

The Testimony of God

I. INTRODUCTION & GENTILE ARROGANCE

A. Gentile arrogance

²⁰ **Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble.** ²¹ **For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.** ²² **Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.** ²³ **And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.** ²⁴ **After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!** ²⁵ **I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,** ²⁶ **and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.** ²⁷ **And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”** (Ro 11:20–27 NIV)

B. Realized eschatology

¹⁶ **Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.** ¹⁷ **Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,** ¹⁸ **who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.** (2 Ti 2:16–18 NIV)

II. HISTORICAL NATURE OF TRUTH

A. The Truth of God

¹⁸ **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,** ¹⁹ **because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.** ²⁰ **For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** ²¹ **For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.** ²² **Professing to be wise, they became fools,** ²³ **and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.** ²⁴ **Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.** ²⁵ **For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.** (Ro 1:18–25 NASB95)

⁸ **For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,** (Ro 15:8 NASB95)

B. The transmission of the truth by means of faithful witnesses

¹ God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (Heb 1:1–2 NKJV)

⁷ For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. ¹⁰ For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, (Tt 1:7–10 NASB95)

⁸ Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, ⁹ but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. (1 Ti 3:8–9 NASB95)

C. The early transmission of the original glory, curse, and hope of restoration

¹⁷ To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Ge 3:17–19 NIV)

- ²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. ²⁹ Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed." (Ge 5:28–29 NASB95)

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Ge 3:15 NIV)

- ²⁵ Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." (Ge 4:25 NASB95)
- ¹⁴ It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jud 14–15 NASB95)

D. The transmission at Sinai

³ Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel..." ⁷ So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. (Ex 19:3–7 NIV)

³ When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." ⁴ Moses then wrote down

everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. (Ex 24:3–4 NIV)

¹ “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ² “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. (Dt 4:1–2 NASB95)

¹⁹ “Now write down this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them. ²⁰ When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their ancestors, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant. ²¹ And when many disasters and calamities come on them, this song will testify against them, because it will not be forgotten by their descendants. I know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath.” (Dt 31:19–21 NIV)

E. The transmission by means of Apostolic witnesses

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Mt 28:18–20 NIV)

² Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. (1 Co 11:2 NASB95)

¹⁵ So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. (2 Th 2:15 NASB95)

⁶ As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message... ⁹ James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. (Ga 2:4–9 NIV)

³ Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. ⁴ For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. (Jud 3–4 NIV)

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is

the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ **All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.** (Ac 10:39–43 NIV)

¹⁶ **For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** ¹⁷ **He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”** ¹⁸ **We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.** ¹⁹ **We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.** (2 Pe 1:16–19 NIV)

III. GNOSTIC/PAGAN NATURE OF TRUTH

A. Gnosticism as rejection of the Apostolic witness

But when the sacred band of the Apostles and the generation of those to whom it had been vouchsafed to hear with their own ears the divine wisdom had reached the several ends of their lives, then the federation of godless error took its beginning through the deceit of false teachers who, seeing that none of the Apostles still remained, barefacedly tried against the preaching of the truth the counter-proclamation of ‘knowledge falsely so-called.’ - Hegesippus (attributed to him by Eusebius, HE 3.32.8)

Those that wish to discern may observe the apostolic tradition made manifest in every church throughout the world. We can enumerate those who were appointed bishops in the churches by the Apostles and their successors down to our own day, who never taught, and never knew, absurdities such as these men produce. For if the Apostles had known hidden mysteries which they taught ‘the perfect’ in private and in secret, they would rather have committed them to those to whom they entrusted the churches...In the same order and succession the apostolic tradition in the church and the preaching of the truth has come down to our time. And this is the most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in faith. (Irenaeus Against Heresies, Bk 3, III, 1-4)

These are “the doctrines” of men and “of demons” produced for itching ears of the spirit of this world’s wisdom... Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy...the denial of the restoration of the body is taken from the aggregate school of all the philosophers... What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from “the porch of Solomon,” who had himself taught that “the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.” Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides. (Tertullian, Prescription Against Heretics 7 [ANF 3:246-47])

B. ‘Gnosis’ as secret esoteric knowledge vs. eye witness testimony of historical event

²⁰ O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” (Gk. ‘gnosis’) (1 Ti 6:20 NASB95)

These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down. And, he said, “whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death.” – Gospel of Thomas, Saying 1

Jesus said, “I disclose my mysteries to those [who are worthy] of [my] mysteries. – Gospel of Thomas, Saying 62

“Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom. It is possible for you to reach it, but you will grieve a great deal. [36] For someone else will replace you, in order that the twelve [disciples] may again come to completion with their god.” – The Gospel of Judas ¹

