

# Inaugurated Hyperspace

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**Abstract:** Several philosophers of religion have used contemporary work on the metaphysics of space to dismantle objections to Christian doctrine. In this paper I shall also make use of work in the metaphysics of space to explore a topic in Christian thought that has received little attention by philosophers, namely inaugurated eschatology. My aim will be to take the conclusions of some biblical scholars who have written on this topic, and then begin to provide some metaphysical models of this doctrine, so as to overcome objections against inaugurated eschatology based on metaphysical concerns.

**Keywords:** Inaugurated Eschatology, Hyperspace, Heaven, Temple, Space

Several philosophers of religion have used contemporary work on the metaphysics of space to dismantle objections to Christian doctrine.<sup>1</sup> For example, Hudson (2005) has used the metaphysics of hyperspace to address various theological problems, including the problem of evil, and Pruss (2009) has employed the metaphysics of bent space to address puzzles surrounding the Eucharist. In this paper I shall also make use of work in the metaphysics of space to explore a topic in Christian thought that has received little attention by philosophers, namely inaugurated eschatology. My aim will be to take the conclusions of some biblical scholars who have written on this topic, and then begin to provide some metaphysical models of this doctrine,<sup>2</sup> so as to overcome objections against inaugurated eschatology based on metaphysical concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference, 'God and Time III: The Saga Continues'. I wish to thank the audience members at this conference for their questions, since they have provided me with the opportunity to improve the paper. I also want to acknowledge David Efird, Anna Marmodoro, Matthew Tugby, Hud Hudson, and Michael Rea, who have all contributed, in various ways, to improving this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Providing metaphysical models to make sense of things is nothing new, with it perhaps being the primary task of metaphysicians (Paul 2012). It is also what philosophers of religion typically have engaged when discussing whether certain claims of Christianity make sense, such as the Trinity, Incarnation, Eucharist, etc.

To do this, the paper will be constructed as follows. First, I will briefly provide some ground clearing concerning what inaugurated eschatology is, and how and why I understand it as I do. Next, I shall turn to the Temple and metaphysical models for understanding it. This might initially seem somewhat odd, but as the Temple is often thought of as key to understanding some aspects of inaugurated eschatology it will become important for what's to come later, as well as provide me space to set out the metaphysics I will employ throughout the remainder of the paper. I shall then turn my attention to how we should understand inaugurated eschatology in relation to persons, and then in relation to creation more generally, before concluding.

## 1. Ground Clearing

I am no biblical scholar, however biblical scholarship raises many interesting questions for philosophers to think about. One area biblical scholarship has recently been keen to explore is that of inaugurated eschatology, a view widely held among biblical scholars. Briefly and simply put, this is the view that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has in some way and to a certain extent brought about the end times.<sup>3</sup> As such there is a sense in which the world has changed, with believers being 'new' in certain ways, and with some scholars also thinking that this newness extends to the whole of creation. I will have much more to say about inaugurated eschatology later in the paper. Yet it will be important to set a few things out from the start.<sup>4</sup>

First, I shan't be questioning any of the interpretations given by biblical scholars that I employ here. I don't claim that the interpretation they give to the biblical data is the only interpretation one could give. But since many scholars interpret the text as affirming inaugurated eschatology, it's worth asking some philosophical questions about it. Second, unapologetically my approach will be metaphysical. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, non-metaphysical models, such as understanding inaugurated eschatology in terms of moral transformation, can only explain some of the data of inaugurated eschatology when applied to persons, but it does not seem to do well at all in explaining the data for creation, which is something I also wish to account for. Secondly, methodologically, I'm happy to explore metaphysical models first and see if they succeed. If they all fail, I would then look to provide another type of account of inaugurated eschatology. Since no one has yet explored metaphysical models, I

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<sup>3</sup> If one reads the phrase, 'now but not yet', inaugurated eschatology is what biblical scholars are referring to.

<sup>4</sup> These following four notes respond to some comments raised by reviewers.

start there.<sup>5</sup> Third, some might think that what biblical scholars tell us is what ancient near east (ANE) people believed, not what we as Christians should believe. Perhaps that is true, maybe biblical scholarship is merely descriptive rather than normative, although I'm doubtful. This paper does not argue that certain positions are normative for Christians to believe regarding eschatology. Nevertheless, why think that because a view is held by ANE people it is not normative for Christians today? I suspect the main worry will be something along the lines of, we can no longer think what ANE people did, since we know the world isn't as they thought, we know better, and as such what they thought possible isn't. One can then think of this paper as arguing that what they thought is possible given what we know today. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can think of this paper as providing a metaphysics for ANE theology, and insofar as one wants to hold a theology as close to what the ANE people thought, one will have some reason to accept the model I lay out here. Fourth and finally, one might wonder why there are no other models to compare with the one I give here. The answer to that is that as far as I can tell there are none that have been given.<sup>6</sup> I welcome people to construct other models, since I do not claim that the one I give here is best, and then comparisons can take place.

With the ground clearing taken care of, we turn to thinking about the Temple, since it will set the stage both theologically and metaphysically for much that is to come.

## 2. Understanding the Temple

There are many fascinating aspects of the Temple that one could think about philosophically. However, for present purposes, I note two key features that ancient Jews believed about the Temple. First, the Temple was taken to be the special dwelling place of God, and second the Temple was the place where heaven and earth met or connected (Barker 1991, 63; Perrin 2010, 7; Meyers 1992, 359; Wright 2013b, 96).<sup>7</sup> The first point deserves more exploration, as how we are to make sense of God being specially present at/in a certain location whilst being omnipresent is an extremely interesting question. However, our focus will be on the second aspect of the Temple, which biblical scholar Wright nicely summarises when he writes, 'When you went up to the Temple, it was not *as though* you were 'in heaven'. You were actually there. That was the point.' (2013b, 97) The temple

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<sup>5</sup> Note that metaphysical models are often consistent with non-metaphysical ones. I made this point on a related topic, namely the new creation of persons. (Page 2018, 17, n.53)

<sup>6</sup> I do actually suggest a second type of model relying on Pruss's use of bending space in the eucharist (page 6), but do not compare it with the hyperspace model I give here.

