nothing about the gospel being good news for Christians; this is a gospel to proclaim to the inhabitants of earth . . . Nor is it any casual or ephemeral news; it is an eternal gospel, a gospel rooted and grounded in the changeless character and purpose of God. If the angel carried a gospel which was eternal good news to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, it is hard to see how this could differ from the gospel.” In the context of Revelation and especially in view of the prologue (Rev 1:4-8) *euangelion* should indeed be understood as good news. In other words, the prologue of the Apocalypse contains a clear description of the gospel. Rev 14:6 must be read on this background. The author knows and understands the gospel, the good news. When he refers to it, he must have in mind the major features of the gospel including the details that he will mention in the next verses.

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includes creation by the sovereign Lord.<sup>59</sup>

Acts 14:15 is another interesting parallel to Revelation 14:7. Paul and Barnabas appealed to the Gentiles to turn from the vain things to the living God “who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.” They confronted Gentiles with the Creator God. Likewise, the eternal gospel is to be preached to “those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people” (Rev 14:6). In both texts proclamation of to the Creator God is the mission of true believers and the Church. All humanity is called to repent.<sup>60</sup> “The inhabitants of the earth have been amazed by the powers displayed by the beast and his false prophet (13:12-14); they are now reminded that they have to do with one who is mightier than the beast—with him who is the source of all things in heaven and on earth.”<sup>61</sup>

***Creation in Revelation 21 and 22***

The terms *ktizō*, *ktisis*, and *ktisma* with their clear reference to creation appear up to Revelation 10. Revelation 14:7 unmistakably describing creation uses the term *poieō*. Rev 21:5 does the same: “And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’” However, even without this statement it would be clear that Revelation 21 and 22a describe the new creation. So far the readers and hearers of Revelation have encountered the original creation in Genesis 1 and 2. Now they are confronted with a new, yet future creation.

Here is an outline of Revelation 21-22b:

INTRODUCTION

New heaven and new earth, holy city 21:1-2

VOICE FROM THE THRONE

The presence of God and its results 21:3-4

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<sup>59</sup> Alain Coralie, “A Word to Worship Leaders: Reflections on Revelation 14:6, 7,” *Ministry*, April 2016, 8, states: “. . . God cannot be Savior and Judge unless He is Creator.”

<sup>60</sup> See George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 193.

<sup>61</sup> Ladd, 194.



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GOD'S SPEECH	21:5-8
And he said:	Making all things new (5a)
And he says:	Truthfulness of the promise (5b)
And he said:	God's self-disclosure and what he does for believers and unbelievers (6-8)
THE SPEECH OF THE ANGEL	
<i>"I will show you the bride . . ."</i>	21:9
THE ACTION OF THE ANGEL	
(1) <i>"He showed me"</i> —the bride as the holy city	21:10-27
• Description of the city (10b-14)	
• Measuring of the city and its wall (15-17)	
• Description of the city continued (18-27)	
(2) <i>"He showed me"</i> —River, tree of life, throne	22:1-5
• Water of life and tree of life (1-2)	
• The Presence of God (3-5)	

This outline shows that the two last chapters of Revelation, dealing with the new creation, contain three speeches of heavenly beings that follow the short introduction:

(1) There is the unidentified voice from the throne with a short but crucial message. This message explains the presence of God among the redeemed with sanctuary language. God tabernacles under his people as he did in the garden of Eden in Genesis 2.<sup>62</sup> The wonderful result is described with the positive affirmation that in fatherly love God will take care of all tears of his children. Personally and in tenderness he removes what creates hurt and injury. This is followed by the undoing of four detrimental aspects of present life that were not found in the first creation: death, mourning, crying, and pain. Moo notes that with these positive effects the curse of the Genesis 3 fall is undone.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> In Jesus God "tabernacled" also among humans, however, in a more hidden way (John 1:14).

<sup>63</sup> Moo, 165: "Of the seven items John lists, the middle five can in biblical tradition be related ultimately to the effects of the curse and the expulsion from Eden described in Gen 3: death, mourning, crying, pain, and—echoing Zech 4:11, but with Gen 3:17 looming in the background—*παν κατάθεμα* (everything cursed)."

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(2) This voice is followed by the voice of God the Father himself containing the declaration that God makes everything new. Gallusz has outlined the speech in the following way

- A 21.5a - the promise of the new creation . . .
- B 21.5b - the trustworthiness of the divine promise . . .
- A 21.6a - the accomplishment of the new creation . . .
- C 21.6b - the guarantee of the new creation . . .
- A 21.6c - the new creation as a reward . . .
- B 21.7 - the climax of the divine promise
- A' 21.8 - the new creation as a punishment<sup>64</sup>

This divine speech is made by the One who sits on the throne, God the Father. While Jesus speaks repeatedly in the book, e.g., all the messages to the seven churches come from him, God the Father utters two direct speeches only, the one found here and the other one in the prologue of the Apocalypse (Rev 1:8).<sup>65</sup> Both of them are related to him being the Creator and contain the divine designation Alpha and Omega. Revelation 1:8 states: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” The context of chapter 1 clearly identify the speaker as God the Father. Both of these speeches<sup>66</sup> come from the throne (Rev 21:5; 1:4) which is situated in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 7:15). Sanctuary and garden of Eden imagery, that is, creation are intertwined. The new aspect in the new creation and eschatological sanctuary however is the issue of salvation.<sup>67</sup>

(3) The third voice is that of one of the bowl angels of Revelation 15 and 16. Only now does the audience get a more detailed picture of what the

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<sup>64</sup> Gallusz, 131.

<sup>65</sup> See Bauckham, 50.

<sup>66</sup> See Gallusz, 122.

<sup>67</sup> Elias Brazil de Souza, “Sanctuary: Cosmos, Covenant, and Creation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 24/1 (2013): 34. On page 37 he writes: “In Revelation, interconnections between salvation and creation occur within the framework of sanctuary imagery. As the concluding chapters of Revelation clearly show, the ultimate outcome of salvation is the full restoration of creation when ‘the tabernacle of God is with men’ (Rev 21:3).” On the original Eden as sanctuary see Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Genesis 1 and the Building of the Israelite Sanctuary,” *Ministry*, February 2002, 9-11; and Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Eden and Israelite Sanctuary,” *Ministry*, April 2002, 11-13, 30, and de Souza, 34-35.

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new creation entails. The message is addressed to John, who is to come and see, and introduces the rest of the new creation as described in Revelation 21b and 22a. The verb *deixō*, “to show” links the angelic speech concerning the “bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Rev 21:9) to the subsequent action of the angels. However, what the angel shows John is “the holy city, Jerusalem” (Rev 21:10), “the river of the water of life from the throne of God”—the sanctuary<sup>68</sup>—“and from the Lamb” (Rev 22:1), and the tree of life (Rev 22:2). So John portrays the new Jerusalem as bride, as a city, and as a garden.<sup>69</sup> Bauckham has described what is happening here under the headings “The New Jerusalem as Place,” “The New Jerusalem as People”—based on Revelation 21:3—and “The New Jerusalem as Divine Presence”—also based on Revelation 21:3.<sup>70</sup>

This angel ends his portrayal of the bride of the Lamb by returning to the beginning of Revelation 21 (especially verse 3). With the new creation God’s presence is now among humankind. The intimate fellowship between God and humanity that existed in original Eden is restored. Redeemed humanity will see the Creator and Savior face to face, will serve him, and reign forever (Rev 22:3-5). Tonstad describes the situation with the following words: “Revelation pictures God relocating from heaven to earth, distance and separation made unthinkable now that God and humans share

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<sup>68</sup> Gallusz, 121, reminds his readers: “The divine throne is referred to four times in the context of new creation mentioned in chs. 21-22.” The texts are Revelation 21:3, 5 and 22:1, 3.

<sup>69</sup> Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 189, declare: “While it is the amplified feature of urban architecture that dominate the first part of the description of New Jerusalem, the city is also envisioned as the primeval garden—Paradise or Eden (cf. 2:7).” Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 164, conclude: “Thus this paradise is not just a garden but an urban garden, or even better, a garden-city. This tells us that it is not civilization/culture/the city itself that is evil, but the distortion of city/culture/civilization caused by evil people and powers.” See also Bruce J. Malina, *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John: The City as Symbol of Life with God* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), suggests that the city is the new earth, “the equivalent of perfection and harmony” (56) and “heightened holiness” (55).

<sup>70</sup> Bauckham, 132-143. On page 132, he concludes: “As a place, the New Jerusalem is at once paradise, holy city and temple.”

