Creation Concepts and Creation Care

Edited by
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Creation Concepts and Creation Care

Perspectives from Early Judaism, Early Christianity, and Beyond

Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik / Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics

Band XVII

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Preface

This volume is based on a conference held June 2–4, 2022 at the Johannes Gutenberg-University of Mainz, entitled "Creation Conference: Creation Concepts and Creation Care in Early Judaism, Early Christianity, and Beyond." Most of the articles were presented as papers at this conference.

We are grateful to the different funding institutions that made this event possible: JGU Mainz, Freunde der Universität Mainz e. V., and Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau. The conference was part of the Mainz research project 'Creation in the Gospel of John' (funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)[1] and is connected to the Mainz research center 'Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity' (*e/αc*).[2] This relation also explains the wide range of hermeneutics represented in the various articles. According to the approach of the *e/αc*, ancient texts are not only interpreted in their historical setting but read against the background of current ethical debates. With regard to the topic of this volume, ancient creation concepts must be linked to the challenges of the global, anthropogenic climate crisis. How can an interpretation of the ancient texts sharpen, broaden, or relativize our view of the current threat? Where do ancient concepts of creation provide inspiration or even orientation for current narratives on creation and climate ethics in their own way of speaking and thinking? The academic discourse among the participants of the conference is here brought to a wider audience in the hopes of stimulating the current debate by engaging with creation concepts and creation ethics. The discourse on climate change over the years has proven that pure scientific data is insufficient to motivate people to rethink problematic practices and begin a process of transformation.[3] We also need narratives, metaphors, and – broadly speaking – concepts of creation, cosmos, and human society that orient us and illuminate pathways out of the crisis. It seems to be paradoxical that looking back can open up new horizons and avenues for the future. However, this is exactly one of the theses of this book.[4] The ramifications of enlightenment and modern thinking, such as the subject-object-

[1] See https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/428143557.

[2] See https://eac.uni-mainz.de/.

[3] See Maja Göpel and Marcus Jauer, *Wir können auch anders: Aufbruch in die Welt von morgen*. Berlin: Ullstein, 2022.

[4] See also Annette Kehnel, *Wir konnten auch anders: Eine kurze Geschichte der Nachhaltigkeit*. München: Blessing, 5th ed. 2022. See on the interconnectedness of time modulation and ethics Ruben Zimmermann et al. (ed.), *Ethik der Zeit – Zeiten der Ethik. Ethische Temporalität in Antike und Christentum*. WUNT 510. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2024.

dichotomy and the ideology of progress and growth, in conjunction with industrialization, have brought us to the dead end and threats we presently confront. Ancient texts will not provide simple solutions but may open our minds for a different perspective and unexpected ideas for how to live.

We would like to thank the contributors for preparing their papers and converting them into articles. We also enjoyed our time together in Mainz and are glad that you took the risk of traveling in uncertain times when the pandemic was not quite over. We are grateful to Jörg Frey for including the volume in the WUNT series. We greatly appreciate the cooperation with the staff at Mohr Siebeck, especially Elena Müller and Markus Kirchner, who were our primary contacts. May this book help everyone interested in creation care and creation concepts to better understand some of the different perspectives from early Judaism, early Christianity, and beyond.

Mainz, February 2024

Zacharias Shoukry, Mirjam Jekel,
and Ruben Zimmermann

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Introduction

Creation Concepts and Creation Care

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"Creation Concepts and Creation Care: Perspectives from Early Judaism, Early Christianity, and Beyond." This title reveals a wide scope both in terms of the ancient texts as well as the theological and ethical questions addressed in this conference volume. Perhaps it would have been better to have a series of conferences, one for creation in early Judaism, one for creation in early Christianity, and one for the hermeneutical-ethical issues of creation ethics. This would have certainly alleviated the difficulties and challenges related to bringing three fields together within a single conference in a coherent way. However, there is great benefit in combining these three disciplines into one broader conference and corresponding volume. For it is precisely in this way that cross-disciplinary exchange emerges. It allows us to consider the important commonalities within the subject matter and the texts treated.

