

my Bible and so found myself captured by the ancient landscapes of biblical writings — of comfort and temptation in the wilderness, divine appearances on mountains, miraculous feedings in the desert. Both the landscapes of Morley and the biblical stories taught me the importance of what Edward S. Casey calls 'the concreteness of being-in-place, i.e. being in the place-world', and that 'to be in the world, to be situated at all, is to be in place' (1993: xv, 183-270). Once, taking my Bible with me on one of my excursions, on a knoll overlooking the Bow River I stumbled onto the exotic landscapes of the book of Revelation. Here landscape wilderness, that cultural construction of space in opposition to civilization (Schama 1996), gave way to 'wild places' — not that human construct 'nature' so much as the now shrill now comforting voices of Earth.² Earth sounded loud and clear through its 'wildscapes' (Casey 1993: 213) of desolation, isolation, dynamism and impenetrable violence. I encountered hail and fire consuming thirds of all forests and grass; seas turned to blood obliterating a third of all sea creatures (Rev. 8.7-8); a river pouring from a serpent's mouth (Rev. 12.15); a two-hundred-mile-long river of blood as high as a horse's bridle (Rev. 14.20); Armageddon filled with the dead flesh of armies (Rev. 16.16; 19.18); four-square heavenly Jerusalem containing the water and tree of life (Rev. 21.1-22.5). Such topographies became surreal when read by the bright light of Alberta skies, sitting on the ancient soil of golden foothills, overshadowed by timeless mountains. **Could God annihilate such beauty? In the apocalyptic tumult to come, in the course of which 'the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up and every mountain and island was removed from its place' (Rev. 6.14), would even these majestic Rocky Mountains be levelled?**

Confused, I decided I needed a guide help me make sense of these endtime geographies. From a Christian bookshop I hired the orienteering skills of a much-recommended commentator, Hal Lindsey. *There's a New World Coming: 'A Prophetic Odyssey'* (1973), sequel to his best-selling *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), was to be my *vademecum* to appreciate the sites, sounds and geographies of what Lindsey interpreted as a map of the imminent end of the world. In the 1970s Lindsey's books were best-sellers. Perhaps more than any other writings of their genre,

2. In what follows I use the term 'Earth' following the Earth Bible Project's definition (Habel 2000d: 27): 'that living system *within* which we humans live in a relationship of interdependence with other members of the Earth community'. Further, I use the term 'earth' (lower-case 'e') to describe 'the ground or land-mass we inhabit... In this context, "earth" does not represent the polar opposite of heaven in a religious sense.'

There's a New World Coming! Reading the Apocalypse in the Shadow of the Canadian Rockies

Harry O. Maier

Crowchild Trail winds slender like a serpent's tongue through the suburbs of Calgary, Alberta. Skirting the Bow River, it slips westward between speckled brown foothills until it disappears into the white-capped teeth of the Rockies. Along the way it sheds its name and becomes an old highway offering tourists a scenic route to Banff. Two-lane asphalt slices a line through the Treaty Seven reserve of the Stoney Nakoda First Nation (the Bearspaw, Chiniki and Wesley/Goodstoney peoples) situated around the settlement of Morley. Treaty Seven, signed by the Blackfoot Confederacy in 1877, was the means by which the Canadian government gained access to lands necessary for the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway.¹ Like the railway, our highway is a colonial reminder. On its way it snakes past St Barnabas Residential School and the white picket fences of McDougall Memorial United Church, the Methodist mission church built in 1876 by George Millward McDougall. His son and co-builder of the mission, John McDougall, acted as translator in the Treaty Seven negotiations permanently settling the Stoney First Nation on the Morley Reserve.

I was sixteen when I borrowed the family car, drove onto Crowchild Trail and let it lead me west, not knowing where it would take me. On family trips we had, of course, driven to Banff, but via the swifter Trans-Canada Highway, and I did not know what lay west of the city's boundaries along this road. Rounding the city limit, high on a hill, a vista of sparkling blue where the Bow River meandered eastward, the golden brown of foothills, and the magnificence of the Rockies invited me to continue driving until swallowed by the mountains.