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the same address.”<sup>71</sup> Bauckham adds, “As a result [of God’s holy presence] the city itself becomes the temple. As well as features already mentioned, the most striking sign of this is its perfectly cubic shape (21:16). In this it is like no city ever imagined, but it is like the holy of holies in the temple (1 Kings 6:20).”<sup>72</sup>

While Revelation 21 and 22a adds new concepts to what is found in Genesis such as the bride, the holy city, the end of suffering and pain, there are many parallels and allusions to Genesis 1 and 2 which we will explore later.

***Summary***

The explicit creation texts and passages in Revelation furnish the following results:

- The book of Revelation contains a number of clear and explicit texts dealing with creation. These text forms a creation theme or network in Revelation that goes beyond individual texts linking many terms in Revelation under the aspect of creation.
- Creation is assumed as a given in Revelation. Apart from Revelation 21-22a the creation passages in Revelation refer to the original creation mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2 and in other passages of Scripture.
- Not only is God the Father clearly described as Creator in Revelation, Jesus Christ is also. This places Jesus on divine level. The book of Revelation counts on a definite beginning of the world’s history through the creative activity of God. But there is no hint that he uses processes such as evolution.
- Jesus is Creator but also Savior. Creation and salvation appear together in Revelation. The Fall that happened according to Genesis 3 makes salvation necessary. The evil effects of sin and the partial undoing of creation must be overcome by a new and permanent creation that needs to be and will be established.
- God created all things. This includes everything not only in our solar system but also in the universe. But God is not part of

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<sup>71</sup> Sigve K. Tonstad, *God of Sense and Traditions of Non-Sense* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 386.

<sup>72</sup> Bauckham, 136. See also Kistemaker, 572-573, and Malina, 54-56.

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creation. There is a marked difference between creator and creation, although they relate to each other.

- In some places of Revelation creation has an eschatological dimension pointing to the promise of consummation and therefore to a future new creation. This future creation is the clearest described in Revelation 21 and 22.
- Creation and Sabbath go together in Genesis 2 and in NT passages dealing with creation, for instance, Revelation 14:7.
- Knowing what creation means and how it closely links humanity to God allows people to find meaning in life.

**Revelation's Allusions and Potential Allusions to Creation<sup>73</sup>**

So far we have more extensively dealt with explicit creation texts and passages in Revelation. We now turn to allusions to creation and begin with Rev 21-22a, the passage that we have just studied and that is the longest among the explicit creation texts. Then we will list other allusions to creation. There will not be an extensive discussion on these allusions, rather the idea is to get an impression of the wide range of the creation motif in Revelation.

***Allusions to Creation in Revelation 21-22b***

Not only commonalities but also differences are found between the original creation and the new creation. Differences include the New Jerusalem as the Holy City, the bride of the Lamb, the end of death, and the nations that are associated with the New Jerusalem. But there are also striking similarities:

- (1) Heaven, earth, and sea. They are mentioned in Revelation 21:1 and Genesis 1:1, 9 (however in the plural form). Heaven and earth come in a pair in both passages. Sea may be different in meaning in Genesis 1:9 and Revelation 21:1.<sup>74</sup>
- (2) The presence of God. God “tabernacles” among his people (Rev 21:30). His throne is in the garden-city and the redeemed will see him

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<sup>73</sup> We do not claim that in this article all allusions have been identified. That may not even be necessary in such a limited treatment of the topic creation in Revelation. Nevertheless, the picture emerges clearly enough that Revelation is saturated with creation references and concepts.

<sup>74</sup> See Moo, 148-167.

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(Rev 22:3-4). According to Genesis 3:8 the Lord walked in the garden where he met Adam and Eve.

- (3) The concept of life. Life is associated with the creation of flora and fauna, and the respective terminology occurs explicitly in Genesis 1:20, 21, 24 and 2:7, 9, 19. In the new creation death will be replaced by life (Rev 21:4). There is the book of life (Rev 21:27), the spring/river of the water of life (Rev 21:6; 22:1; Gen 2:10), and the tree of life (Rev 22:2; Gen 2:9; 3:24).
- (4) Precious stones and gold. They are associated with the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:11, 18-21). They also appear in Eden (Gen 2:12).
- (5) Sun and moon as well as light. Sun and moon are not needed in the New Jerusalem because the glory of God provides light (Rev 21:23; 22:5). Sun and moon appear in Genesis 1:16 as two great lights. Light is important in the original creation account because it appears already on the first day and may be associated with God himself (Gen 1:3-5). On the fourth day the two great lights were created plus the stars to give light to the earth (Gen 1:14-19).<sup>75</sup>
- (6) Day and night. Days will exist on the new earth, but no longer nights (Rev 21:25; 22:5). In Eden and obvious on the entire planet the rhythm of days was established with the seven creation days (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:2-3). Night and day appear in Genesis 1:5 and in Genesis 1:14, 16, 18 where day and night are separated and associated with heavenly bodies. While “day” refers to the light part of a twenty-four hour period, it also describes the entirety of this very period.
- (7) Humans are reigning/ruling. The redeemed “will reign forever and ever” (*basileuō*, Rev 22:5). Adam and Eve received the mandate to rule (*archō*, Gen 1:26, 28).

#### ***Other Allusions and Potential Allusions to Creation***

- (1) The phrase “*from the foundation of the world.*” This phrase appears in Revelation 13:8. We are here not interested in the interpretation of the text but the understanding of the phrase “from the foundation of the world.” For instance, Aune states that “the crucifixion of Jesus, was an

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<sup>75</sup> See William H. Shea, “Creation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series vol. 12, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 420.

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event predetermined from the beginning of creation”<sup>76</sup> NIV translates the phrase “from the creation of the world,” which seems to be the correct meaning.

- (2) *It is done*. This phrase occurs in two different forms in Revelation 16:17 and 21:6. It is translated: “It is done” or “It is finished” (NLT). The Greek consists of one word: *gegonen* (Rev 16:17, singular) or *gegonan* (Rev 21:6, plural, literal: “they are done”)<sup>77</sup> respectively. The difference between the declarations (Rev 16:17 and 21:6) is that the first is uttered by “a loud voice . . . out of the temple from the throne” that designates the end of judgment, whereas in the Revelation 21:6 it is clearly God’s voice that speaks, declaring final salvation in the new creation order.<sup>78</sup> *Gegonan* is derived from the verb *ginomai*, which has various meaning, dependent on the context.<sup>79</sup> This term is frequently used in Genesis. It relates especially to God’s creative acts in Genesis 1 where it appears no less than twenty-three times.<sup>80</sup> Depending on the verbal form *egeneto* in its context it means “let there be” (Gen 1:3), “it was” (Gen 1:5) or together with the particle *outōs* “it was so” (Gen 1:6). This verb links the Genesis creation account and the completion of creation there with the new creation in Revelation 21-22b and its completion.<sup>81</sup> Revelation 21:6 continues with pointing to God as Alpha

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<sup>76</sup> David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, Inc., 1998), 747. Mouce, 252, proposes: “It is better in this case to follow the order of the Greek syntax and read, ‘the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.’ That is, the death of Christ was a redemptive sacrifice decreed in the counsels of eternity.”

<sup>77</sup> The plural may refer to the “words” and/or “all things” in verse 5.

<sup>78</sup> See Blount, 381; Smalley, 540-541.

<sup>79</sup> These meanings include “to be born,” “to be produced,” “to be made,” “to be created,” “to come about,” “to happen,” “to become,” and “to be.” See Moisés Silva (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 196-199.

<sup>80</sup> Gen 1:3 (twice), 5 (twice), 6 (twice), 8 (twice), 9, 11, 13 (twice), 14, 15, 19 (twice), 20, 23 (twice), 24, 30, 31 (twice), 2:4, 5, 7. See the chapter by Jon Paulien, “Creation in the Johannine Writings,” 000.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Kistemaker, 559; Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 19 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1984), 352; and Jürgen Roloff, *Revelation*, A Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 237. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1055, refers also to the cross: “There [Rev 16:17] it stressed God’s promises to judge the ungodly, but here [Rev 21:6] it designates the accomplishment of the new creation, which

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and Omega and Beginning and End and thus strengthening the allusion to creation.<sup>82</sup> It also alerts us that when it occurs in other places in Revelation a creation reference may be intended: The silence under the seventh seal is described with *ginomai* (Rev 1:18), as is the undoing of creation under the trumpets (Rev 8:7, 8, 11) and the plagues (Rev 16:2, 3, 4, 10, 18, 19).