<sup>7</sup> This way of thinking about the temple was also present in other ancient Near Eastern thought (Walton 2018, 73-74).

was therefore unlike any other place on earth, since only in the Temple, and perhaps more precisely the Holy of Holies (Beale, 2011, 628), could you be simultaneously located in heaven and earth. How do we make sense of this?

I'm going to suggest one way to do so, which will pave the way for understanding much of what's to come. However, my answer will require a key piece of machinery, 'hyperspace', which I shall briefly explicate now. Hyperspace affirms the existence of extra spatial dimensions other than the three we are most accustomed to. Thus supposing we think about space in terms of a set of points, we can say something in 1-space has location within only one spatial dimension,  $x$ ; something in 2-space would have location in two spatial dimensions,  $x, y$ ; something in 3-space would have location in three spatial dimensions,  $x, y, z$ , whilst something in 4-space would have a location in four spatial dimensions,  $x, y, z, q$ . Given this Flatlanders, from the book 'Flatland' by Abbott (1884), have location in only two spatial dimensions, whilst we humans are located in at least three spatial dimensions. The hyperspace hypothesis claims that in addition to the three spatial dimensions we are aware of, there are further spatial dimensions.

To think more clearly about what this might mean, it will be helpful to use a dimensional analogy, something that the story of Flatland provides (Lindgren & Banchoff 2010, 231–232). Think of a 3-space which has been completely sliced such that all we have left are multiple sections of 2-space, each slice being like a different Flatland. If we joined these slices together we would once again have a 3-space. What is true for 3-space and 2-space is equally true of 4-space and 3-space, with the thought this time being that we inhabit one sliced segment of a wholly sliced up 4-space.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, picturing this is extremely difficult, just as problematic for the flatlander to picture 3-space in Abbott's book.<sup>9</sup> I will therefore often refer to the story of Flatland so to provide an analogy for how I suggest we think about  $n$ -space and  $n+1$ -space.<sup>10</sup>

Before some accuse me of adding to the craziness by invoking hyperspace, let me note that there are a number of arguments which can be made in favour of it. One could begin by appealing to many different scientific theories, such as string theory, which require more than three dimensions and hence justifies the belief in hyperspace.<sup>11</sup> This surely provides us with some evidence that hyperspace is

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<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to Gilmore (2006) for this way of thinking.

<sup>9</sup> See chapter 15 and 16 of Abbott (1884).

<sup>10</sup> For ease of explication I shall also assume substantivalism about hyperspace space, as Hudson does (2005, 3), although I leave it open as to whether one could translate what I say here into a relationalist picture.

<sup>11</sup> Kaku writes that multi-dimensional theories have 'already swept across the major physics research laboratories of the world and has irrevocably altered the scientific landscape of modern physics, generating a staggering number of research papers in the scientific literature (over 5,000

possible and may even describe our actual world. The second set of arguments in favour of hyperspace would be philosophical, with Hudson (2005) and van Cleave (1987) offering some of these types of reasons for adopting it. Note that much of what I say in the remainder of the paper will rely in particular upon Hudson's work and the possibilities he allows for, the two most important being that there is no absolute ban on causal processes that cross spatial dimensions,<sup>12</sup> and that it's possible for an object to move from being in, say 2-space to 3-space and vice versa.<sup>13</sup>

A final reason some have adopted hyperspace may be due to its efficacy in solving other problems, this being a Lewisian style of argument (1986, 135). Hudson again is most explicit in adopting this style of argument when thinking about Christian doctrines, showing how hyperspace can be used to provide answers to many problems, such as the problem of the best world, the problem of evil, the virgin birth, miracles, and a number of other things (2005, 163–204). Given this he claims that Christians in particular may have 'reasonable grounds for endorsing the hypothesis of hyperspace by way of inference to the best explanation.' (2005, 184) This type of argument might be further strengthened by Stump (2018, 120), who has employed the Flatland analogy to explain how God's eternity encompasses all worldly time, and Wilkinson, who explicitly makes use of higher dimensions so to model God's relationship with time (2010, 115–135). Additionally, what I say in the remainder of the paper will further add to the utility of hyperspace for Christians, and therefore will give those who believe in inaugurated eschatology further reason to embrace it.

Return now to thinking about the Temple. Recall Wright's claim that if you are in the Temple, you are in heaven. How is hyperspace meant to help? This might depend on what you take to be possible in hyperspace scenarios. Here are three different possibilities.<sup>14</sup>

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by one count). (1994, viii) Whilst Rucker claims that, 'The fourth dimension is part and parcel of many respected scientific theories'. (2014, 3; Pickover 1999, xi)

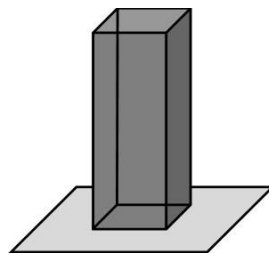
<sup>12</sup> I take this to be metaphysically possible. Some warrant for this is that it seems to be allowed in *Flatland*, and also some scientific theories allow certain particles and other forces, such as gravity, to cross and interact with other spatial dimensions (Randall, 2019). Nonetheless, I do note that it's unclear whether current scientific theories that postulate multiple spatial dimensions can mediate causal connections between macroscopic events.