It was a time of discovery. Recently confirmed as a Lutheran, I was in the full blush of a fervent conversion to Christianity. Even as I ventured beyond the boundaries of familiar city boundaries, I had begun to read

1. For a history of the relationship of Treaty Seven to the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway see Miller (2000: 197-224); Ray (1996: 210-12).

Lindsey's writings have successfully promoted a reading of the books of Revelation and Daniel as outlining a divinely pre-ordained sequence of political, economic, religious and ecological events of this the alleged last generation living into the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Coming to me as I was in the heat of new Christian faith, Lindsey's reading of the Apocalypse as tomorrow's news today was a spark that ignited my imagination. Here was proof-positive that we were in living in the last days. Conversion never felt more right.

But there was a cost attached to believing Lindsey was a trustworthy guide to traverse Apocalypse territories. His reading confirmed my fear that the promised end would obliterate these places, becoming sacred to me even as they were holy to the Stoney First Nation for thousands of years before a young white city kid discovered them. In fact, the unavoidable conclusion of Lindsey's apocalyptic surveys was that I was mistaken to be taken up into the wonder of the world that greeted me on my teenage excursions. Instead, his exegesis urged me to turn my attention heavenward from whence Jesus was soon to come, to avert my gaze away from the very Earth that was, in each new trip through Morley, teaching me my place in the web of life. No sooner had I discovered Earth than I was invited to see myself on the eve of a battle pitching heaven against Earth.

Earth, Autobiography and Exegesis

Lindsay's is an invitation whose cost this essay seeks to estimate. The cost is personal, hence the autobiographical beginning. To begin a reading of the book of Revelation autobiographically is to insist upon the centrality of the second ecojustice principle undergirding the work of the Earth Bible Project. 'Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival' (Habel 2000d: 24, 44-46). To read the Apocalypse autobiographically is to connect Earth community, exegesis and text. Autobiographical exegesis proceeds from one's own Earth location — one's own concrete 'being-in-place' — as a beginning point of orientation in and among the immediate Earth networks of which one is a part. The metaphor of network is central, for without it autobiographical exegesis quickly becomes anthropocentric, even solipsistic. In the network metaphor, self is only one vertex in a complex series of interconnecting relationships that do not exist for the sake of the interpreter. Though brought to consciousness through interpretation, they are present even without an interpreter reflecting upon them. This contrasts with traditional historical-critical exegesis where the self as interpreter is filtered out from exegesis in

order to arrive at an allegedly value-free, objective reading of a text. Such an enterprise becomes docetic if not nuanced by a critical subjectivity that acknowledges the interests every critical investigation brings to its topic of study (the genesis of the interpreter's questions, his/her place in a larger community of scholars, the tradition of interpretation, the relationship of interpretation to politics). It can deny the flesh and blood of real readers approaching a text from a set of not dispassionate interests. It risks Earth — not because its practitioners are not ecologically minded, but because it is the very insistence on objective scientific detachment that belongs to a much larger world view treating the world (of text, of historical backdrop, of author...) as object rather than as partner in exegetical conversation. This is what ecotheologian Sallie McFague (1997: 67-117) contrasts as an arrogant knowing of the world as manipulable object, as opposed to entering into a 'subjects' relationship of encounter, and articulated in the second ecojustice principle invoked above.

For me, Earth and Apocalypse came alive in the shadow of the Rockies. But it was only by Earth's cross-examination of the apocalyptic violence against Earth, as an intrinsically worthy partner in exegetical conversation with the text, that a new reading of Apocalypse as pro-Earth text became possible for me. The voices of dissent Earth raised, via the startling beauty of sky, foothills, river and mountain, became voices of dissent and resistance to the easy dispensing of heaven (i.e. sky) (Reid 2000: 240-41) and Earth in dispensationalist apocalyptic interpretation.³ The Earth voices I heard told me that to dispose of an old creation in favour of a new one was to dispose of *myself*. Again, I do not intend this anthropocentrically: my own being is not the beginning and end of Earth's existence. Rather, I mean that from my perspective as partner in the web of Earth life, to obliterate Earth is to annihilate my own self, for 'if one member suffers, all suffer together' (1 Cor. 10.26). Lindsey's premillennialist voice tempted me to deny my connection with the dust from which I came and to which I one day will return, not to mention the