To facilitate fruitful dialogue between these sometimes widely different approaches and subjects, in the following, we will offer some thoughts as a collection of possible guidelines and as a framework for the diverse articles presented here.

1 The Volume Within the Current Exegetical Debate on Creation

We are not the first to deal with creation issues in ancient Jewish and Christian texts. In the last twenty years, multiple monographs and volumes have been published that address creation in ancient texts from different perspectives.[1] When planning the conference, we wanted to pay attention to the desiderata we have realized within some publications of this research. These desiderata can

[1] E. g., Habel and Trudinger, *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*; Gaiser and Throntveit, *"And God Saw That It Was Good"*; Pennington and McDonough, *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*; Nicklas and Zamfir, *Theologies of Creation*; Horrell et al., *Ecological Hermeneutics*; Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*; Schmid, *Schöpfung*; Roskam and Verheyden, *Light on Creation*; Culpepper and Van der Watt, *Creation Stories in Dialogue*; Sosa Siliezar, *Creation Imagery*; Duggan, Egger-Wenzel, and Reif, *Cosmos and Creation*; Thomas and Janowski, *Natur und Schöpfung*; Gradl, *Schöpfung*; Janowski, *Biblischer Schöpfungsglaube*; Wasmaier-Sailer and Durst, *Schöpfung und Ökologie*.

be identified on three levels: (1) the selection of texts, (2) terminology and concepts, and (3) methodology: hermeneutics and ethics.

1.1 The Selection of Texts

It is relatively easy to identify desiderata with regard to the selection of texts. There are prominent texts, such as Gen 1–3, Jubilees, or the Colossian hymn in Col 1:15–20, which have been discussed many times. But creation motifs are also found in texts that are less in focus within the scholarly debate, although they may well bring interesting facets to the discussion.

We wanted to pay attention to texts that have largely been overlooked in the research to date. Therefore, in our first section on early Jewish writings, we deal with texts such as 3 Maccabees,[2] Syriac Baruch,[3] and Greek Esther,[4] which one might consider not to be at the center of early Jewish reflections on the topic but which nevertheless provide inspiring contributions to the debate. In the second section, we turn to various early Christian texts[5] and read them against the background of our topic.

The selection of texts is also related to the definition of creation. What constitutes a text as a creation text? Is it the occurrence of certain lexemes, motifs, or narratives? Or is it certain discourses with and about that text in collective memory which indicate that it is about creation? What do we have in mind when we speak of 'creation' or a 'creation text' respectively? This leads us to our second point:

1.2 Terminology, Definition, and Conceptualization

Creation is a multi-faceted word. Depending on the context and the person referring to the phenomenon, creation can mean different things. Therefore, it is necessary to first reflect on the semantic spectrum. We have found barely any exegetical studies in which terms such as 'creation,' 'nature,' or 'cosmos' are adequately defined. Exegetes, in particular, tend to use these words without disclosing how they understand them. Even in some articles within the common dictionaries, one searches in vain for definitions. Therefore, the first article by

[2] See Barbara Schmitz, "Creation Theology in 3 Maccabees?" in this volume.

[3] See Daniel Gurtner, "The Corruption of Creation in Second Baruch," in this volume.

[4] See Kristin De Troyer, "God and Creation in Greek Esther," in this volume.

[5] This includes both canonical and non-canonical texts. See Michal B. Dinkler, "The Wild Edges of Characterization"; Hans-Georg Gradl, "Rearranged Powers"; Mirjam Jekel, "Greening John"; Christof Landmesser, "Paul's Theology of Creation"; and Alison G. Salvesen, "Creation, Nature, and Paradise," in this volume. When planning the conference, the non-canonical early Christian texts 1–2 Clement, Didache, and Shepherd of Hermas were also recognized as texts relevant to creation. For various reasons, these contributions could not be integrated here; the contribution by Shoukry presented at the conference will be published as "Die Erde erben: Schöpfung in der Didache," in *NTS* (2024/25).

Dirk Evers[6] is intended to orient readers on the different uses and understandings of the term, as well as to develop definitions in different fields of scholarship – including natural sciences.