<sup>13</sup> Again, this possibility is illustrated in *Flatland* and in Hudson (2005, 204).

<sup>14</sup> It is a virtue to be honest, so I am honest here. Leftow, when talking about his work on perfect being theology, at one point writes, 'I have a nagging fear that I am just making stuff up.' (2012, 12) Sometimes when thinking about some of these hyperspace models that I will propose, I have a similar fear. I give them anyway, and just as it is up to the reader to determine whether Leftow is just making stuff up, I leave it up to the reader to determine whether I am.

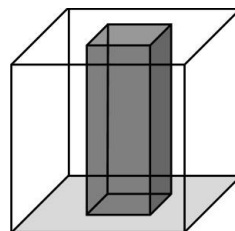
To start, suppose that heaven has a spatial location, however the dimension it inhabits differs from the three we are aware of and typically inhabit.<sup>15</sup> When God comes to indwell the Temple, He creates this extra heavenly spatial dimension such that it only encompasses the location of the Temple. As such we can say that every place other than where the Temple is located has only  $x, y, z$  spatial co-ordinates, whereas the Temple has  $x, y, z, q$  spatial co-ordinates. Thinking about this in terms of 2-space and 3-space, it would be like a flat 2-space plane, representing the whole world, which also had a strange feature, namely having specific 3-space region, where the Temple is located on the 2-space plane.

**Model 1:**



Here is a second model. This time we can say that there is a 4-space but only some 3-space objects participate in it. Here we have an analogue to the Flatland story where the 3-spacer, whilst participating in 2-space also participates in the third dimension, whilst the flatlander, until being transferred, only participates in two of the 3-dimensions (Abbott 1884, ch.15-19). The 3-space encompasses the 2-space and is available to the threelander but not the flatlander.<sup>16</sup> In terms of the Temple, we can say that only the Temple participates in 4-space, where we can think of the fourth dimension as the heavenly dimension, whilst everything else in the world only participates in 3-space.

**Model 2:**



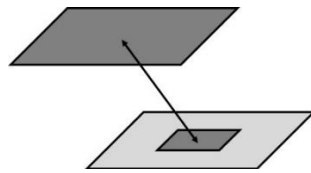
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<sup>15</sup> I make no commitment as to how many extra dimensions in total there are or how many heaven has.

<sup>16</sup> I take it that Stump and Wilkinson think something like this is the case when thinking about God's relation to our worldly time. Our world is part of an extra dimension, eternity, but only God participates in this extra dimension even though it encompasses all our dimensions.

A final model says that heavenly space is wholly isolated from our worldly space but that God creates a continual symmetric causal connection between this heavenly space and our space in the place where the Temple is located.<sup>17</sup> What's important to note here is that this causal connection does not extend beyond the place where the Temple is, since if it did we would have to claim that heaven and earth overlap more significantly. Also note that on this picture, when a person is in the Temple that person is not in heaven, per se, rather they are only in the place where heaven continually and specially causally interacts with earth. However, perhaps we could loosen our talk of locatedness and say that causal action is enough to say that something is present in that place, even though it will be present in a weaker sense than in the previous two models.<sup>18</sup>

### Model 3:



Although one might be partial to some of these models, I can imagine someone responding as follows: Why on earth think of heaven in terms of a dimension? Other than its usefulness, which seems to be one reason Hudson gives for adopting this view (2005, 184–188), my answer is very simple. I adopt this position since it's how a number of biblical scholars claim, albeit very briefly, we should understand what heaven is given the biblical text. This isn't to say that quotes from biblical texts are usually provided, since they are not, but rather that biblical scholars think that their familiarity with the text and the wider context in which they were written, gives them reason to think that it's highly likely that this is how heaven was understood. As such, New Testament scholars frequently describe heaven in terms of another dimension (Barker 1991, 58–62; Beale 2011,

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<sup>17</sup> It needs to be symmetric since if it was asymmetric with the direction of causation going from the heavenly dimension to the earthly one, we would only have heaven on earth, and not some 'thing' on earth in heaven. Whilst it might be less problematic, it won't give us the result we will need later on in the paper.

<sup>18</sup> It seems many within philosophy of religion should grant something like this as omnipresence, how God is present everywhere, is often thought of in terms of causal action rather than spatial location.

144, 238, 287, 628, 919; Lincoln 1981; Wright 2007, 126–128; 2016, 175–176).<sup>19</sup> Wright is perhaps the most explicit about this, stating,

‘Heaven’ is, in fact, one of the most misused religious words around today, with the possible exception of the word ‘God’ itself. The biblical notion of heaven is not of a place far away ‘way beyond the blue’. Nor is it simply, as some have said in reaction to that older notion, a state of mind or heart which some people can attain here and now. Heaven is God’s space, which intersects with our space but transcends it. It is, if you like, a further dimension of our world, not a place far removed at one extreme of our world. (1994, 85)

Further, a hyperspace view of heaven also allows us to affirm other things Wright says, such as ‘God’s space and ours—heaven and earth, in other words — are, though very different, not far away from one another.’ (2007, 127) For we can say that the fourth spatial dimension is very different from the other three spatial dimensions, affirming Wright’s first point, and can also agree with the second, since we can claim that the extra dimension is arbitrarily close to our world (Hudson 2005, 187). That hyperspace allows for this provides us with a further benefit of the theory.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, so to be generous to those who don’t like the view that heaven is another dimension, and instead perhaps think of it as somehow being located somewhere in our three-dimensional space, let me offer a suggestion as to how one might be able to make sense of the Temple, and provide the tools to translate much of what I say in the remainder of the paper into a non-hyperspace view. The thought here is that Pruss’s (2009, 523–526) use of bending space, that he employed to explain how Christ’s body could be present in more than one location at the eucharist, could also do the work we require here and for what’s to come.<sup>21</sup> Thus through employing the notion of a quotient space, where this construction ‘identifies’ together points of the original space to form a new space’ (Pruss 2009, 525), Pruss writes that