3. Dispensationalism, alternatively often named premillennialism, coined from and produced for mass consumption in C.I. Scofield's translation of the King James Bible, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, draws its name from Scofield's dividing up of history into seven dispensations or periods, six of which have passed, and the seventh of which is imminent. Premillennialists read the book of Revelation as a prediction of things to happen before the advent of the last, seventh dispensation, the Millennium (Rev. 20.4). The Apocalypse is thus read as predicting an inevitable sequence of calamities before the Second Coming. There is not room here to offer a detailed discussion of the nineteenth-century rise of dispensationalist interpretations of the book of Revelation (see Weber 1987).

memories of and connection with a landscape that continue to define me even though I now live hundreds of miles from the Alberta foothills.

So, in what follows I want to make a counter-offer to those readings of Revelation that outline an imminent future in which God destroys the old creation to replace it with a new heaven and Earth. I am aiming, through a careful listening of Earth's voices, to bring the Apocalypse back down from heaven to this old Earth—which is, in fact, the sacred Earth of Morley and the Stoney First Nation peoples. My overarching aim is to posit an Earth reading of Rev. 22.1-5, the conclusion of the heavenly Jerusalem vision begun at Rev. 21.1. That conclusion, however, must be read against the backdrop of the Apocalypse's representations of its villains and their relationship with the world of nature.

Revelation 22.1-5 offers a vision of Earth creatures living in life-affirming ecological interdependence. To read Revelation privileging Earth means to foreground this vision and interpret the environmental calamities rehearsed in earlier chapters in its light—rather than the other way around, so typical of premillennialist interpretation. Coming at the end of Revelation's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem descended to Earth (Rev. 21.1-27), it urges a renewed relationship of humankind with creation. In the vision, humans bring forth 'their glory' into the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21.24) and receive from the leaves of the tree of life, planted in the city's middle, healing (Rev. 22.2). Revelation 22.1-5 portrays a symbiotic relationship of interdependence between Earth and its inhabitants; it is an Earth text. It models a way of being human in Earth community. This is in sharp contrast with the destructive relationship of Earth and its inhabitants, sketched in earlier chapters of the Apocalypse: rapacious Babylon and its commercial/political allies are its most potent embodiment (Rev. 18.9-24, esp. Rev. 18.11-13), and ecological calamity are its hallmark.

In an Earth reading of Revelation's concluding vision, we do not come to the Apocalypse looking for a snapshot of tomorrow's events. Instead, we read John's visions to see what forms of interdependence they outline, and how they invite us to envision the web of life. Such a reading resists any easy exchange from an apocalyptic discourse into a futurist wager. Instead, it pays attention to what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1998: 21-5) names the Apocalypse's literary-aesthetic strategies of persuasion. Put differently, Revelation's apocalyptic language belongs to a genre of literature that depicts calamities of all sorts in order to explore Earth relationships. It offers a mythopoetic retelling of creation to bring into focus the broken and right relationships of Earth community. It paradoxically deploys rhetorical distortion in order to make clear—a distortion whose paradoxical function is lost when woodenly translated

into literal descriptions of what must transpire. However shrilly, the Apocalypse (literally, the 'unveiling') offers a revelation not only of 'what is to take place hereafter', but of 'what is' (Rev. 1.19), namely the relationships within Earth community, which at this historical moment are a matter of life and death. While traditional Christian exegesis has interpreted Revelation as offering an unveiling of future events, I want to read it as outlining present realities and possibilities of Earth relationship. The Apocalypse offers two contrasting pictures of Earth relationship, and leaves its listeners with what Barbara Rossing (Rossing 1999) calls 'the choice between two cities', Babylon or Jerusalem, each of which embodies a characteristic relation to creation. As an unveiling, the Apocalypse brings into relief contrasting topographies that are not so much pictures of what is to come as revelations of social relationships that already are, and invitations to a wholeness that may yet be.