- (3) *Silence in Heaven*. Silence in heaven is mentioned in the seventh trumpet. The context suggests that the sixth trumpet ends with the second coming of Jesus, the Day of the Lord (Rev 6:14-17). While the unbelievers ask the rocks and mountains to fall upon them in order to avoid seeing God and the Lamb, the question is raised, “Who is able to stand” (Rev 6:17)? This question is answered by Revelation 7. Those who are able to endure the Second Coming are the 144,000, the great multitude. The 144,000 are described as being on earth, while the great multitude finds itself in front of God’s throne in the heavenly sanctuary. They are cared for by Jesus. There will no longer be hunger or thirst or scorching heat. They are lead to the “springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7:17). This is not a description of the new earth but of the condition of the redeemed in heaven. Therefore, Revelation 7b may describe the Millennium. The silence follows the Millennium. In the OT silence is associated with judgment.<sup>83</sup> If this is also the case here, the seventh trumpet would be an indirect reference to the executive judgment that takes place in front of the great white throne (Rev 20:11-15) and the inauguration of the new creation (Rev 21:1).<sup>84</sup>

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was set in motion at the cross when Jesus cried, ‘It is finished!’”

<sup>82</sup> Witherington, 256, speaks about God as “Creator or Author of Life” being now “the Finisher or Completer of Life” and continues: “And so, we will hear of creation renewed, restored, and re-created in the new heaven and new earth.”

<sup>83</sup> See, e.g., God is silent: Isa 42:14; humans/the earth are silent when God executes judgment: Exod 14:14; Ps 37:7; Ps 76:9; Hab 2:20; Zeph 1:7; Zech 2:13. Cf. Mounce, 170.

<sup>84</sup> See especially Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 445–453. On page 450, he declares: “These Jewish reflections on the silence in connection with the exodus confirm our earlier contention that the silence in Rev. 8:1 is directly associated with both judgment and new creation . . .” Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 157-158, comes to the following conclusion: John amplifies the judgment theme with the declaration of silence. Though the seer only uses the word *sigē* (silence) here, in both Old Testament and Jewish contexts the



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- (4) *The Beast that Comes out of the Earth (13:1)*. The combination of sea and earth in Revelation 13 from which two beasts arise may have a creation background as mentioned above. Especially the second beast, the one coming out of the earth, seems to reflect the creation motif. Rodríguez makes the following suggestion:

The Hebrew term translated ‘animal’ in Genesis 1:24 is the equivalent of the Greek *therion*, ‘beast,’ used in Revelation 13:11. . . . According to Genesis, bringing a beast into existence from the ground or earth is a divine act of creation, a manifestation of divine power. Since this is the only parallel to Revelation 13:11, we would have to conclude that the second beast comes into existence as a result of a divine act of creation . . . .<sup>85</sup>

This second symbolic beast will later develop into an opponent of God and his people, but this does not rule out its divine origin.

**Creation Themes in Revelation**

Having dealt with explicit references to creation and allusions to creation this section will briefly mention some other creation themes that appear in Revelation. The difference between creation themes and allusions is mainly their frequency of occurrence.

- (1) *Divine Designations*. Early in the Apocalypse God calls himself “Alpha and Omega” (Rev 1:8) and later also “the Beginning and the End” (Rev 21:6). In Revelation 22:13 Jesus is even titled “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” The three designations overlap in meaning. “The Beginning (*archē*) and the End (*telos*)” seem to have creation overtones since Jesus as the Beginning of creation (Rev 3:14) is the originator (*archē*) of creation, and the End (*telos*) appears in a verbal form with a prefix in Genesis

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term conjured images of divine judgment. . . . The relationship between the moment of silence and the breaking of the seventh seal is reminiscent of the silence that preceded God’s creation of heaven and earth. In this case, following the cataclysms of the final judgment, God will create a new heaven and a new earth.

<sup>85</sup> Angel Manuel Rodríguez, *Future Glory: The 8 Greatest End-Time Prophecies in the Bible* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 114.

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2:1 (LXX): “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed/finished (*synteleō*). Stevenson suggests: “The term end here is therefore not so much the cessation of something, but the culmination of something. Stating that God is the *archē* and the *telos* means that God has put something into motion for a specific purpose and that something is heading toward a predetermined goal. That goal, in Revelation, is new creation.”<sup>86</sup> Now, whether *telos* refers to the end of the creation process in Genesis 2 or to the new creation in Revelation 21 and 22, it seems clear that the phrase “Beginning and End” has creation overtones. This would then also be applicable to the parallel terms “Alpha and Omega” and “First and Last.” Lichtenwalter may be right when he asserts: “God precedes all things, and he will bring all things to eschatological fulfillment. He is the origin and goal of history. He has the first word in creation. He has the last word in the new creation.”<sup>87</sup> The term *pantokratōr* was already mentioned above. It seems also to refer to creation because it is used in the creation context of Revelation 4.

(2) *Making (poieō)*. As indicated above, the verb *poieō* is the verb used in Genesis 1 and 2 (LXX) to describe the divine activity in creation. In Revelation it is used for believers, evil powers, and God himself. Five texts are important for our discussion:

- 1:6 Jesus has made us a kingdom and priests.
- 3:12 Jesus will make the overcomers pillars in God’s temple. They have an important function to fulfill in God’s sanctuary.
- 5:10 Jesus has made believers a kingdom and priests.
- 14:7 God has made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.
- 21:5 God promises to make all thing new.

While Revelation 14:7 talks about the original creation, Rev 3:12 and 21:5 refer to the future new creation. However, Rev 1:6 and 5:10 describe a kind of spiritual creation in the interim between the Genesis

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<sup>86</sup> Stevenson, 141. He also proposes that these divine titles are cosmological titles that describe God as the sovereign ruler of and caregiver to all creation (141).

<sup>87</sup> Lichtenwalter, “Creation and Apocalypse,” 127.

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creation and the eschatological new creation. Jesus is active now in changing the life of people. He alters their status, making them a kingdom and priests for God. From that perspective God has not ceased to be creatively active.

- (3) *The Undoing of Creation in the Trumpets and Bowls.* The trumpet vision has various OT and NT backgrounds that refer to trumpets, series of sevens or the actual content of some of the trumpets.<sup>88</sup> The seven trumpets come in two groups, a group of four that affects nature and a group of three that affects humanity.<sup>89</sup> The group of three is also called the three woes. However, the trumpet series in Revelation 8-11 does not only refer to the Egyptian plagues or the blowing of trumpets in the OT but also to elements of creation that are at least partially destroyed. Hail and fire, mixed with blood, burns a third of the earth, a third of the trees, and the grass (Rev 8:7). A mountain is cast into the sea, and a large part of the sea becomes blood (Rev 8:8). A great star falls from heaven with devastating effects (Rev 8:10). Sun, moon, and stars are partially darkened (Rev 8:12). The abyss (9:1-2, 11) is opened and immense smoke comes out of it, darkening the sun, followed by a locust plague that tortures humans (Rev 9:4-6).<sup>90</sup> This torture of humanity is intensified under the sixth trumpet. Horse-like beings with serpent-like tails kill a third of the people on earth (Rev 9:7-11). Part of the trumpets do not only seem to refer to the exodus from Egypt and the fall of Babylon,<sup>91</sup> but also to an undoing and reversal of creation. Ramsey notes: “The four areas affected—earth, sea, fresh water and sky—made up the whole of the human environment as the ancients perceived it. These four spheres were what

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<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of some of these backgrounds see Gordon J. Wenham, J. A. Motyer, D. A. Carson, R. T. France (eds.), *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1437, Blount, 160, and Caird, 108-111.

<sup>89</sup> See Kistemaker, 267.

<sup>90</sup> Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, 181, shows the parallel between Revelation 9:2 and Genesis 1:2 (LXX) and comes to the conclusion: “Here the author of Revelation introduces the flavor of the creation account into the plague narrative. This plague is returning God’s creation to its pre-creation chaotic state.”

<sup>91</sup> See Kenneth A. Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25/1 (1987): 107–121, and Ben Witherington III, *Revelation*, *The New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148.