Christ’s body would come to be present on the altar, then, in the sense that the points in the space just around the eucharistic host would come to be neighbors of points in heaven. It would become literally true that a little piece of heaven is on earth. The only thing one needs to do to form the quotient space is to have a

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<sup>19</sup> One might worry about saying that Heaven is spatial, yet this is something that at least some scholars seem to affirm. Thus Simon writes, ‘The Bible views Heaven and Earth as one world. If the earth is spatial, so is Heaven. If the earth is inhabited, so is Heaven.’ (1958, 126)

<sup>20</sup> Interestingly much of what Wright (2007, 126–128; 1994, 86; Beale 2011, 238) says about the ascension matches, or at least fits very well with the hyperspace explanation of it given by Hudson (2005, 202–204).

<sup>21</sup> At least it appears to me *prima facie* possible.

one-to-one correspondence between each set of points where a wafer is before consecration and the points in Christ's heavenly body.' (2009, 526)

One can visualise how this works more easily by thinking of the world as two-dimensional, and conceiving of space being bent such that in my case, the location of heaven on the 2D plane lines up with the location of the temple, with them then being stuck together.<sup>22</sup> Given this, the temple would be a little piece of heaven, or as Pruss puts it 'The Kingdom of Heaven would then be present among us in a more literal sense than one might have initially thought possible.' (2009, 526)<sup>23</sup> As such, it seems we have another account which at least *prima facie* appears to be able to translate much of what I say in the following sections into this way of thinking.

Our time with the Temple is over, and now we can take the lessons learned so to look at my primary concern in this paper, namely inaugurated eschatology as it pertains to persons and creation.

### 3. Inaugurated Persons

Revelation 21 is the climax of the biblical narrative, where God recreates or restores heaven and earth,<sup>24</sup> and His people dwell in a place where there is no Temple building since God specially dwells everywhere. This conclusion brings to completion the mission given to the first humans in Genesis, since it is thought by numerous interpreters that a primary role of Adam and Eve was to extend God's special presence beyond Eden into the whole of the earth (Walton 2001, 186; Beale 2011, 621–622; Middleton 2014, 48–49; Kline 2017, 190–191).<sup>25</sup> Given this understanding it's easy to see why Alexander claims that 'Although it may not be immediately apparent, the theme of God's presence on the earth is especially significant for understanding the biblical meta-story.' (2008, 14–15) Revelation 21 is therefore a vision of a fully realised eschatology, where God shall be all in all (Leese 2018, 88; Wright 2005, 150, 174; 2007, 112). It is something for the future. Inaugurated eschatology, by contrast, is taken by many scholars to be what is the case at present, holding that some aspects of realised eschatology are currently present, but by no means all. The new era has begun, but not all the

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<sup>22</sup> Pruss notes that a little more work will need to be done for 3-space, but he thinks this is possible (2009, 525).

<sup>23</sup> It would be maybe more literal compared to how many philosophers think about it, but perhaps not any more literal than the way many biblical scholars think about it.

<sup>24</sup> Biblical scholars disagree as to whether we should understand this as a destruction of the old heavens and earth with God creating new ones, or if this language should be more thought of as implying restoration of both the heavens and earth.

<sup>25</sup> Even if one does not take Adam and Eve literally, one can still understand this as a truth about humans, that one of their roles was to extend God's presence.

items on the agenda have been realised yet. As such, the popular phrase 'now but not yet' or 'already but not yet', is a helpful way to describe inaugurated eschatology.

One place where there is regular talk of 'now but not yet' concerns Christian believers, since many New Testament texts stress that something significant happens to these persons when they convert and are filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> This is the 'now', yet the biblical text is also clear that there is also a 'not yet' part of believers, that is their eschatological transformation is by no means complete. Here I shall concern myself with providing models as to how to understand the 'now' eschatological aspects that biblical scholars often point out. For instance, how can we explain the common thread in the following statements:

Each saint is to act like the "new man" of the new age that has penetrated from the future dimension into the present, not like the "old man" of the sinful, old age that is passing away. (Beale 2011, 287)

The context makes clear that the Christ event has brought about a radical delineation of one 'world' from another and that through crucifixion, Paul (and through inference, all believers) has been transferred into a new reality. (Leese 2018, 56)

The church that is described as God's temple in Ephesians 2:19–22 is a heavenly, rather than local, assembly. Earlier in the chapter, the readers are numbered amongst those whom God has, even now, 'raised up with Christ and seated ... with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (2:6; cf. Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 12:22–24). This is a vivid way of speaking about the realization of eschatological realities for those who are in Christ. Christian believers have experienced God's power and salvation 'in the heavenly realms in Christ' (1:3) and are *already assembled with him there*. (Peterson 2004, 168)

The common thread I will be interested in is providing a metaphysical model as to how a believer somehow penetrates/is transferred/or assembled in some type of reality which they were not in before. The models that I give will rely on hyperspace in much the same way as I used it above. One reason for this is as follows. Believers are said to be the Temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:6–17), so much of what was said of the Temple is likely now to be able to be said of believers.<sup>27</sup> As such we can now say that it's the believer who exists in all the dimensions, including the heavenly 4-space, rather than the Temple building.

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<sup>26</sup> Jesus's action of breathing on the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit is meant to show that the Holy Spirit changes the believers significantly (John 20:22), with Jesus's breathing mirroring God's breathing life into humans in Genesis (Wright 2013a, 21–22).