The Geography of Nowhere

While critical scholars not formed in premillennialist schools of apocalyptic scholarship tend to dismiss dispensationalist readings as products of a (Protestant fringe), it is nevertheless important to identify what socio-political, economic and ultimately environmental agendas such interpretations serve, even if unwittingly. Such an analysis is culturally timely because no biblical text has captured the Western First World imagination more than the Apocalypse, as witnessed by the film, music and popular culture it continues to inspire.⁴ Given the hold of premillennialist interpretation on American culture, it should come as no surprise that former President Ronald Reagan and his Secretary of the Environment, James Watt, invoked, respectively, the imminent arrival of a new heaven and Earth to justify their policies; Reagan used it to defend the largest build-up of nuclear weapons in history, and Watt cited it to justify legislation permitting corporations to mine and log national parks.⁵ Being premillennialists themselves, both mirrored a popular preoccupation—the imminent end of the planet.

It is politically timely to discuss such views because of the lack of critique of the socio-economic function of premillennialist readings of the Apocalypse in silencing Earth voices in the Bible. If premillennialism

4. For a survey of the Apocalypse in popular culture, see Kingswell (1996); for the Apocalypse as furnishing a self-fulfilling script of annihilation in the Christian First World West see Keller (1998).

5. For a discussion of Dispensationalism in the White House, see O'Leary (1994: 172-93); for Reagan and Watt, see O'Leary (1994: 182).

continues to fascinate and enthral the consumers of Western popular culture and their leaders, then it is a matter of great urgency to return that reading with a critical evaluation that seconds Earth's voices of resistance to its inevitable destruction. This is all the more urgent if, as I argue below, one place where that voice of resistance is loudest is in the Apocalypse itself. Critical exegetical re-evaluation enacts the sixth principle of the Earth Bible Project, 'the principle of resistance', to side with 'Earth and its components' and its 'differ[ing] from injustices at the hands of humans', and to go further by assisting in its 'actively resist[ing] them in the struggle for justice' (Habel 2000d: 24, 52-53). The need to second Earth's voices of resistance becomes all the more pressing once it is recognized that premillennialist dispensationalism arises out of and expresses the economics and politics that makes the majority of Earth's inhabitants slaves to greed and Earth-destroying ambition.⁶

It was a colonizer's road that led me westward from Calgary into Morley, and a colonizer's interpretation of Revelation that tempted me with an Earth-renouncing interpretation of the Apocalypse. Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *There's a New World Coming* are fruitfully interpreted against a backdrop of increasing industrialized removal from and objectification of our planet. David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* socio-economically critiques modern and post-modern understandings of place and time since the Enlightenment. He coins the phrase 'time-space compression' to describe the result on cultural notions of time and place when Earth is transformed into a field of forever increasing capital via economic development. Development to achieve capital levels place (a distinct geography with its own animal and plant life, time cycles, histories...) into time-space containers that are calculated to win economic profit (see Harvey 1996: 201-207; for 'time-space compression', 260-307). The expansion of capital throughout the globe leads to a globalizing reduction of place into a grand, homogenous time-space field for economic production. Consider, for example, what happens to place in assembly-line production: it is an opening for a space mechanized to yield a certain rate of production. Place gives way to space, which in turn is in the service of assembly-line time governed by future speculation. Finally, on Harvey's analysis, even

6. This is not to deny that post-1945 premillennialist dispensationalists have been critical of all political ideologies, including capitalism (e.g. see Boyer 1992: 250-53, 263-67), only to point to the irony of how unwittingly premillennialists play into the very sociopolitical order and consumerism they decry as they look forward towards a new heaven and Earth. However, even in these last days, Lindsey (1981: 132, 149, 157-58) champions democratic capitalism over against its detractors.

space is swallowed by time: technology increases the pace of economic development. It shrinks the world through communication and transportation networks created to facilitate an ever-increasing exchange of goods. The virtual space of the Internet delivered at ever faster rates of baud is all the place required to make money. On this analysis 'the worldwide web' is a metaphor which renounces its ecological etymology. On 'the web' one world is replaced by another in the time it takes to click a mouse.