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Jews and Christians acknowledged as God's creation (compare 14:7).<sup>92</sup> Kistemaker talks about "an area of God's creation" that is affected with each trumpet that is sounded.<sup>93</sup>

The same is true for the last seven plagues/bowls, only that the plagues are an intensification of the trumpets, a third being replaced by the fullness of the impact of God's wrath.<sup>94</sup> The first plaque affects the earth, the second the sea, the third the waters/springs, the fourth the sun, the fifth brings intense darkness, and the sixth Armageddon so that humans are directly affected (Rev 16). U. B. Müller suggests that with the pouring out of the first four bowls the entire creation of earth, sea, rivers, and heavenly bodies is affected.<sup>95</sup> It seem that the trumpet series describes a partial undoing of creation, while the parallel and yet distinct bowl series describes the complete undoing of creation<sup>96</sup> and, therefore, stands in contrast to the new creation in Revelation 21-22a.

- (4) *The Abyss*. The abyss appears in Revelation 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3. It is found in Genesis 1:2 (LXX). The "surface of the deep" (Gen 1:2), which is connected to the state of planet earth being formless or void, is translated with the term *abyssos*. "Over the surface of the deep' parallels 'over the waters' in the subsequent clause. . . . On the second and third days these waters are eventually separated from the expanse and land masses when the waters are called 'sea' (vv. 6-10)."<sup>97</sup> After the separation sea (*thalassa*) and earth (*gē*) became visible. It is precisely from these two areas that the two beasts of Revelation 13 come forward, the sea beast and the beast out of the earth. In Revelation 17:8 another beast emerges from the abyss. Although in the NT the abyss receives a slightly different meaning, it can be assumed

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<sup>92</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, vol. 20, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 121.

<sup>93</sup> Kistemaker, 273.

<sup>94</sup> For parallels between trumpets and bowls see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 497-499.

<sup>95</sup> U. B. Mueller, 281.

<sup>96</sup> The trumpet series is still rooted in and depicts processes in history, while the bowl series describes eschatological events, in this case the judgment that culminates in Christ's second coming.

<sup>97</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 133.

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- that John takes his imagery from the creation account in Genesis 1.<sup>98</sup>
- (5) *Souls of Humans*. The term *psychē* occurs in Genesis 2:7 and seven times in Revelation. The word can be translated “soul,” “life,” “self,” “person” or “creature.” According to Genesis 2:7 the body formed by God plus the breath of life from God make this lifeless entity a living soul/being. In other words, the soul in Genesis 2:7 designates the entire human being with all its faculties as created by God. In the Apoclypse, the first usage of “soul” comes in Revelation 6:9, talking about the souls “slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.” As in Genesis 2:7:

these *souls* are not disembodied spirits. They are, after all, visible to John. Nor are they the ‘lives’ or ‘selves’ of slaughtered victims as a kind of abstraction, nor are they typical of what theologians like to call ‘the intermediate state’ (the interval between a believer’s physical death and the final resurrection). Rather, at least within the horizons of John’s vision, these *souls* are people with voices and real bodies, like the ‘beheaded’ souls of 20:4. They are martyrs, not just in the sense of bearing *testimony* (Greek *martyria*, v. 9), but in the sense of having been ‘killed’ (v. 11) for their testimony. Like Abel, the first martyr, who ‘still speaks, even though he is dead’ (Heb 11:4; compare Gen 4:10), they cry out for justice to be done.<sup>99</sup>

In Revelation 8:9, which is part of the second trumpet, the “souls” are associated with “creatures” (*ktismata*). Therefore, NASB translates, “the creatures which were in the sea and had life (*psychē*)” and ESV

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<sup>98</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the abyss see Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Beast of Revelation 17—A Suggestion (Part 1),” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 10/1 (2007): 40-50.

<sup>99</sup> Michaels, 106. Larry Lichtenwalter, “‘Souls Under the Altar’: The ‘Soul’ and Related Anthropological Imagery in John’s Apocalypse,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 26/1 (2015): 66, writes: “That Revelation would 1) twice portrays [sic] sea creatures as having (8:9) or being (16:3) souls; 2) equate the human soul with the body (18:13); and 3) place the soul in juxtaposition with death as opposites (12:11; 16:3) reveals how it echoes anthropological realities found in the Genesis narrative. Genesis 2:7 records that “the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being”. . . ; i.e., a living soul. One does not have a soul; he is a soul—a living being, a living person. The breath of life unites with the inanimate body transforming it into a living being.”

renders the phrase as “living creatures.” The parallel text in the second plagues states, “every living thing (*psychē*) in the sea died” (Rev 16:3).<sup>100</sup> In Revelation 12:4 *psychē* must be understood as self or life and not as a part of a human being; in 18:13 “human souls” are sold as merchandise. They seem to be identical with the preceding “bodies”<sup>101</sup> and describe humans as wholistic entities (see Gen 2:7). In Revelation 18:14 “your soul” (ESV) means “you” (NASB). In Revelation 20:4 the souls are again human beings in their totality, created and later raised by God from the dead.

- (6) *The Seven Churches with Their Promises to the Conquerors.* The messages to the seven churches end with promises to the overcomers/conquerors. The first and the last messages to the seven churches have clear references to creation—either the original creation or the new creation—speaking about eating of the “tree of life which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev 2:7) and about Jesus as the originator of creation (Rev 3:14) upon whose throne the overcomers will sit with him (Rev 3:21). But also the messages to the churches other than Ephesus and Laodicea have at least indirect creation overtones.<sup>102</sup> These overtones relate to the new creation. The overcomers in the church in Smyrna are promised to be protected against the “second death” (Rev 2:11; 20:6, 14 and 21:8). Those in Pergamum will receive a white stone and a new name, obviously in the future kingdom of Christ (Rev 2:17). To the overcomers in Thyatira the promise is made that they will have authority over the nations (Rev 2:26). The nations are mentioned in Revelation 21:24, 26 and 22:2, in the context of the new earth and the New Jerusalem. The overcomers in Sardis will

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<sup>100</sup> Typically, the phrase is understood as referring to fish, sea mammals, and other life forms in the oceans. However Beale suggests that in Revelation 16:3 *psychē* should also be understood as humans. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 815, notes: “πᾶσα ψυχὴ ζωῆς ἀπέθανεν can be translated “every living soul died” . . . This may refer to the death or suffering of people who depend on a maritime economy. The second trumpet judgment involved the death of sea creatures “having life” (ψυχάς) . . . The death of humans themselves appears to be the point of 16:3, especially since every other use of ψυχή in Revelation, except technically in 8:9, refers to people (6:9; 12:11; 18:13, 14; 20:4). . . .”

<sup>101</sup> See Mounce, 334.

<sup>102</sup> Stanley, 29, proposes: “John links six of these conquering promises with a reward in Rev. 20-22.” We would suggest that all the promises to the overcomers of the seven churches contain a creation/new creation reference.

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receive white garments and are assured that their names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev 3:5). Those will enter the New Jerusalem “whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27). The promise to the overcomes in Philadelphia was mentioned above, namely being pillars in the temple of God. But in addition they are told that they “will not go out from it anymore” and the name of the New Jerusalem will be written on them, the name of the city “which comes down out of heaven from My God” (Rev 3:12). Thus, the promises to the overcomers in the seven churches are related to the new creation of Revelation 21-22. The conquerors have the assurance of resurrection to eternal life—a kind of new creation—on the new earth. In addition, another promise to the overcomers is found in Revelation 21:7. This is in the very context of the new creation and is clearly linked to the creation theme.

- (7) *Resurrection.* The resurrection is mentioned for the first time in Revelation 1:5 and then again in Revelation 1:18. It is associated with life, that is, coming to life. The resurrection of Jesus is the paradigm for all resurrections, whether in the past or the future. The resurrection of the two witnesses is described as “the breath of life from God” coming into them” (Rev 11:11). The “breath of life” appears in Genesis 2:7 in connection with the creation of Adam, although slightly different vocabulary is employed.<sup>103</sup> Revelation 20:4-6 mentions the future first and second resurrections of humans. Those resurrected to life will enjoy the new creation. So resurrection, at least the first resurrection is linked to the new creation, reminding the audience what took place in the garden Eden. To resurrect people who have completely disintegrated is a creative act of the almighty God. Stevenson writes: “Christ’s resurrection provides a model for understanding the new creation of Revelation 21-22. . . John describes the ending of the first heaven and first earth in terms reminiscent of death. In light of the resurrection of Christ, however, death becomes merely an ending that

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<sup>103</sup> Gen 2:7 (LXX) has *pnoēn zōēs*, while Revelation 11:11 uses *pneuma zōēs*. There should not be a substantial difference. *Pneuma zōēs* describes the living beings that will die in the flood (Gen 6:17; 7:15). In Genesis 6:17 they seem to refer to animals and human beings. In Ezekiel 37:5 God speaks to the dead bones: “Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, ‘Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life’” (Eze 37:5). See also Ezekiel 37:10.