<sup>27</sup> Biblical scholar Fletcher–Louis seems to make this point whilst also noticing a shift in New Testament theology when writing, 'a defining feature of New Testament theology: sacred *space* is overtaken by sacred *person(s)*.' (2004, 98)

They have therefore ‘penetrated’ this dimension, having been ‘transferred into a new reality’, and therefore can be ‘seated’ and ‘assembled’ in the heavenly realms.<sup>28</sup> I now explain this in terms of the three models I gave above.

On the first type of model, God creates a fourth dimension, the heavenly dimension, at every place where there is a believer. Further, this dimension is linked to the believer, so it matches their location at every moment. That is, whereas the Temple’s fourth dimension was built on top of a static point on the three-dimensional space, this is not. Thinking about this in terms of Flatland and threeland, anywhere there is a believer, who is a flatlander in this analogy, there is a three-dimensional object on their location that moves with them. The heavenly dimension can be thought to grow on this model, since every time there is a new believer God can be thought to create a 4-space for them.<sup>29</sup> However, at least one niggle with this view is the following. Before the first Temple was destroyed God was said to leave the Temple (Ezekiel 10). What then happened to the heavenly dimension? One option would be to say that God destroyed this dimension. I don’t think by saying this we should think that this means that God destroyed Himself just because He is present throughout the heavenly dimension, since we also shouldn’t say the parallel, that God destroys Himself, or part of Himself, if He were to annihilate the earth even though He is present throughout in all our 3-space. God could then just re-create a heavenly dimension when it is needed again. But something just seems wrong about this type of view. After all, if Heaven is God’s space (Wright 1994, 85; 2007, 127), why would He destroy His space?<sup>30</sup> Another option might be to say that when God left the Temple He completely de-couples the heavenly dimension from our three-dimensional world, should that be possible, or perhaps instead He just chooses an arbitrary point in our three-dimensional world to move it to. These latter stories might work to provide an explanation of this data, but I must admit to being a little ill at ease with them.

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<sup>28</sup> The models I give may also explain certain claims about worship that scholars make, namely that ‘when we worship here on earth, we are actually participating in heavenly worship.’ (Gladd & Harmon 2016, 126; Beale 1999, 323)

<sup>29</sup> On this view 4-space thus grows in size, with the more believers there are the bigger the size. This shouldn’t be too problematic, since on a growing block of reality it seems that dimensions also grow and this is rarely objected to. Alternatively, maybe instead of thinking about this dimension growing in size, we can think of it as a geometrical axis. This would mean that talk of heaven growing would be an in apt description of what is happening here. Rather, there would just be more ‘stuff’ located within this axis.

<sup>30</sup> When biblical scholars say heaven is God’s space, what should they mean? I leave that for future work. Here I take it at face value, given the types of things biblical scholars say, and think of it as similar to our space. Yet it will be important to think about the relations of dependence between God and His space, since we may have philosophical reasons to think that God should not and does not depend on space in anyway.

Turn now to the third model that I gave above, which holds that heaven is an isolated space which has continuous symmetric causal connections with our three space. Whereas before these connections were between the heavenly realm and the location of the Temple, this time they are between the believer and the heavenly realm. It may well be that for every believer God creates a new causal connection such that they are linked with the heavenly dimension. A question might be asked as to what the causal relata are in these causal connections? The first is obvious, it will be the temple, believer, or other object that is in 3-space. The other causal relata may be less obvious. One suggestion would be to think that if one adopts a substantivalist view of space then this can stand in causal relations.<sup>31</sup> Tooley has argued for this possibility in more detail elsewhere (1997, 258–264), but *prima facie* it seems to me that if one adopts either a theory of ‘spatial qualities’, where ‘places are fundamental properties of qualities and location is a predication’ (Koons & Pickavance 2017, 375), or ‘spatial particularism’ where ‘places are ordinary particulars (not properties or qualities, and *location* is an external relation between fundamental particulars’ (Koons & Pickavance 2017, 375), then space can stand in causal relations. Yet, there are other philosophers who would seem to reject this type of view, thinking it peculiar to claim that substantial spacetime is causal (Slowik 2005, 157).<sup>32</sup> As such, I suggest for them that the relata in the heavenly realm is something that exists in this location. What exactly that will be I’m unsure of, perhaps it will be the job of biblical scholars to determine. For now, let us just, as a placeholder, say that it is the main throne room of God (Revelation 4), which seems as suitable an object as any. This view therefore would say that when God left the Temple all that happened was that God destroyed the causal connections between the heavenly dimension, in one of the ways of understanding this just given, and the Temple, with the heavenly realm existing independently from our 3-space. However once there were believers, God then created causal connections between them and the heavenly realm. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this account has a hard time giving a more literal account of a believer ‘penetrating’, or being ‘transferred to’, or ‘seated’ and ‘assembled’ in the heavenly dimension, as causal relations seem insufficient for this.

Finally, consider the second model given above. This type of account seems to provide answers to the worries I had with the previous two models. On this view the whole world is contained in 4-space but we humans only participate in 3-space, much like the flatlander who only participates in 2-space in a 3-space world. As we saw above, at one moment in history it was just the Temple that

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<sup>31</sup> I earlier said that you may be able to translate what I say in this paper into a relationalist view of spacetime, however it should be obvious that what I say here relies on substantivalism and insofar as it does, what I say here cannot be translated.