It is useful to consider Lindsey's Apocalypse commentaries with Harvey's analysis as backdrop. Consider the degree to which in Lindsey's books place has given way to a wholly shrunken time-space field of production. *The Late Great Planet Earth* offers by means of its title a dramatic instance of time-space compression. The signifiers refer, of course, to a future event, but offered as a retrospective. Its title describes a time so compressed that the future is already past. Similarly the space the title describes is simultaneously the physical space of the globe and what a book jacket envelops. Here, between two covers, is the end of the world that can be bought, consumed and disposed of. Further, the places named in First Testament and Second Testament apocalyptic texts are little more than spaces for production the reader is hungry to consume as she or he seeks insight into the end of the world. Place names such as the Euphrates River (Rev. 9.14; 16.12) and Gog and Magog (Rev. 20.8) become code words for world powers (the People's Republic of China; the former Soviet Union), which in turn become signifiers of imminent calamity. Reading Lindsey's interpretations of Chinese and Russian Soviets attacking Jerusalem and the nuclear holocaust that follows, one would never guess that in these apocalyptic spaces there are flesh and blood people. Nor in his rehearsal of the ecological disasters used by God to smite enemies is there any thought given to the extermination of myriad plants and animals; God is, in Lindsey's reading of the Apocalypse, an outside observer of nature's travail, a power who cannot take all the blame for nature's cruelty towards humankind.

To be sure, God is the ultimate source of the judgements [those described in Rev. 8.6-12], but He has a willing ally in the fallen natures of men. Ecologists tell us that man's selfishness threaten to pollute him off the planet, so God can't take all the blame when man finally succeeds in doing the job! (Lindsey 1973: 134).

Lindsey compresses places, persons and events into apocalyptic time-space configurations. Like its capitalist analogue, geography only serves as token for the ever hastening clock ticking towards a global production — in this case, calamity. Thus he inadvertently plays into a cultural

production of reality in which the planet is no longer a network of interdependent Earth relationships, but a space for apocalyptic productions eagerly consumed at the news-stand. Ecological disasters are little more than signs of the times (Boyer 1992: 331-39).

This is a colonizer's voice interpreting the Apocalypse — a religious expression of an economic reduction of the diverse Earth relations and inhabitants to conform to a pre-arranged time-space script. It is not unlike a kind of venture capitalism, wherein one invests now hoping for a healthy future return. Lindsey's books end with appeals to convert before it is too late (Lindsey 1973: 301-308; 1970: 186-88). If his books produce anything other than dismay at the sorry state of the world, they harvest souls for heaven. Souls that must, like the place names in biblical apocalyptic texts, give up their identity and become colonized by the interpreter's vision of time and space — invested like money in the bank for the inevitable rainy day. Intriguingly, the implied readers of Lindsey's books are urban American middle and upper-middle class college students (Lindsey was active in Campus Crusade for Christ before becoming a best-selling author; see O'Leary 1994: 143-46). His treatments of geography as container for inevitable events reflect the urban flight from place (usually via the automobile) which American culture has undertaken since the Second World War. Lindsey's readers, already having renounced the idiosyncrasies of place to live in more or less homogenous suburban spaces — paved over with strip-malls, freeway turnpikes and fast-food chains — live in what James Howard Kunstler (1993) aptly calls 'the geography of nowhere'. Fitting, then, that they should be invited to look towards a future that is a Utopia. As the etymology suggests, the place they are looking towards is not that much different from where they are: 'no where'. Reading Lindsey's interpretations socializes one to become a heaven-fixed premillennialist renouncing the particularities of time and place except as a form of investment that will pay off in the life to come. Where there is no longer place, there is no longer Earth, and certainly not Earth worth caring about.

Broken and Right Earth Relations in the Apocalypse

Nevertheless, there is Earth in the Apocalypse — Earth whose voices never tire of expressing themselves, whether quite literally in voices of thunder (Rev. 10.3-4) and the eagle (Rev. 8.13), or which speak in imitation of Earth noises, with voices likened to the sound of 'many waters' (Rev. 1.15; 14.2; 19.6), the lion (Rev. 10.3), and thunder (Rev. 6.1; 19.6). Revelation is the New Testament's noisiest book. But even when not sounding, Earth makes its voices heard. Indeed, it is voices John para-

doxically 'sees' (Rev. 1.10) as apocalyptic visions unfold before him. They are voices of woe and blessing, signalling — visually — contrasting studies in idolatry and faithfulness, broken and right relationships.