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inaugurates a new beginning.”<sup>104</sup> This statement could be interpreted differently. People could assume that death is the way to eternal life, but it is Jesus Christ who guarantees the first resurrection to those who believe in him. Bauckham states:

Creation is not confined for ever to its own immanent possibilities. It is open to the fresh creative possibilities of its Creator. This is how the hope of resurrection was possible. The Jewish hope of resurrection was not based on belief in the inherent capacity of human nature to survive death . . . . It was fundamentally a form of trust in God the Creator, who, as he gave life that ends in death, can also give life back to the dead. More than that, he can give new life—eschatologically new life raised forever beyond the threat of death. . . . But Jewish eschatological hope was not just for the resurrection of individuals. It was hope for the future of God’s whole creation. It was hope for new creation . . . .<sup>105</sup>

**Summary**

Our study has pointed out a significant number of clear creation references. In these verses and passages creation vocabulary has been used. The Apocalypse affirms God and Jesus Christ as creator and bases itself squarely on the Genesis creation account and its reverberations in the Old and New Testaments.

However, the creation references do not provide the entire picture of the importance of the topic creation in the Apocalypse. Many allusions and potential allusions to creation round out the picture. These could be further explored.

Finally, what has been termed “creation themes” are allusions to creation that occur more frequently throughout the book, adding considerably to the overall topic. All the references, themes, and allusions taken together reveal an impressive network of the creation theme throughout Revelation which is theologically very significant.

**Metaphorical or Non-Metaphorical Understanding  
of the Creation Motif in Revelation?**

However, before we explore the theological significance of the creation

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<sup>104</sup> Stevenson, 141.

<sup>105</sup> Bauckham, 48-49.



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theme in Revelation, the question has to be addressed if creation in the Apocalypse should be understood primarily or exclusively metaphorically and spiritually or if it would also point to actual creation events as described and implied in Genesis 1 and 2. As pointed out Revelation refers predominantly to the Genesis creation, but occasionally also to a spiritual creation and extensively to the new creation at the end of time. We are here concerned with the creation of a hospitable environment and life on planet earth. Is this creation to be understood symbolically or not? Furthermore, would it be correct and fair to read into biblical texts our present understanding of scientific theories and suggest that these are the intended meaning of Scripture? And if they are not, would we be justified to reinterpret Scripture, accommodating it to our present world view and the next generations to theirs?

This issue is certainly a larger hermeneutical issue that cannot be discussed here. The answer depends to some extent on one's own presuppositions and decisions on the origin, role, and authority of Scripture. Still we will attempt to respond to part of the issue.

It is no secret that Revelation should be primarily understood symbolically (Rev 1:1). While its letter frame (Rev 1-3; 22:6-21) is more straightforward and not as rich in symbolism as is the apocalyptic part (Rev 4:1-22:5) and has to be understood more literally than figuratively, the apocalyptic part is full of symbolic descriptions and entities. Theoretically, this might allow for understanding the creation motif metaphorically. However, we need to add some cautionary remarks.

Even the symbolic portions of Revelation are not completely symbolic. There is always a mixture between metaphorical and non-metaphorical language. For instance, the term "God," which appears ninety-six times in Revelation, is not a single time used figuratively. It always describes the supreme Being, the Creator of the universe. A purely symbolic text would hardly be understandable, and it would be extremely difficult to unlock the biblical meaning of its symbols, if all terms were used figuratively only. The task of the expositor is to find out, which terms should be understood figuratively and which ones should not be interpreted that way. This cannot be based on personal preference but must be grounded on sound principles, if one really wants to understand the author's intended meaning.

Without controls figurative language can be misused and given a multiplicity of artificial meanings that disregard the message of the document under investigation. Such interpretations may even be

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contradictory. While we recognize that texts may speak differently to different readers, typically the authors pursued one specific goal rather than remaining completely vague regarding the meaning of their message.

Therefore, symbolic language must be unlocked, for instance, through the study of the context, the use of the respective symbols and their explanation by the same author as well as through intertextual connections between different authors—in this case OT and NT authors—that have lived and worked basically within the same framework, worldview, and fabric of thinking.

The creation motif occurs in the apocalyptic part of Revelation as well as in the messages to the seven churches without major differences. See, for example, the creation vocabulary,<sup>106</sup> divine designations related to the creation motif, and allusions such as resurrection that are not spiritualized in Revelation.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, a shift of meaning needs to be proven from the text and cannot just be assumed.

Revelation uses clear references and allusions to the OT creation account and OT and NT passages based on them. They describe who God is and what he does. These references to creation appear in different literary genres without losing their basic meaning. Creation is intrinsically linked to the nature and being of God and should not be interpreted completely differently in different biblical documents. God is and remains the Creator God. While biblical authors may highlight various aspects of God's creative activity, there is no reason to believe that they doubted that God has actually created the universe and life in it, including on planet earth.

In Revelation Jesus appears among others in the role as Creator. This is in line with NT statements such as the ones found in 1John 1:1-3, Hebrews 1:1-2, and Colossians 1:15-16. According to Colossians 1:15 Jesus is not only the "firstborn of creation" but according to verse 18 he is also the "firstborn of the dead" (*prōtotokos tōn nekrōn*). According to Revelation 1:5 Jesus is the "firstborn of the dead" (*prōtotokos tōn nekrōn*)—the very same phrase is being used—and according to Revelation 3:14 "the beginning of God's creation" (ESV), "the ruler of God's creation"

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<sup>106</sup> A good example may be the word family *ktiz-*.

<sup>107</sup> On the resurrection in Revelation see Ekkehardt Mueller, "Basic Questions About the Millennium, Part 2: The Issue of Dispensational Premillennialism." *Reflections* July (2016): 2-3.

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(NIV) or “the originator of God’s creation” (NET), which is the same concept as being the firstborn of creation.<sup>108</sup> In both cases *ktisis* (creation) is being used, and the person responsible for it is mentioned. The OT background for Colossians 1:15-18 and Revelation 1:5; 3:14 is Psalm 88:28, 38 (LXX). John clearly builds on OT and NT creation theology.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, his understanding of the Creator does not differ from Paul’s understanding of creation and Creator since the same terminology is being used. In addition to being the originator of creation, the Gospels remind us that Jesus affirmed the creation of Adam and Eve (Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6) and believed in the historical existence of their son Abel (Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51).

Obviously the OT audience as well as the first century AD audience understood that creation happened in the way as described in Genesis 1 and 2, although details are not revealed there. But a consistent picture of creation appears throughout both OT and NT, culminating in the one portrayed by John the Revelator. God and Jesus are Creator in the true sense of the word.

Therefore, a metaphorical reinterpretation of creation does not seem to fit the data and does not seem to be justified. If the original creation has to be taken seriously, the future should likewise be accepted and vice versa. Gorman states: “This eschatological reality is not a fantasy but a certain hope, guaranteed by the faithful and true God and by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of the slaughtered Lamb, the faithful and true

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<sup>108</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 104, seeing the parallel to Colossians 1 states that the concept of Jesus as the prime source of God’s creation “is the same as ‘alpha’ in the title ‘alpha and omega.’” See also Jürgen Roloff, *Revelation*, A Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 64.

<sup>109</sup> Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, suggests: “In all probability, the writer did not formulate this title, for the title ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ‘the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,’ occurs earlier in Col 1:18 (in the context of a hymn incorporated into that letter). Since Colossians was circulated in the Roman province of Asia, including Laodicea (Col 4:16), one of the seven churches to whom Revelation was addressed, the title may have become part of the christological tradition of the region.” For a discussion of the passage in Colossians 1:15-20 see Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Firstborn in Colossians 1:15,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies on the Trinity*, edited by Paul Petersen and Rob McIver (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2014): 65-86.

witness.”<sup>110</sup> “. . . it is equally clear that a real creation is necessary to his [John’s] theological use of that creation [the new creation].”<sup>111</sup> And Heide affirms: “We can interpret apocalyptic literature as visionary without denying the reality of the essence of the vision.”<sup>112</sup>

### **The Contribution of the Creation Theme to the Theology of Revelation**

Stevenson proposes that “creation as a theological concept is a central component of the Book [of Revelation] . . .”<sup>113</sup> The question is what this means. In this section we will take a brief look at the contribution of the creation theme to Revelation’s teaching on God and anthropology and will mention in passing how it is related to other important topics.