<sup>32</sup> See also Slowik’s endnote 7 and 8 (2005, 164).

participated in the 4-space, with everything else only participating in 3-space. However, to model inaugurated eschatology regarding persons we can say that it is now believers who participate in 4-space, not the Temple. That is, when one becomes a believer God performs the same trick the threelander performed on the flatlander and moves them into another plane of reality, such that the world they participate in is enlarged. On this view we don't need to worry about what happens to the heavenly realm when God leaves the Temple, since this will just mirror what the threelander does to the flatlander when he moves him back from 3-space into 2-space, removing the flatlander's access into this 3rd dimension. Hence, God just removes the access the Temple had with the heavenly dimension, such that nothing created participates in this fourth dimension, other than perhaps heavenly beings.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, it's easy for God to have believers participate in this heavenly dimension, as this dimension never disappears, and all God needs to do is move them there. There is thus no need for God to create this dimension again nor extend it in size. Additionally, we can also make sense of all the language used above, namely 'penetrating', being 'transferred to', 'seated' and 'assembled' in the heavenly places in a spatial way, which I take to be the *prima facie* way of understanding what these words are referring to.

Nevertheless, a question might arise. In Flatland, the flatlander, when in 3-space, is aware of this third dimension, so why aren't believers aware of this fourth dimension when they come to participate in it? One response would be to claim that some believers do at least suggest they are aware of a heavenly dimension. Yet, even if some do, something I am sceptical of, it is not typically taken to be continual awareness and this awareness is not had by many believers. As such, we should think of different options. Another thing we might say is that the lack awareness of this heavenly dimension is an aspect of the 'not yet' part of inaugurated eschatology. Perhaps it is only when believers receive their new and transformed bodies in the resurrection that they will then be able to perceive this dimension (1 Corinthians 15:35–58).<sup>34</sup> Further, we might be able to come up with plausible reasons why God wouldn't give believers the ability to perceive the heavenly dimension at present. For perhaps God is more interested in believers carrying out their role in 3-space, and knows that if He were to give them

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<sup>33</sup> Hudson (2005, 193–195) provides a nice brief discussion of this topic

<sup>34</sup> Note that the objection to extra dimensions based on our being unable to perceive them, shouldn't be thought of as a very strong objection. Whilst it may give us some evidence against their reality, it is weak evidence. As such I take it that the theoretical reasons these dimensions are posited, both by scientists and philosophers, are strong enough to overcome this evidence. Further, I think those who claim there are theological reasons for positing extra dimensions, are also able to overcome worries based on lack of perceivability.

perceptual access into 4-space they would become distracted and so wouldn't fulfil their role of bringing God's kingdom to earth.<sup>35</sup>

A final worry that is related concerns what believers, who also are present in the heavenly 4-space, are doing there and how they navigate it?<sup>36</sup> I suspect numerous answers could be given, but here's one. Perhaps every believer has incredible blindsight of the fourth dimension. This means believers perfectly respond to the sensory stimuli they are not consciously aware of. Perhaps this information is also subconsciously fed into the actions I perform in 3-space, such that when I move and do what I do here, I also move perfectly and do 'correct' things in 4-space. Given this possibility, this doesn't seem to me to be a significant worry.

With all that said, it seems that we have three potential ways of thinking about believers and the heavenly dimension, although each has its difficulties. At the very least, by identifying these models, future work can be done to debate how serious these difficulties are, and how fruitful these models will be for Christian theology.

#### 4. Inaugurated Creation

Nevertheless, there's more to be explained. This is because many biblical scholars think something has also happened to the whole of creation, such that it too can be in a state of 'now but not yet'.<sup>37</sup> Here the 'now' aspect has to do with creation being renewed, or at least has started to be renewed, in some way, with the 'not yet' referring to the culmination of this renewal.<sup>38</sup> Since I imagine thinking this will strike more of my readers as unwarranted, I will provide a flavour of the reasons why New Testament scholars think this, before proceeding to try and provide a way of understanding it.

In the New Testament writing of Paul we see used explicitly the language of 'new creation'. This has led to at least three recent book-length studies (Jackson 2010; Owens 2015; Leese 2018) so to investigate what Paul meant by this phrase,

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<sup>35</sup> Some of what is said here has some resemblance to Hudson's discussion about 'The Museum Curator Story' (2005, 174–181).

<sup>36</sup> For instance, if we take one of the quotes above literally, it seems believers need to be able to sit down in the heavenly realm, and presumably this would be in place where no one else was sitting.

<sup>37</sup> I note here that there are fewer who think creation has already been renewed in some way and to some extent when compared with those who think persons have been renewed in some way and to some extent. Nevertheless, it is by no means a minority position. There are further complications, in that how realised one's eschatology is can be thought of on a sliding scale and therefore there are many different options scholars can and do take.

<sup>38</sup> I didn't emphasise the newness of persons in the previous section, but persons too have a 'now' but 'not yet' component in terms of newness.

with each concluding that Paul uses this language to signify not only the renewal of humans, but also the renewal of the cosmos.<sup>39</sup> Thus Hays, commenting on Paul's letter to the Galatians writes, 'It is the *kosmos* that has been crucified, not merely Paul's perception of the *kosmos* ... A new reality has been brought into being that determines the destiny of the whole creation.' (2000, 344) As such, 'For Paul, exactly in line with Revelation and other early writings, the result of Jesus's achievement is a *new creation*, a new heaven-and-earth world' (Wright, 2016, 268). Nevertheless, despite this 'now' aspect of the renewed creation, there is also a 'not yet' component since creation is not wholly restored. Paul is also clear on this, with Wright commenting that 'Paul's specific contribution to this overarching narrative is to insist that the 'coming age' has already been inaugurated (though not yet completed) through Jesus.' (2013b, 477)

Turning to the gospels, it has been claimed that here too we see themes of creation's renewal. For instance, Matthew and John's gospels start with the theme of Genesis, thus hinting that a new creative work is about to begin.<sup>40</sup> Pennington for instance writes, 'Matthew's frequent use of Genesis, including the heaven and earth theme, is a key that Matthew wants us to understand the work of Jesus Christ as constituting a complement to the Genesis story, indeed a new creation.' (2008, 39) Whilst McDonough says of John that 'what is hinted at in the Synoptics comes into full view in John. The opening verses of John are a deft blend of creation and new creation, a revisioning of Genesis that both affirms the surface reading of the texts and probes its depths.' (2016, 7)

Arguably Jesus's miracles also point towards the new creation, with Beale writing,

Seen within the framework of the new creation, Christ's miracles of healing not only inaugurated the end-time kingdom but also signalled the beginning of the new creation, since the healings were a beginning reversal of the curse of the old, fallen world. The miracles were a sign of the inbreaking new creation, where people would be completely healed. (2011, 423; 1997, 29–30)

So too is the continual talk of the 'kingdom' in the gospels, with a number of scholars appearing to see this as inextricably linked to the theme of worldly new creation (Beale 1997, 25; Schreiner 2013, 564; Wright 2018).