1.2.1 Terminology

Which lexemes should be included when talking about creation in ancient Greek texts? It might seem that the clearest path would be to search the texts for the Greek equivalent of the lexeme creation, namely κτίσις and its derivates.[7] However, if we focus only on the root κτι-, we might miss important texts such as Gen 1–3, in which according to the Septuagint none of the κτι-derivations occurs, though there might be a broad consensus that these texts deal with creation. This shows that we need more lexemes and methods to identify creation material. The articles in this volume demonstrate various approaches to this question, with some focusing on κτι-, others identifying allusions to (Old Testament) creation texts, and still others discussing creation in the broadest possible sense, including all of nature.[8] While there are words that in biblical and other early Jewish and Christian texts almost always refer to creation (e. g., κτίζω, κτίσμα, κτίστης, παντοκτίστης, συγκτίζω), others are polyvalent. One example is ποιέω, which can be linked to God as the agent of the action as well as to humans and which describes all sorts of actions. Depending on the context, it might unmistakably express the act of creating or another kind of action (contrast, e. g., Gen 1:1 with 4:10). Other words in this category are, for example, γίνομαι, ἐργάζομαι, ζῳοποιέω, καλέω. Moreover, there are words such as ἔργον, φῶς, or γῆ that frequently describe the result of a creational act. These words, however, also occur in different semantic contexts. In some cases, a specific contrasting or complementary pair of terms, such as 'heaven and earth' or 'light and darkness,' is sufficient to reinforce the reference to creation. In most cases it is not a single lexeme or syntagm, but only the wider context and specific usage of the terms that helps us to decide whether a passage is about creation.

1.2.2 Definition of Creation

Reflection on creation not only raises lexical and semantic issues, but also confronts us with fundamental theological questions: What concept of 'creation' do we have in mind? How can we inductively develop a definition that, on the one

[6] See Dirk Evers, "Creation, Nature, and Cosmos," in this volume.

[7] As Barbara Schmitz demonstrates, even this path is less straightforward than it may initially appear, as the primary meaning of κτι- outside biblical texts is 'founding of a city.' Even during the time of the composition of the 3 Maccabees, this connotation is still so strong that it cannot be assumed without question that κτι- automatically serves as a technical term for creation. See Schmitz, "Creation Theology in 3 Maccabees? An Analysis of the Lexeme κτι-," in this volume.

[8] See Michal B. Dinkler, "The Wild Edges of Characterization," in this volume.

hand, accommodates the use of terminology in the sources, but, on the other hand, meets the conceptual requirements of a definitional explication?

'Creation' in a narrow sense always transports a religious frame in dealing with reality. Speaking of 'creation' in ancient Jewish and Christian texts assumes that there is a divine 'creator' who has influence in a specific way on the emergence and the maintenance of life and matter. Following that avenue, creation can describe both the action of God and the result of this action. Through analyzing ancient texts, we came to the conclusion that even in antiquity it is reasonable to distinguish these two areas. Therefore, Shoukry and Jekel introduce a terminological distinction in their dissertations.[9] The first area encompasses lexemes that designate creation as an act or process of divine activity (1). In addition to the well-known lexeme κτι-, there are several other lexemes to consider. As mentioned above, some of these lexemes are technical terms for creative action, but most of them are polysemous and can only be understood as concepts of creation in specific contexts. The second area gathers lexemes that designate the result of creative action (2), "something that is created,"[10] be it on a cosmic level (the world), on a material level, e. g., living beings, or on an abstract level of order (e. g., day and night, seven days including the Sabbath). The second field is also linked to natural and cosmic phenomena such as mountains, foundation, cosmology, and nature. Again, there is ample room for interpretation – not every mention of 'sabbath' necessarily indicates creation. However, how narrow or broad the interpretive framework is drawn here is also a hermeneutic decision.

Furthermore, some texts indicate an initial act of calling something into being; but creation also involves preservation and conservation, e. g., of life. It refers to the complex process of a diverse ecosystem that functions in a specific balance of give and take, metabolism and symbioses, sharing and using, reproduction and dying. Finally, there might also be a promise how creation can or should be in the future. Is there a goal toward which creation is heading? Thus, creation is closely linked to the narrative of salvific history of God and human beings. It is, therefore, heuristically meaningful to distinguish between a *creatio prima*, a *creatio continua*, and a *creatio eschatologica*.