### **Creation and the Godhead**

#### *The Nature of God*

Being Creator is not only about what God<sup>114</sup> does, namely his works, but has to do with his very identity. Human beings made in the image of God are by nature creative, some more and some less. God is by nature the Creator, exhibiting unlimited creativity and yet being distinct from creation. Therefore, it is correct to argue that “Creation is a fundamental component of who God is. . . God’s creation of a new heaven and a new earth (21.1) is a testament that God’s creative activity was not a one-time event, but an

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<sup>110</sup> Gorman, 166 (emphasis his).

<sup>111</sup> Paulien, “Creation in the Johannine Writings,” 000. (now p. 40)

<sup>112</sup> Heide, 55.

<sup>113</sup> Stevenson, 139.

<sup>114</sup> In this section “God” is to be understood in the wider sense of “Godhead.” While in Revelation God the Father is clearly identified as Creator and Jesus is called the originator of creation, there is less information about the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit is found in close relationship with God the Father. In Revelation 4, God is praised as Creator (4:11). In this creation context the Holy Spirit occurs. Also the point cannot be missed when one looks at Revelation 5:6. As the Spirit is linked with the Father in Revelation 4, so he is linked with the Lamb in Revelation 5 who is praised as Redeemer. Revelation 4 and 5 contain among other topics the themes creation and salvation. Creation and salvation belong together as do Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Especially from Revelation 5 one can derive that the Holy Spirit is involved in salvation, but so he is in creation. See Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Holy Spirit in Revelation,” unpublished paper, 28. Regarding Jesus, Gorman, 167, holds, “. . . Revelation really does engage in the christological reconfiguration of God, especially prominent in chapters 4-5 . . .” This is confirmed at the end of the Apocalypse.

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intrinsic part of his nature.”<sup>115</sup> In contrast to humanity’s creativity and human “creations” God’s creativity is related to life. He is the source of life.<sup>116</sup> God the Father as well as the Holy Spirit give the water of life without cost to those who are thirsty and come to God (Rev 21:4; 22:17). Those who are redeemed by Jesus have the right to the tree of life (Rev 22:14). The “breath/Spirit of life” came into the two witnesses, and “they stood on their feet” (Rev 11:11), revived.<sup>117</sup>

God has not only created inanimate things, but he has also created various life forms (e.g., Rev 16:3). In addition, he has created beings that are not only alive but are also candidates for eternal life (Rev 21:1-4, 27:22:1-5). Because he has created all things (John 1:3) and has done this through his word (Heb 11:3), it can be assumed that he created ex nihilo. This creative power surpasses the capacities of all of God’s creatures. Therefore, God as Creator is unique. From this uniqueness as Creator derives God’s authority over all creation. He is the Lord Almighty, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End (Rev 1:8, 4:11; 21:6; 22:13). He is the only one to be omnipotent. He is to be praised and worshiped (Rev 4:11; 14:7). The angel of Revelation 10:6 bases his oath on the surest foundation, the Creator God.

Although Revelation does not directly attribute to God the ownership of creation as, for example, Psalm 24:1-2 does, this concept, found in various places in Scripture,<sup>118</sup> still seems to be assumed. Jesus as the originator of God’s creation (Rev 3:14) reprimands the church in Laodicea. He has “supreme authority and power to execute the word of which he is the guarantor and the faithful and true witness.”<sup>119</sup> “He is the source of creation, and therefore he has a legitimate claim on it.”<sup>120</sup> God creates, and he undoes creation—either directly or allows for it to happen.<sup>121</sup> He has the authority, power, and right to do so, and nobody can hinder him. He

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<sup>115</sup> Stevenson, 140.

<sup>116</sup> Or vice versa, as Bauckham, 141, expresses the thought, life has its “eternal source in God.”

<sup>117</sup> For a discussion whether or not the breath/Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit, see Mueller, “The Holy Spirit in Revelation,” 22-24.

<sup>118</sup> See, e.g., Ps 50:12; 1Cor 10:26.

<sup>119</sup> Beasley-Murray, 104.

<sup>120</sup> Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 142.

<sup>121</sup> See the seven trumpets and the seven plagues.

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engages in just judgments and brings retribution on those who have mistreated and killed others (Rev 16:5-7). Obviously these abused ones are his own, and God will intervene for them by bringing to justice their enemies and raising them from the dead. He allows the planet earth to be in an empty and void state for a thousand years (Rev 20) and then creates a new heaven and earth (Rev 21-22), not allowing any of his creatures to spoil his long range plans. In the New Jerusalem Sanctuary God's direct presence, his immanence, will be revealed and an unprecedented closeness and intimacy between the Creator and his creation will be established. "The fact that a divine throne is present in the city expresses the idea that the political structure of the new creation is theocracy, a veritable kingdom of God."<sup>122</sup> So he cares for his creation by sustaining it, recreating it, governing it, and letting his people participate in his reign (Rev 22:5).

Creation is the foundation for the theocentricity of the Book of Revelation. Other concepts of God derive from the fact that he is the Creator. From this perspective being Creator is a foundational and encompassing concept. It allows for an integrated understanding of the Godhead's—Father's, Son's, and Holy Spirit's—nature and divine actions and avoids major inconsistencies in the way the Trinity would relate to the world and its beings were God not the Creator of all.

***God's Intentionality***

In creating inanimate things and animate beings God pursued his plan and purpose. While Revelation does not provide the slightest hint that there was in God an inherent need to have a counterpart in creation and that he therefore was more or less forced to create beings in order to be able to achieve self-realization or to exhibit his love and holiness, God decided anyway and in free will to create. Thus creation was no coincidence, and God was not surprised by the appearance of intelligent beings. By his will creation came into existence and is sustained (Rev 4:11). Even the Fall, as bad as it was, was not an unexpected shock for the Godhead, and the question whether or not to find a way of salvation for humanity did not need to be pondered in a divine emergency meeting (Rev 13:8). The male child of Revelation 12 was the fulfillment of the proto-gospel in Genesis 3:15. Likewise ". . . the New Creation of Revelation 21-22 is not an

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<sup>122</sup> Gallusz, 172.

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afterthought. . . .”<sup>123</sup> Indeed God has a plan and purpose. He created so that humans may “fear” and worship him (Rev 14:7). He recreates so that humanity can live in the most intimate relation with him. The new creation even surpasses the old creation, especially with God living permanently among humankind, and this is certainly intentional. Therefore, Stanley may be talking about perfection: “With the one who brought the cosmos into being, *ex nihilo*, there is also the possibility—for there is the will—to bring it to its intended perfection. . . .”<sup>124</sup> Bauckham claims that “Creation has . . . a moral and a religious goal—its dedication to God fulfilled in God’s holy presence—and also an aesthetic goal—its beauty fulfilled in reflecting the divine glory.”<sup>125</sup>

***God’s Relation to Creation and His Creatures***

Creation, life, is an undeserved, unmerited gift of God. However, the biblical God is not a deist God, winding up a clock and leaving it to itself. He sustains creation and cares for it (Rev 4:11). “. . . all of God’s creation, from beginning to end and everything between, fall under God’s sovereign rule and divine care.”<sup>126</sup> Jesus the Creator (Rev 3:14) addresses his church in Laodicea attempting to bring it to repentance so that it may not get lost, inviting the church members to open the door to him and dine with him (Rev 3:20).

Relationship is strongly expressed in the creation passages of Revelation 7 and 21-22. The Lamb, who is Creator and Savior, becomes Shepherd of his people. He guides them and provides what is needed, especially the water of life (Rev 7:14, 17). Personally, God will wipe away the tears of his people (Rev 7:17; 21:4). “. . . here God himself is said to wipe the tears from the faces of all his suffering creatures. The love of God, for which Revelation rarely uses the word ‘love’ (cf. 1:5; 3:9, 19, 20:9), could hardly be more vividly depicted.”<sup>127</sup>

Relationship is also expressed through the disappearance of boundaries and distances. Interestingly, it is not only humanity that wants to overcome the barrier separating them from God. It is God himself, who wants to be

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<sup>123</sup> Stevenson, 141.

<sup>124</sup> Stanley, 32.

<sup>125</sup> Bauckham, 141.

<sup>126</sup> Stevenson, 141.

<sup>127</sup> Bauckham, 141.