There are also signs of these themes at Jesus's death. Firstly, once one understands what the Temple curtain symbolises, namely the whole of creation due to its embroidery (Barker 1991, 104–111; Fletcher–Louis 1997, 160–161, 164–

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<sup>39</sup> This contrasts an earlier study by Hubbard (2002), which argued that there is no cosmological significance of this phrase.

<sup>40</sup> Davies and Alison even suggest that for Matthew a possible usage of "genesis" is part of Matthew's title: the story of Jesus is a new creation.' (2004, 1; Fletcher–Louis 1997, 165–166)

165), it becomes clear to see that when the curtain is torn in two this symbolises some cataclysmic change that has happened to creation (Beale 2004, 189–191).<sup>41</sup> Matthew further emphasises this when he tells us that the earth shook, rocks were split and bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised (Matthew 27:51–52 NRSV). John makes it clear that new creation has begun in another way, through the use of days within his gospel and his emphasis that Jesus's resurrection occurs on the first day of the week (John 20:1, 19). As Brown writes, 'this emphasis moved beyond the story level to communicate *theologically* that a new week has begun ... Genesis 2:2–3 indicates that after six days of creative work, God rests on the seventh day. John turns the clock ahead ... thereby signifying that re-creation begins at the resurrection of Jesus.' (2010, 283; Wright 2003, 440, 669) Given this and a host of other reasons, Brown concludes that the theme of creation and its renewal is woven into the fabric of the fourth gospel (2010, 290).<sup>42</sup>

As such, biblical scholars think there is much evidence that should lead us to think that the whole of creation has been renewed in some way. Is there any indication as to what this renewal consists of? I think many scholars would answer yes, where the answer once again centres around the Temple. As noted previously, the Temple was the specific place where heaven and earth met in a specific location. The argument of the gospels, so say many New Testament scholars, is that through Jesus's death the place where heaven and earth meet has changed. That is the location of the Temple, or the need for the earthly physical Temple is no more. Thus Bird when summing up a key aspect of Mark's narrative writes, 'that the coming of Jesus has wrought a cataclysmic transformation in the relation between heaven and earth.' (2008, 58) Similarly Walton, when commenting on Luke's gospel, writes that it 'prepares for the fuller picture seen in Acts by portraying phenomena which show that heaven is entering the earthly realm to reclaim the world for its Creator.' (2008, 71) The result is that 'Jerusalem is no longer the navel of the world where heaven and earth are united and where God's presence is uniquely experienced. Heaven and earth have been reconciled cosmically and universally. ... Both are reunited, and the entire creation once again becomes ambiguously sacred and profane.' (Waetjen 1989, 238) What then seems to have changed in creation is that heaven and earth have joined together in some way, something that was always meant to be the case (Wright, 2013b, 97). The 'now' of the new creation, I take it, is therefore the fact that once again heaven and earth overlap, or at last can overlap, since what prevented them from

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<sup>41</sup> For more discussion on the significance of the curtain see Gurtner (2007).

<sup>42</sup> The resurrection arguably points to a renewed cosmos as well since as Wright notes, 'the Jews who believed in resurrection did so as one part of a larger belief in the renewal of the whole created order.' (1993, 332; 2003, 224; 2009, 84).

overlapping has been overcome on the cross through the work of Jesus. At least that is how the story goes.

How then are heaven and earth connected in a way different from before? Providing an account will allow us to answer those who think there is no 'now' aspect to the renewal of the creation,<sup>43</sup> and overcome a worry that leads some to reject this type of reading of the New Testament, namely in claiming that 'the grass is not any greener, the sunsets no more colorful than in pagan days' and therefore creation hasn't yet been renewed, with this showing inaugurated eschatology about creation is false (Reumann, 1973, 97–98).<sup>44</sup>

The first thing to say is that in my model believers and creation are both going to be related to the heavenly dimension in one of the three ways that I suggested above. As such you can substitute what I said about believers above and think instead about creation. I won't list these substitutions out in detail since they are fairly self-explanatory. Instead let me address some specific worries one might have with the account, with the first being raised by certain biblical scholars quoted in the previous paragraph, namely how we're to make sense of creation not appearing any different even though it has a new relationship with the heavenly realm.

One reply a metaphysician might give is that a lack of empirical detection, doesn't mean that the heavenly dimension isn't now related in a different way to creation. Only a strong empiricist will think this is *very* concerning, and Christians are typically not strong empiricists. Perhaps the concern instead is that we know what it is like for the heavenly dimension to be related to the earthly one, since this is what is supposed to have been the case in Eden and will be the case in Revelation 21, where God recreates/restores the whole earth. Yet it's clear that creation isn't currently as it's described in either of these cases. In reply, we might be able to claim that the relationship between Heaven and earth now is as it is in the Eden and Revelation 21 cases, but what is happening in 3-space, the world we humans perceive, differs from what happened in 3-space in both Eden and Revelation. That is, in our present 3-space there is still sin, death,<sup>45</sup> and evil, things that are lacking in both Eden and Revelation 21. Perhaps at present, creation does have new abilities or powers due to its new relationship to the heavenly 4-space, but these are masked or prevented from manifesting due to

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<sup>43</sup> Moo (2010, 58–59) seems to think that although new creation is cosmic in scope, the effect on the cosmos is a 'not yet' aspect of renewal.