This leads us to the following working definition:

> Creation is a confessional statement that a divine 'creator' has influence on the emergence and maintenance of life and matter. It includes (a) an act or process of creation (*creatio prima, creatio continua, creatio eschatologica*) as well as (b) something that is created, be it on a material or abstract level.

While the first aspect focuses on the process of making or maintaining something and hence the subject or agent of doing so, the second refers to creation as an object, the different kinds of created things and beings.

[9] See Jekel, *Schöpfungspoetik im Johannesevangelium,* ch. 2; Shoukry, *Schöpfung im Johannesevangelium,* ch. 2.1.

[10] Merriam-Webster, *Creation*.

These two aspects of the definition include different hermeneutical and ethical questions. The first definition is mainly connected to theological issues in the narrower sense. How can we understand the concept of God the creator against the background of a modern worldview? And furthermore: How can we speak theologically of a creator in an academic world that is dominated by the scientific approach of experimental proof and falsification?

The second approach deals with reality, nature, and cosmos. We might ask: How do ancient texts, for instance, conceptualize the cosmos, human beings, plants, animals, and other creatures including non-living beings?[11] Do they have intrinsic value as created things? How do they relate to each other? What is the role of human beings within this cosmos? Are humans stewards or even co-creators? These questions already include ethical dimensions and reveal that broader concepts are at stake when we talk about creation; these will be briefly explored in the following section.

1.2.3 Concepts with regard to Dogmatic Categories

The idea of creation by divine activity is broadly accepted in theology. For many theological concepts, this notion includes a strict separation between 'the creator' and 'the created' in an ontological and/or spatial dimension. Following that line, we then say that the idea of creation marks precisely this fundamental dividing line: The creator is to be separated from the created.

However, this concept can also be disputed. In the Earth Bible Project, for instance, the founders of the project avoid the term 'creation,' instead preferring to speak of 'the Earth, and all its components.' The avoidance of the use of 'creation' might also be a response to the so called 'Creationists,' who see the term creation as a confessional term against the theory of evolution, misunderstanding Gen 1–3 as a historical report on the origin of the world.[12] Others want to keep the term 'creation' precisely because of its religious confessional dimension beyond the very beginning. Viewing animals, plants, and everything that exists as 'God's creation' and not just as 'nature' or 'the universe' implies that there is a power of origin and order in the background and above everything, and that the world did not come into being and is not maintained by chance. However, this does not necessarily entail the classic dogmatic separation between God and creation. Does the christological statement that the Logos became created flesh (John 1:14), i. e., that he entered fully into creation including suffering and dying, include that God is also revealed and experienced in creation and all its components? This idea was discussed dogmatically with regard to the problem of 'natural theology,' or is more recently taken up as a panentheistic

[11] See Dinkler, "The Wild Edges of Characterization," in this volume; also Althoff, "Kosmos."

[12] See on these issues Breul, *Schöpfung*, 60–65, 79–106.

idea of an incarnation or embodiment of God in the entire cosmos.[13] Following Gregersen, 'deep incarnation' is the view that "God's own Logos (Wisdom and Word) was made flesh in Jesus the Christ in such a comprehensive manner that God, by assuming the particular life story of Jesus the Jew from Nazareth, also conjoined the material conditions of creaturely existence ('all flesh'), shared and ennobled the fate of all biological life forms ('grass' and 'lilies'), and experienced the pains of sensitive creatures ('sparrows' and 'foxes') from within."[14] Within the New Testament, for example, the question arises in such a way that plants and animals in the parables are seen as the ground of revelation and experience of God's kingdom or reality.[15] Does this mean that the line between creature and creator should not be drawn as strictly in the text as later dogmatism suggests?