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close to his creatures. In the new creation “the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them” (Rev 21:3). Three times in this one verse the loud voice stresses that the distance between God and humanity will have been permanently overcome. In addition, not only something will be no more, something else will be: “they will be his people” (Rev 21:7), he will be their God, and they will be his sons (Rev 21:7), God’s name will be on their foreheads (Rev 22:4). Although the redeemed will serve God (Rev 22:3) they are still sons and daughters of God. The closeness of God to his people is also expressed with other images: God and the Lamb as the temple (Rev 21:22), the New Jerusalem that includes the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev 22:23), God and the Lamb illuminating the believers (Rev 21:23; 22:5). The climax will be reached when his own will see his face (Rev 22:4), something which was not possible for humans throughout history. No human being was able to see God and live (Exod 33:20). How important is it for good communication and an intimate relationship to see the face of the partner! Humans will see God’s face.

This is creation theology at its best. It is creation that establishes the possibility to relate to a being beyond our world, the Creator, and there find meaning in and purpose for life.

#### ***God, Creation, and Salvation***

But with the new creation theme comes another crucial concept, and this is salvation. When through the Fall creation went wrong, God became the Savior. The powerful connection between the two concepts can be illustrated through three points:

- (1) Revelation 4 and 5 have already linked creation and salvation through the hymns addressed to Father and Son and both of them. The two concepts are inseparable. God the Father is here portrayed as Creator, and the Son as Savior-Lamb. Creator and Savior are worshipped together.
- (2) Among others salvation in Revelation is expressed through the imagery of the slaughtered Lamb, his shed blood (Rev 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11), the Lamb releasing humans from their sins (Rev 1:5), the Lamb purchasing people for God (Rev 5:9; 14:3, 4), people washing their robes and whitening them in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14), and the redeemed



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standing with the Lamb on Mt. Zion (Rev 14:1, 3, 4).<sup>128</sup> However, this Lamb is Jesus the Creator, who throughout the Apocalypse is associated with God the Father, also described as Creator.

- (3) Clearly the concept of salvation and new creation are linked again in Rev 21-22. The new home for the believers will only be for those, who are saved (Rev 21:7-8). Therefore, the call is issued to make a decision and accept the water of life at no cost (Rev 22:17).

Creation and salvation go together in Revelation. It is inconsistent to separate these two crucial teachings. If done anyway, typically, both of them are compromised and damaged. Reinterpreting creation may lead to a reinterpretation of salvation or to a soteriology that is shallow and/or unsatisfactory. The Creator God is also the Redeemer God. This is the difference between Gnosticism<sup>129</sup> and biblical religion.

### **Creation and Anthropology**

#### ***The Nature of Human Beings***

Creation describes among other things what humans are. Humans are not an accident of nature. God willed them. They are part of creation and yet can think beyond creation. Having a body and mental-rational as well as emotional capacities they are wholistic entities, called “souls” (Rev 6:10). Humans reflect not only on others and their environment but also on themselves. They are aware of their finitude. While they cannot understand eternity, neither can they fully comprehend that this life here and now is all that there is. They hope for something else. Humans wrestle with the questions, Where do we come from? Where will we be going to after death? And why are we here? And it is precisely to these questions, which have to do with the meaning of life, that the theology of creation provides important answers. Humans come from the hand of God. Their life gains meaning through their relation with God. They are not immortal by nature but through Christ can have eternal life and be kept in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 3:5; 21:27). That means they will have a future beyond life here

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<sup>128</sup> For more details see Ekkehardt Mueller, “Christological Concepts in the Book of Revelation—Part 3: The Lamb Christology,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 21/2 (2011): 42-66.

<sup>129</sup> Kurt Rudolph, “Gnosticism,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1033.

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and now, if they make the right choices.

Obviously, humans are moral beings with their own will and freedom of choice. They can distinguish between good and evil and can choose what is right. If this were not so, God would hardly call them to fear and worship him as Creator (Rev 14:7).

Humans are also created as relational or social beings. They relate to other humans. Some are members of Christ's church or the remnant (Rev 2-3; 12:17). Some maintain a relationship to God and follow the Lamb (Rev 14:4). In the context of creation and salvation Revelations ascribes to the redeemed the status of priests and a kingdom (Rev 1:6; 5:20; 20:6), which clearly contains relational aspects and tasks.

Creation affirms a basic equality among humans. With creation there is no preferred gender, no caste system, and no human hierarchy. These are later human constructs to regulate communal life, oftentimes to the detriment of the weaker ones. Lichtenwalter writes:

Human equality is assumed and is an essential part of human creation. There is no fundamental difference in the essential nature of races (and genders). Every nation, all tribes, peoples, and tongues, the small and the great, rich and poor, free men and slave are equally within the Apocalypse's field of vision for both redemption and moral accountability (7:9; 11:18; 13:16; 14:6; 19:5, 18; 20:12). Slavery and trafficking in human lives is a reason for divine judgment (18:13).<sup>130</sup>

***Human Responsibilities***

With all their privileges humans carry responsibility not only for their own decisions and behavior (Rev 2:4, 14-15, 20; 3:15; 9:20-21; 10:10) but also for creation,<sup>131</sup> that is, their treatment of fellow humans. Throughout the book of Revelation one encounters injustice, persecution, and murder of humans by humans (Rev 2:10; 6:10; 13:15-17; 17:6). Revelation 18 contains an economic critique of Babylon. God intervenes with his righteous judgments (Rev 16:5-6; 19:2, 11; 20:12-13).

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<sup>130</sup> Lichtenwalter, "Creation and Apocalypse," 134.

<sup>131</sup> Frequently the last phrase of Revelation 11:18 is quoted to point to an ecological interest of the Apocalypse. But this text should rather be seen in connection with Revelation 19:2 which identifies the destroyer of the earth with Babylon. The interest of Revelation is more spiritual than ecological. Cf. Kistemaker, 345, and Patterson, 256.

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But followers of Christ have a responsibility for fellow believers (Rev 3:2) and for non-believers. They are witnesses (Rev 12:11) and proclaimers of the three angels' messages (Rev 14:6-11), reminding humanity of the Creator God and his claims. Personally, they will emulate Christ's lifestyle (Rev 14:4-5) and as overcomers (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7) inherit the promised blessings of the new creation.<sup>132</sup> In addition Stanley notes: "John's imaginative vision not only creates hope but it bestows an obligation upon us to work with God in building just cities while we await the final city symbolized as New Creation."<sup>133</sup>

**Creation and other Theological Topics in the Apocalypse**  
***Creation, Eschatology, and the Great Controversy Motif***

John's Apocalypse covers at least the time from the first century AD until the second coming of Christ, as chapters 12-14 indicate. However, there are references to an early time of human history, especially the repeated emphasis on the original creation and also the reference to the Fall, followed by the divine promise encapsulated in the proto-gospel. But Revelation contains also a strong emphasis on end time events. The entire second half of the book deals with these last events of human history. The seven plagues describe the final divine judgments on apostate humanity before the Parousia of Christ (Rev 15-16). The last two plagues are elaborated in Revelation 17-19. Chapter 19 is a portrayal of Armageddon, in which Jesus as rider on the white horse brings to an end the present evil age. The Millennium, framed by the first resurrection and the second

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<sup>132</sup> Stanley, 30, 33-34 explains how in his opinion the Christian mandate in view of the new creation should work itself out: "New creation as the people of God involves conquest over sin and sinful social systems such as imperialism, materialism and the religious syncretism . . ." (30). "Today Revelation's New Creation calls for a counter-cultural people who commit themselves to the Lamb and conquer through a lifestyle that distances themselves, as far a possible, from the military-industrial complex, from nationalism, from consumerism, and from the religious syncretism which pervades modern life . . . If John were writing to Christians in the United States he would instruct them not to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States because Christians are citizens of the kingdom of God more than any nation state. Such behavior, which combines church and state, violates the New Creation" (33-34).

<sup>133</sup> Stanley, 35.

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resurrection,<sup>134</sup> follows chronologically in Revelation 20.<sup>135</sup> It will come to an end with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

So Revelation places eschatology on the background of creation. It paints the large picture of human history from creation to recreation, providing even vistas into the angelic world. This encompasses the Great Controversy motif.<sup>136</sup> Gorman observes correctly: “Genesis and Revelation constitute the Bible’s two bookends, comprising the canon’s own alpha and omega. The grand narrative that began with creation now ends in new creation, as promised by the prophets long ago.”<sup>137</sup>

But if this is so, creation should be understood in the same way in the beginning as well as in the end. It is the same Creator God engaged in the same initiative. Scripture indicates that both, the Genesis creation as well as the new creation are actual and real creation events executed by the same Creator God. The Genesis creation account makes possible the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. “Creation theology is essential to eschatology. The One who creates is the One who consummates. God will achieve creation’s goal.”<sup>138</sup>

***Creation and Worship***

Worship in the context of creation is very clearly expressed in Revelation 4:8-11 and 14:7. It is such an important theme that the central

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<sup>134</sup> Stevenson, 142: “As the story of Christ is incomplete without resurrection, so too is the story of creation incomplete without resurrection.”