In Revelation, ecological disaster portrays broken relations between humans and with God. This is one of its chief literary-aesthetic strategies of persuasion, and it draws heavily upon Older Testament pictures of creation at enmity with humankind to express divine punishment and alienation. In Rev. 8.7-12 there is a 'de-creation story' that reverses the creation story of Gen. 1.1-2.4a: thirds of plant life (Rev. 8.7), then sea creatures and waters (Rev. 8.8-10), and finally of sun, moon and stars (Rev. 8.12) are destroyed. In Rev. 9.3-10, fantastic locusts sweep across Earth, tormenting humankind. These visions of ecological destruction lead up to Rev. 9.20-21, a narrative summation that outlines the result of all this calamity on an idolatrous humankind.

The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts.⁷

Following a narrative hiatus (Rev. 10.1-15.20 — the little scroll), at Rev. 16.1-21 (parallel with Rev. 8 thematically) John again witnesses ecological calamity, this time borrowed from the epic narrative of the Exodus. Disasters reminiscent of the Exodus plague narratives (sores, Rev. 16.2; sea and rivers turned to blood, Rev. 16.3-4; scorching heat, Rev. 16.8-9; darkness, Rev. 16.10-11) fall in quick succession upon those who bear the mark of the Beast and worship its image (Rev. 16.2). The result rehearses and intensifies the outcome of Revelation 8: not only do the victims not repent, they curse God (Rev. 16.9, 11, 21).

In Revelation 17-18 the Apocalypse climaxes in the vision of the destruction of the whore of Babylon and the laments of her allies. Again, John invokes Earth themes. He sees the whore of Babylon riding a seven-headed beast, seated upon many waters (Rev. 17.3), the latter being 'peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues' (Rev. 17.15), that is, the peoples of the Mediterranean Basin under Roman domination. The beast she rides was introduced in Rev. 13.1 and, like its land cousin (Rev. 13.11-12) is a pointed socio-economic caricature of Roman tyranny dominating land and sea for economic gain (see Bauckham 1998: 338-83; Kraybill 1996). Both express an economic relationship of unbridled greed at Earth's expense.

7. In what follows I cite the NRSV, sometimes with slight modification.

In Rev. 18.9-19, the laments by kings, merchants and sea-traders over Babylon's passing and the loss of their wealth continue the caricature. This parody was already forecasted in Rev. 6.6 with an appeal even amid the ecological chaos of the four apocalyptic riders (Rev. 6.2-8) to sell food for inflated prices and to avoid harming the oil and wine. The detailed listing of merchant cargo (Rev. 18.11-14, 16) describes the way Earth is mined, slaughtered, logged, spun and sold for the sake of profit. With good reason does John name these powers in an earlier vision as 'the destroyers of Earth' (Rev. 11.18). If John has anyone in particular in mind when he describes the 'small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave' who bear the mark of the Beast (Rev. 13.16) in order to 'buy or sell' (Rev. 13.17), it is surely the lamenting merchants and sea-traders of Revelation 18. The Roman Empire was notorious for its extinction of animals and exhausting of Earth resources to feed its hunger for entertainment and luxury (Rossing 1998: 491-94). The *mise-en-scène* for the laments in Revelation 18 is the desolate and abandoned Babylon whose ecological desolation (Rev. 18.2) becomes the potent symbol of the broken Earth relationships between peoples, plants, animals and natural resources that imperial greed lets loose upon the world. A dark externally, smoking ruin (Rev. 18.9, 23; 19.3), Babylon is all that is death and destruction. It is in anticipation of this scene that the 'de-creation' themes of Rev. 8.7-12 are to be read. The vision of the destruction of Earth is a hallmark of the ancient apocalypse genre's rhetorical-literary strategies of persuasion. In Revelation, divine agents announce the destruction of Earth, but it is debatable whether the destruction originates with God. The angelic trumpet-blowers unveil through mythopoetic visions of cosmic and ecological disaster the broken relations embodied more concretely in the laments of Babylon's mercantile allies.