Beyond these elementary thoughts, we can observe more detailed ideas about God the creator and the order of the cosmos or offer concepts about human beings and their role in this cosmos. Most of these thoughts can be sorted into the classical categories of cosmology, anthropology, and theo-logy in a strict sense (regarding God).[16]

Let us first consider potential consequences for cosmological thought. A concept of the world as created by God can lead to different perspectives and interpretations. One perspective is that the world is seen as precious and beyond human control, ultimately inaccessible. This viewpoint may foster an eco-theology that emphasizes the importance of treating the world as a gift from God, requiring utmost care and respect.[17] On the other hand, this concept can also lead to the understanding that the world itself is not divine but rather created by God.[18] In this view, creation stories that incorporate both a benevolent creator and an evil power can help explain the world's ambivalence and provide a framework for dealing with negative experiences. However, this dualistic understanding of creation can also result in a rigid division of the world into good and evil.

The concepts of *creatio prima*, *continua*, and *eschatologica* highlight the close relationship between creation and salvation history. Eschatological creation concepts offer hope for a different future and envision radical change.[19] However, they can also lead to fatalistic thinking or expectations of a literal end of the

[13] See, for instance, Gregersen, "Extended Body of Christ"; Enxing et al., *Animate Theologies*; on the debate about 'deep incarnation' see Breul, *Schöpfung*, 158–64.

[14] Gregersen, "Extended Body of Christ," 225–26.

[15] See Zimmermann, *Parabeln in der Bibel*, 145–52, 181–85.

[16] See Ramírez-Johnson, "Perspective on God's View," 251–60; Sabia-Tanis, "Holy Creation, Wholly Creative (2019)," 195–222; Roberts, *Creation and Covenant*.

[17] See eg., Bernstein, "Ecotheology," 197–210; Braaten, "God's Good Land," 148–65; Brown, "'Deep Calls to Deep'," 166–83; Middleton, "Image of God," 284–98; Schifferdecker, "Book of Job," 184–96.

[18] See the discussion in Scherle, "Creation as Promise," 243–58.

[19] See e. g., Balabanski, "Pauline Epistles," 241–55; Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology*; Finger, *Evangelicals*; Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," 449–88; Rowland, "Ecology and Eschatology," 299–309.

world.[20] It is worth considering whether the expected 'new heaven and new earth' can be seen as an alternative or replacement for our current world. Lastly, it is important to consider how the term κόσμος is understood in the various texts under discussion. Its meaning can range from referring to the entire universe or the diversity of living beings to primarily representing the environment of humans from an anthropocentric perspective.[21] The interpretation of κόσμος can significantly influence our understanding of creation and our relationship with it.

Our understanding of creation does not only influence cosmological thought but is also relevant for anthropology. Creation is a fundamental concept that highlights the external factors responsible for the existence of humans. In ancient Jewish and Christian texts, these factors are depicted as benevolent and intentional. According to these texts, humans were deliberately formed by God. This perspective has significant potential implications, ranging from recognizing human diversity – including gender diversity – as a divine gift, to condemning any attempts by humans to alter themselves in a way that supposedly goes against God's intentions.[22] The notion of transformation, inherent in eschatological creational concepts, emphasizes that humans have the capacity to change and that the process of re-creation is ongoing.[23]

While humans are part of the created world, they are also distinct from other creatures. This duality can give rise to an ethics of responsibility towards creation[24] as well as an ethics of domination.[25] Both perspectives ultimately revolve around humans as the central focus, considering them fundamentally different from the rest of creation.[26] Consequently, two contrasting concepts emerge regarding the role of human beings in relation to other living beings: stewardship and mutual custodianship.[27] Stewardship implies a sense of responsibility and care for the well-being of creation, while mutual custodianship suggests a shared responsibility and partnership with other living beings.

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[20] See the discussions in Adams, "Awaiting," 168–75; Dyer, "When Is the End Not the End?," 44–56; Harris, "Synoptic Gospels," 211–27; Lowe, Lamb, and Toly, "Climate Skepticism," 425–44.

[21] See Balabanski, "John 1," 90; Daly-Denton, *John*, 192; Jekel, *Schöpfungspoetik im Johannesevangelium*, ch. 5.4.5, 8.4.4., 9.4.2.

[22] See e. g., Fehige, "Sexual Diversity," 35–59.

[23] See Culpepper, "Prologue," 20–24; Droge, "Sabbath Work," 112–41; Painter, "Earth Made Whole;" Culpepper, "Children of God," 28.