<sup>135</sup> On the Millennium see Ekkehardt Mueller, “Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 20,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 37/2 (1999), 227-255; *ibid.*, “Basic Questions About the Millennium,” [1st part] *Reflections* April (2016): 1-9; *ibid.*, “Basic Questions About the Millennium, Part 2: The Issue of Dispensational Premillennialism.” *Reflections* July (2016): 1-6.

<sup>136</sup> Moo, 167, does not mention the Great Controversy motif and yet may reflect elements of it when he writes: “. . . John’s intent is to assure the churches that they have not therefore been abandoned to a world of sorrow, pain and mourning. Instead, the triumph of the ‘Lamb that was slain’ means that the creator’s fidelity to his creation—hinted at in the rainbow around the throne, sign of the Noahic covenant—is expressed finally through nothing less than the renewal of the cosmos, an event in which the world is brought beyond any threat of future rebellion or sin.”

<sup>137</sup> Gorman, 161.

<sup>138</sup> Stevens, 386. Stevenson, 140, observes: “Revelation is more about creation than it is destruction; or, to put it another way, it is about how an ending leads to a new beginning, how the old gives way to the new.”

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vision of the book, Revelation 12-14, focuses almost exclusively on the issue of false worship versus true worship. True worship has its foundation in the divine act of creation. It is theocentric and Trinitarian. It maintains the tension between God's immanence and his transcendence. It extols the character and nature of God but also praises his works. True worship is universal and all-encompassing. The completion of the plan of salvation with a new heaven and a new earth is placed into a worship setting. Worship is not only due to the Creator God, but it also benefits the worshiper. It provides a new perspective to life on earth. Worship of the Creator will continue unendingly.<sup>139</sup>

***Creation, Sabbath, and Ethics***

The first part of the twofold creation account in Genesis climaxes in the Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3). Sabbath and creation are combined again in the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:8-11). If there is such a close connection between Sabbath and creation, while creation is a major theme in Revelation and there is such a strong emphasis on worship in the Apocalypse, one would also expect to find a reflection of the Sabbath in Revelation. Although the Sabbath is not mentioned directly and by name in Revelation, it is found indirectly in the references to keeping the commandments and especially in the description of the Creator God "who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters" (Rev 14:7).<sup>140</sup>

There is some recognition that "keeping the commandments" (Rev 12:17; 14:12) may refer or does refer to the Decalogue,<sup>141</sup> which includes the Sabbath commandment. The fourfold description of the extent of creation is understood as consisting of three major elements. The last one

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<sup>139</sup> See Ekkehardt Mueller, "Reflections on Worship in Revelation 4 and 5," *Reflections: The BRI Newsletter*, July (2012), 1-6.

<sup>140</sup> See, e.g., Larry Lichtenwalter, "The Seventh-day Sabbath and Sabbath Theology in the Book of Revelation: Creation, Covenant, Sign," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 49/2 (2011): 285-320.

<sup>141</sup> Smalley, 334, states: "The allusion here to obeying God's commands probably refers primarily to the ethical demands of the Decalogue, and then to the need in the Johannine community for its members to obey the love command . . ." See also, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 709-710; Kistemaker, 413; Ekkehardt Müller, *Der Erste und der Letzte: Studien zum Buch der Offenbarung*. Series: Adventistica: Forschungen zur Geschichte und Theologie der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten - Volume 11 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011), 373.

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“sea and springs of water” is considered to be one sector of the cosmos.<sup>142</sup> However, such a description of creation is found in Exodus 20:11, the Sabbath commandment, and John seems to allude clearly to this commandment.<sup>143</sup> A number of commentaries avoid discussing Revelation 14:7 at all,<sup>144</sup> while a few are looking for the OT background and acknowledge a reference to the Sabbath commandment. J. M. Ford sees in Revelation 14:7 a reference to Exodus 20:4-5, the second commandment of the Decalogue,<sup>145</sup> and U. B. Müller points to God’s works of creation by listing among other texts Exodus 20:11.

While the 25th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* mentions in its margin Exodus 20:11 as OT background of Revelation 14:7,<sup>146</sup> the 27th edition uses the parallel text Acts 4:24 and there lists Exodus 20:11.<sup>147</sup> The 28th edition uses the other parallel in Revelation 10:6 and there states as reference Exodus 20:11.<sup>148</sup> The 4th edition of *The Greek New Testament* lists as a parallel of Revelation 14:7 also Exodus 20:11.<sup>149</sup> So there seems to be a clear recognition that Revelation 14:7 at least alludes to the Sabbath commandment. This fact may inform the interpretation of other texts in Revelation dealing with the day of worship.<sup>150</sup>

Creation theology in Revelation includes the seventh-day Sabbath.

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<sup>142</sup> See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 828.

<sup>143</sup> See John T. Baldwin, “Revelation 14:7: An Angel’s Worldview,” in *Creation, Catastrophe, & Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, edited by John Templeton (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 19-39.

<sup>144</sup> E.g., Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 223.

<sup>145</sup> J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, The Anchor Bible 38. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 248.

<sup>146</sup> Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland, (eds.) *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Editio Vicesima Quinta (London: United Bible Societies, 1969), 639.

<sup>147</sup> Nestle-Aland (eds.) *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Editio Vicesima Septima Revisa. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 660, 330.

<sup>148</sup> Nestle-Aland, 28th Edition, *The Greek English New Testament: Novum Testamentum Graece English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 1532, 1514.

<sup>149</sup> Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (eds.) *The Greek New Testament*, fourth revised edition (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 2001), 863.

<sup>150</sup> See Ranko Stefanovic, “The Lord’s Day of Revelation 1:10 in the Current Debate,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 49/2 (2011): 261-284.

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While salvation has been attained by Jesus Christ and can never be earned by his disciples but as a gracious gift of God can only be accepted by faith, believers keep his commandments and pursue an ethical lifestyle because they love and follow him. They live a righteous and holy life (Rev 22:11), and thus are distinguished from those rejecting the will of God for their life (Rev 21:7-8; 22:14-15). And yet keeping the commandments including the Sabbath is not only a consequence of the experience of the gift of salvation, it is also in itself a gift praised throughout Scripture.

**Summary and Conclusion**

In this article we have studied Revelation's references and allusions to creation. We found an unexpected number of such allusions with a heavy emphasis on the original creation as portrayed in Genesis 1 and 2. There was also a mention of Jesus activity here and now in changing the life of people, which is described in creation language (Rev 1:6 and 5:10). However, this aspect remained a minor focus in Revelation. Yet a strong emphasis was found on the eschatological new creation which is described in terms of the creation of Genesis 1 and 2, reflecting but also surpassing it. Gorman notes regarding the final vision of Revelation: ". . . this vision . . . is the *climax of the book of Revelation, the New Testament, the entire Bible, the whole story of God, and also the story of humanity.*"<sup>151</sup>

So the Genesis creation and the eschatological new creation are linked and invite us to consider the two in tandem. In Revelation both need to be understood as real events and should not be interpreted metaphorically. They provide meaning for human beings and inspire them with hope and confidence.

The theological significance of the creation motif is considerable. The creation motif makes a substantial contribution to the understanding of the nature of God. That God is the Creator is foundational to his nature. It shows his intentionality in bringing about inanimate objects and various life forms. But as Creator God—although he is not dependent on it—he seeks a relationship with his creation, especially humankind. Therefore, he supports and sustains creation, and when through the Fall it went wrong, he stepped in by bringing about salvation. Revelation maintains that creation and salvation form an inseparable package that cannot and should not be

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<sup>151</sup> Gorman, 163.

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severed.

The creation motif also helps to understand the nature of human beings and their responsibilities. It highlights the great controversy theme. It calls human beings to the worship of God Almighty, and it challenges them, as those who have been saved, to live in a close relationship with their God. That involves justice, righteousness, holiness, an ethical lifestyle, and obedience to the One who has made them and loves them (Rev 1:4-8).

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