The Apocalypse uses narratives of ecological disaster and desolation in order to express broken relationship. John also deploys narratives of ecological harmony as a literary-aesthetic strategy of persuasion to win his listeners' allegiance. Like the destruction narratives, these too are steeped in First Testament symbols. When the pregnant woman of Rev. 12.4 (already a potent Earth symbol because of mythic associations with fertility, wisdom and abundance; see Collins 1976: 57-100) flees into the wilderness 'to be nourished' (Rev. 12.6, 14), and Earth comes to help the woman, saving her from the dragon's attack (Rev. 12.16), John invites us once again into the Hebrew epic of Exodus wilderness traditions. Here wilderness signals right Earth relationship — a wholeness indicated by granting the woman 'the two wings of the great eagle' (Rev. 12.14) for escape. Whereas earlier an eagle spoke destruction as summation of ecological violence (Rev. 8.13), now an eagle's wings signal ecological

protection. And if the enmity of Earth and humankind expresses First Testament traditions of creation at odds with the children of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3.17-18; 7.1-8.22), the wholeness of Earth relationship recalls a primeval state of blessing: 'To those who conquer I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (Rev. 2.7). Original time and endtime meet in the Apocalypse (see Gunkel 1895). Both express whole Earth relationships. The promise of Rev. 2.7, of course, fore-shadows the Apocalypse's final vision (Rev. 21.1-22.5). Whereas Revelation 12 takes up a wilderness tradition, John's concluding vision rehearses more urban themes, drawn especially from Ezek. 40.1-48.35, but mixed with rural-looking metaphors. John's development of Ezekiel's urban ideal is politically pointed, as we shall see presently.

As many have noticed, John's depiction of the heavenly Jerusalem offers a reverse picture of Babylon (see Deutsch 1987: 123; Howard-Brook and Gwyther 1999: 157-96). Further, John's final vision represents what Deutsch names a transformation of symbols deployed by Second Temple Jewish texts to describe the restoration of Israel/Zion (see also Rissi 1966). Fewer have noticed the way John's depiction of heavenly Jerusalem expresses hope couched in ancient utopian symbol, and how it outlines a politics designed to stand in sharp relief to the earlier depiction of Babylon (see Royalty 1998: 211-40). John's apocalyptic resources include not only Jewish ideals, but pagan utopian ones as well. As Georgi suggests, the Apocalypse's descended heavenly Jerusalem, with its picture of the garden city, draws upon a Greco-Roman utopian ideal, never realized, of the harmonization of town and country (see Georgi 1980: 351-72). Whereas, in the imperial city, there would be forum and temple, in the new Jerusalem there is a garden with a stream and tree of life. John's city is a political counter to the kind of pro-imperial ideology represented by Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, where the Augustan order is likened to an idyllic garden. Virgil's depiction is the political application of a century-long hope (see Demandt 2000: 165-94). But John knows a crueller reality of nature at enmity with, or abused by, Empire. When he sees 'a new heaven and a new Earth; for the first heaven and the first Earth had passed away, and the sea was no more' (Rev. 21.1), we see a transformation of First Testament symbol — we also see a transformation of politics. For the sea refers not only to the mythology of chaos and order of Gen. 1.1-2, but the imperial dominion of the Mediterranean much celebrated by pagan authors and exploited by the merchants and sea traders lamenting in Revelation 18 (see Wengst 1987: 7-37).

The *new* heaven and Earth John beholds signal, spatially, a new set of relationships in which Earth — as Isa. 65.17-25 the *locus classicus* for this vision suggests — plays not a role of enmity with humankind, but enjoys

one of mutual blessing. Whereas abandoned, smoking Babylon is the final slogan of Earth at odds with a Roman Empire-loving human creation, John's Jerusalem vision expresses one of harmony. A transparent cube, it represents right Earth-divine relationship, even as oriental mythology associated quadrate cities with divinely arranged order (Müller 1961). With its preference for the number 12 (Rev. 21.12), it embodies a numerology hallowed by Hebrew tradition. It *also* embodies an astrological – the ark's cosmic – perfection. Like the twelve signs of the zodiac – each, in pagan astrology, with its own precious stone – Jerusalem is the place where Earth and God dwell together in peace (see Malina and Pilch 2000: 250).