[24] E. g., Berry, *Care of Creation*; Dyrness, "Stewardship of the Earth," 50–65; Hall, *Steward*; Hiebert, "Genesis," 81–94; Rooke, "Leviticus," 95–110; Wilkinson, *Earthkeeping*, 224–38.

[25] See White, "Historical Roots," 1203–7; Amery, *Ende der Vorsehung*.

[26] See the discussions in Clough, "The Bible and Animal Theology," 401–12; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*.

[27] For stewardship, see Liederbach, "Stewardship," 310–23; Rosenberger, *Eingebunden*; for mutual custodianship, see Habel and Balabanski, *Earth Story in the New Testament*, 17.

As stated above, creation encompasses not only the physical aspects of nature but also the rules and structures that govern life. These include natural rhythms such as day and night, seasons, as well as social rhythms and rules like the seven-day week and the Sabbath. Biblical creation texts provide etiological explanations for various aspects of life, such as the origins of life and death,[28] the nature of work and rest, power dynamics,[29] gender roles,[30] and more. By infusing these structures with meaning and divine authority, the texts shape our understanding of the world. One of the most influential etiologies found in creation texts is that of original sin and its consequences.[31] This concept explores the idea that humans are inherently flawed and prone to sin, resulting in a broken relationship with both God and creation. It highlights the need for redemption and restoration, emphasizing the significance of moral and spiritual transformation. Lastly, creation concepts also influence our understanding of God, God's spirit, and (for Christians) Christ. God, as the creator, is envisioned as the most powerful being, governing the entire world and assuming responsibility for everything. By including Christ as a co-creator, Christians envision his participation in God's power and responsibility. God (and Christ) is perceived as the underlying reason and foundation for the entire world. This raises questions about the nature and intentions of God, including the challenging issue of theodicy.[32] On the other hand, the concept of an all-powerful and all-responsible God can sometimes lead to ethical quietism, where individuals believe that since God is ultimately responsible, he will control the living conditions on Earth according to his own will. Consequently, humans may perceive themselves as having limited power to contribute to any meaningful changes.[33]

Since creation is considered a manifestation of God's work, it can be interpreted as one of God's ways of revealing himself. By analyzing creation and questioning why God is described as desiring to create the world in the first place, we can deepen our understanding of God.[34] The concepts of creation and eschatological re-creation are inherently connected to christological soteriology. As Paul states, "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the

[28] See Mirjam Jekel, "Greening John," in this volume.

[29] See Hans-Georg Gradl, "Rearranged Powers," in this volume.

[30] See Angela Standhartinger, "Creation and Gender," in this volume.

[31] For different receptions of this motif in the movie culture, cf. Adele Reinhartz, "The Reception of Biblical Creation Motifs in Contemporary Film Culture," in this volume.

[32] See Scherle, "Creation as Promise," 243–58.

[33] See the discussions in Adams, "Awaiting," 168–75; Dyer, "When Is the End Not the End?," 44–56; Harris, "Synoptic Gospels," 211–27; Maier, "Green Millennialism"; Lowe, Lamb, and Toly, "Climate Skepticism," 425–44 and also Thorsten Meireis, "The Garden of Life and the City of Hope," in this volume.

[34] See McFague, *Life Abundant*; idem, *Body of God;* and (referring to McFague) Eckholt, *Schöpfungstheologie.*

new is here!" (2 Cor 5:17).[35] This highlights the transformative power of being united with Christ and emphasizes the inseparable link between creation and the ultimate redemption and renewal of all things. This outline does in no way claim to be comprehensive; rather, in its provisional character, it is intended to stimulate further thinking.

It became obvious that at the conceptual level, ways of thinking of the texts or their authors and later impacts or philosophical dogmatic positions closely overlap. This leads us to the third and last point.

1.3 Methodology: Hermeneutical and Ethical Considerations

It is the goal of the Mainz Research Center of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity (*e/αc*)[36] to bridge the gap between ancient texts and current ethical debate. It is, however, also one of the basic hermeneutical and methodological questions any exegete must address: how should scholars approach ancient texts in the year 2024?