<sup>44</sup> Murphy–O'Connor (1991, 60, n.46) seems to agree with this style of objection and denies that the new creation is cosmic in scope.

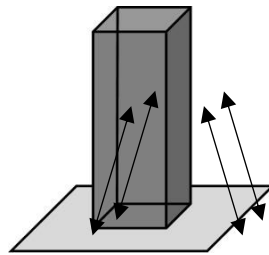
<sup>45</sup> Depending on one's view, one might want to restrict what death here refers to, since many will allow certain types of death in Eden, e.g. plants, individual cells, etc., but not all kinds of death.

the present goes on in the 3-space.<sup>46</sup> These may only have the ability to manifest once the sinful occurrences in 3-space are overcome, in the final recreation/restoration of earth (Revelation 21:1). Much of what I've said here might also apply to believers, in that they too, in being related in some way to the heavenly realm, may have powers or abilities which fail to manifest due to sin. As such, it seems we can overcome this type of objection.

Here is a second concern. If the heavenly dimension relates to the whole of creation in the same way as it relates to believers, then non-believers also seem to be related to the heavenly dimension in the same way as believers, since they themselves are parts of creation. Yet surely this can't be right, since it seems to be that the biblical data suggests that it is only Christian believers who are related to the heavenly dimension in a special way. One suggestion here is that we restrict the domain of creation such that it doesn't include human beings, 'creation-minus'. Then we could say that creation-minus has a new relationship to heaven, and only those humans that are Christians also have this. Non-believers, on this view, would therefore not be so related, and would only have location in 3-space. However, this way of restricting the domain of creation may seem ad-hoc, since creation in other areas of Christian thought is taken to encompass all of reality that is not God. I think we could claim that this case is different, given the biblical data we are trying to explain, and that perhaps we could restrict creation. However, here is another model that avoids making this restriction.

This time suppose that heaven's relationship to believers is as it is in model one. Yet instead of thinking that heaven's relationship to the rest of creation mirrors this, perhaps we can say that it is how it is in model three.

#### Model 4



The thought here is that there are two different ways to relate to the heavenly dimension, with one by being present in this dimension and the other through having a causal connection with this dimension. Is this possible? I don't see why not. By doing this, we might be able to say that there are different relationships

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<sup>46</sup> This would be an explanation in line with the 'now' and 'not yet' aspects of inaugurated eschatology.

to the heavenly dimension which come in different strengths. So perhaps, contra what I said previously, we claim that causal relations are insufficient for locatedness, and therefore the whole of creation has a weaker relationship to the heavenly dimension than Christian believers, since they can be said to be located in heaven. Nonetheless, the whole of creation is related to heaven in a new way, with this encompassing also non-believers as well. This may also make sense of the fact that whilst New Testament scholars do speak of all of creation having a new relationship to heaven, it doesn't seem to be the same as how believers relate to heaven. There will be the problem of non-believers also being in some sense related to heaven, but perhaps if its relationship is of the same type of creation this worry is mitigated, since after all they are 'parts' of creation. Maybe the worry here is that sin, in some way, will be related to heaven, and this cannot be. Whilst I appreciate this concern, it will also be one that will need to be answered for believers, who are currently located in the heavenly 4-space, since they too sin. What are we to say about Grace the believer, who although rarely sins, still does on occasions. Does she vacate the heavenly dimension during this sinful act, or does the sin somehow only occur in the 3-space, such that it doesn't at all affect the heavenly dimension? These are all good questions, but they will have to await discussion in future work. Nevertheless, given what I've said here I hope to have provided some models, or some suggestions for thinking about constructing models, to account for what biblical scholars claim regarding inaugurated eschatology.

## Conclusion

This paper has started to explore one way in which we might model the metaphysics of inaugurated eschatology, a position that is popular within biblical scholarship. There are many further questions which need to be addressed to further this model, such as how to best account for the relationship between heaven and earth in Eden and Revelation 21–22 and whether these are the same or different, why we cannot currently 'access' these dimensions,<sup>47</sup> to explicate the 'not yet' feature of these proposals more thoroughly, whether and how sin affects the heavenly dimension, if the categories employed need to be more fine-grained than my coarse-grained categories of believers and creation, and whether sense can be made of degreed relationships between different spatial dimensions. Additionally, it will be worth exploring whether other ways of formulating hyperspace models of inaugurated eschatology will be more informative, or if non-hyperspace models fare better. Yet answering these questions will require further papers, and additional philosophers to work on such a task. For the

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<sup>47</sup> Hudson has something to say something about this (2005, 187–188).

moment, I hope to have removed some of the ‘craziness’ that may have surrounded the doctrine of inaugurated hyperspace,<sup>48</sup> or at least shown how some crazy metaphysics can help explain this seemingly crazy doctrine.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> I don’t think that because a view seems crazy, one should not hold to it, since one might think of craziness as Schwitzgebel does, where ‘a position is “crazy” in the intended sense if it is contrary to common sense and we are not epistemically compelled to believe it.’ (2014, 665)

<sup>49</sup> I’m not all that concerned about crazy metaphysical theories, after all, as Hudson writes, ‘It is a common but almost never compelling critique to accuse someone of holding a crazy metaphysics. That is scarcely alarming ... *metaphysics is a crazy business.*’ (2014, 15; Schwitzgebel, 2014, 665)

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