So it is that 'the kings of Earth' (Rev. 21.24), who just three chapters earlier were fornicating with the whore of Babylon (Rev. 17.2) and gathering to battle against Jesus/God (Rev. 19.19), now 'bring their glory' into open-gated Jerusalem. John draws the motif from Isa. 60.5, 11; 61.6, but, as Royalty notes, with a subtle change: whereas in the Isaiah text it is wealth that the nations bring to Jerusalem/Zion, John replaces wealth with 'glory'. This is due to the Apocalypse's literary-aesthetic associations with wealth and Babylon/the Beast in earlier chapters (see Royalty 1998: 232). Earlier in the Apocalypse these powers only took from Earth (Rev. 18.11-13); now they bring, and in bringing, they in turn receive the life and healing of the water and tree of life (Rev. 22.1-2). In any case, there is no need for money. If earlier no one could buy or sell without the economic marker of the Beast (Rev. 13.17), now John insists (twice: in Rev. 21.6; 22.17) that the water of life is free. The 12 fruit trees bearing through each of 12 months a different fruit (Rev. 22.2) echoes the numerology, both Hebrew and astrological, discussed above. Here Earth heals. Just as in Revelation 12 Earth came to rescue the fleeing woman, now John adapts Ezekiel's temple-as-city vision to include healing landscape, and so weds First Testament wilderness and temple traditions.⁸

The city without night (Rev. 22.5) also belongs to a rhetorically charged picture where the danger of social relations symbolized in the whore of Babylon's bloodthirstiness (Rev. 19.6) and her destroyed city's darkness (Rev. 18.23) gives way to a portrait of safety and security. No longer is there any need to close the gates of the city (Rev. 21.25), for the dangers of broken relations represented by the potent biblical metaphor of night and darkness have given way to a more peaceable Earth community. Right relation takes back the night from those who would use it as a cloak for destruction and violence. The vision sets out a renewed heaven and Earth made new through right relationship.

8. The theme of healing landscape is also present in Ezek. 47.1-12, but there the landscape surrounds the city-temple; in Revelation the landscape is inside the city.

Revelation 22.1-5 as Giveaway

The counter-economy of the Apocalypse replaces conspicuous accumulation with conspicuous generosity. Its final vision outlines an Earth relationship not unlike what one finds among North American First Nations peoples. Read, for example, from the First Nations perspective of the Nakoda people of the sacred Earth of the Stoney Nation, the 'kings of Earth' who bring their glory to Jerusalem and receive healing could be interpreted as what the Nakhota/Stoney call 'the Giveaway' (see Grob-Smith 1979: 123-31; Kehoe 1980: 17-26). The Giveaway describes a ritual practised by several Plains First Nations in which wealth or objects of value are ritually given away in order to acknowledge dependence on others for success. Through Giveaway, wealthier members celebrate their social location and publicly affirm social obligations in using their wealth to promote an equitable distribution of goods. Giveaway dramatizes the interdependence of tribal members with one another and with Earth. Among Plains First Nations, the Giveaway often takes place in the context of the powwow or tribal gathering in order to mark rites of passage, social honours and, most importantly, to acknowledge the First Nation's relationship with Earth and the Creator.

The Sundance, central especially to Lakota and Nakoda peoples, also known as the Medicine or Thirst Dance, connects Giveaway with a sacred dance around a specially erected tree symbolizing the interconnection of heaven and Earth and the sacred character of all life. Here the interdependence of Earth was traditionally represented with activities requiring great physical endurance (see Mails 1978; Spier 1921; Lowie 1954: 197-79; Peelman 1995: 209-17). The dance and Giveaway around the sacred tree furnish a provocative way of interpreting that other tree at the centre, this time of the heavenly Jerusalem: 'the tree of life' (Rev. 22.2). Indeed, the metaphor is already cross-cultural in the Hebrew Bible: it originates in Mesopotamian culture where it similarly functions to represent a web of life (Parpola 1993: 161-208).

To read Apocalypse as Giveaway is to listen for Earth voices of resistance and blessing in the literary-aesthetic profiles of ecological destruction and wholeness in Revelation's apocalyptic stories. It is also to situate its vision of a new heaven and new Earth in *this-worldly* living. Earth's voices in Revelation tell us there is indeed a new world coming whenever and wherever there are those courageous enough to live and express the Giveaway of the tree and water of life.