With the focus of this volume, therefore, we must ask how ancient creation concepts can be linked to current concepts of cosmos and nature. There is a growing awareness that these present concepts cannot be described apart from the anthropogenic ecological crisis we are currently facing. Therefore, the question can be restated more precisely: How can the creation concepts that we encounter in individual writings of the Judeo-Christian tradition come together with the urgent questions of the present about creation care in the context of climate change? As obvious and even trivial as these questions are, we felt that many publications on creation concepts in ancient Judaism and early Christianity did not reflect the problems posed by them in a satisfactory way. But there are inspiring and successful approaches dealing with these hermeneutical challenges, such as the Earth Bible Project or the Exeter Project.[37]

In simplified terms, there are two ways of relating ancient texts and current debates to each other: (1) one is from the text to the present, and (2) the other from the present to the text. The first option attempts to place a creation concept philologically and historically as precisely as possible in its historical context. With regard to ethics, we might ask: how does the text generate moral significance? Are there specific norms, a way of reflecting moral issues (be it argumentation, narration, hymn)? Who is the addressed subject as a moral agent? These questions, in our view, lead to the eight perspectives of Ruben Zimmermann's so

[35] For an analysis of this and other Pauline passages, see Christof Landmesser, "Paul's Theology of Creation," in this volume.

[36] See https://eac.uni-mainz.de/; on ecological ethics in particular see *Journal of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity* 5 (2023).

[37] See the metareflection in Habel and Trudinger, *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*; Horrell, "Ecological Hermeneutics;" Conradie, "Road," 305–14.

called Organon, a methodological tool for exploring the "implicit ethics" within the text.[38]

In many cases, the historical and textual work leads first to a deepening of the distance between antiquity and the present. The challenge presented by this methodological approach is to nevertheless establish a relation to the present. One will then have to ask whether, despite the historical peculiarities, there are analogies to contemporary questions. Is it possible to abstract norms and values that can claim relevance as natural norms or with *longue durée* beyond the temporality of the text? But one will also be obliged to say to what extent the statements about creation within this text are no longer applicable to the present or can even lead to wrong conclusions in the case of a hasty connection.

In the second option, the questions asked are curated from the present, in particular the various current threats to creation. The issues can be raised from various current discourses including basic human conditions (biology, gender, or mortality). Most urgent, however, is once again the challenge of climate emergency. It is not only about the forecasts of meteorologists, but especially about the theological and ethical evaluation of climate change. For instance, human misconduct can theologically be understood as guilt before God when creation is entrusted to human beings and does not belong to them. What can be the role of humans within creation? What may and must humankind do, and where are limits set precisely in their creatureliness? More generally speaking, are there ecojustice principles which might frame how to approach the biblical texts?

Accordingly, one might ask specific questions of the texts driven by this eco-hermeneutics. One can ask whether the ancient texts, for their part, reflect statements about the preservation of creation, about the role of humans, the scope of wrongdoing, and so on. A distinctive reflected method of how to do this was established by the Earth Bible Project in a three-step approach: suspicion – identification – retrieval.[39]

The challenge with this approach is not finding hasty answers to current questions in the texts and developing from them ethical programs or simple instructions for action. Even if the epistemological interest in approaching the texts is openly reflected, there is always the danger of making the texts submissive to this interest. Historically-critically trained exegetes will always ask in which historical contexts and basic considerations, e. g., on cosmos, life, humans, and animals, a specific text is embedded.

From this point of view, both ways are not so different after all. However, perspectives and approaches are nuanced differently. The hermeneutic and ethical

[38] See Zimmermann, *Logic of Love*, 29–110.

[39] See David Horrell, "Why and How Should We Speak of 'Creation'?" in this volume, where he explains these steps in more detail; furthermore, see the application in Zimmermann, "The Healing Tree of Life," in this volume; see also Jekel/Shoukry/Zimmermann, "Schöpfungsethik," 197–98.

Index of Sources

Old Testament[1]

[1] For pragmatic reasons, we follow the Protestant understanding of the canon (39 writings in the Old Testament). For other OT books in different canons, see the category "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha" in alphabetic order.

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

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