Those who were wise in their own estimation came to put him to the test. But he discredited them as empty-headed people. They hated him because they really were not wise men. After all these came also the little children, those who possess the knowledge of the Father. When they became strong they were taught the aspects of the Father's face. They came to know and they were known. They were glorified and they gave glory. In their heart, the living book of the Living was manifest, the book which was written in the thought and in the mind of the Father and, from before the foundation of the All, is in that incomprehensible part of him. – The Gospel of Truth ²

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PAGAN/GNOSTIC TRUTH

A. Dualism: The exaltation of the transcendent and the contempt for the physical

One never hides a thing of great value in a large vessel, but very often countless treasures are placed into a vessel worth an assarion. It is the same with the soul. Being a precious thing, it is placed in a contemptible body. – Gospel of Philip, 22 ³

His students said to him, When will the dead rest? When will the new world come? He said to them, What you look for has come but you do not know it. – The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 51

Beware that no one lead you astray, saying ‘Lo here!’ or ‘Lo there!’ For the Son of Man is within you. Follow after him! Those who seek him will find him. – Gospel of Mary 4:34

His disciples said, “When will the Kingdom come?” It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying here it is or there it is. Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth and men do not see it. – The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 113

Yeshua said, Whoever has come to know the world has discovered a carcass, and whoever has discovered a carcass, of that person the world is not worthy. – The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 56

¹ From the National Geographic translation of The Gospel of Judas, published in 2006, found here: http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/_pdf/GospelofJudas.pdf

² The Gospel of Truth, attributed to Valentinius, translated by Robert M. Grant, Early Christian Writings, 16 December 2015, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/gospeltruth.html>

³ The Gospel of Philip, translation by Vladimir Antonov Ed., Createspace (2008). 14

B. Salvation: Deliverance from ignorance by means of secret knowledge

These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down. And, he said, “whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death.” – Gospel of Thomas, Saying 1

When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty. – The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 3

What you seek after (is) within you. ~The Dialogue of the Savior

If you bring forth what is within you, what you have will save you. – Gospel of Thomas, Saying 70

V. ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL: PLATO VS. THE GNOSTICS

A. Alexandrian School: Plato vs. the Gnostics

“Clement and Origen’s shared concerns include a defense of the ecclesiastical tradition against the Gnostics on the basis of allegorical interpretation of the Bible and an eschatology in which God’s punishments are purificatory rather than retributive.” ⁴

“Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration. ‘For thy foot,’ it is said, ‘will not stumble, if thou refer what is good, whether belonging to the Greeks or to us, to Providence.’ For God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring ‘the Hellenic mind,’ as the law, the Hebrews, ‘to Christ.’ Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ.” (Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, Bk. I, Ch. V)

B. Origen’s appropriation of Dualism and Secret knowledge

“Reaction to Valentinianism so profoundly influenced Origen that Holger Strutwolf, in a recent monograph, can refer to Origen’s work as “the reception of Valentinian Gnosticism” into the mainstream of Christian thought. By this he means not that Origen was a Valentinian, but that, by a process involving both acceptance and rejection, he, in effect, appropriated and transformed Valentinianism.” ⁵

“Both authors (Clement and Origen) also distinguish between *simple Christians* motivated by fear and more advanced, spiritual Christians motivated no longer by fear but by love. The latter have a responsibility to guard certain advanced, secret doctrines from premature disclosure that would only harm the former. A fundamental division of Christians between what he termed a “simpler” majority and a minority who are genuinely “spiritual” would constitute a prominent feature of Origen’s thought” ⁶

⁴ Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen (The Early Church Fathers)*. London, Routledge, 1998, 9

⁵ Trigg, “Origen” 8-9

⁶ Trigg, “Origen” 10 (emphasis mine)

“And again he says, ‘We shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.’ [I Th. 4] We are therefore to suppose that the saints will remain there [in their progress to heaven] until they recognize the twofold mode of government in those things which are performed in the air... If any one indeed be pure in heart, and holy in mind, and more practiced in perception, he will, by making more rapid progress, quickly ascend to a place in the air, and reach the kingdom of heaven, through those mansions, so to speak, in the various places which the Greeks have termed spheres, i.e., globes, but which holy Scripture has called heavens.” (Origen, On First Principles 2.11)

“there is no thinker in the Church who is so invisibly all-present as Origen.” ⁷

“Origen’s influence was immense...through them and others Origen became the father of scriptural study and systematic theology in the Christian tradition.” ⁸

VI. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD

A. The Scriptures – A Hebrew Stewardship

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? ² Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. (Ro 3:1–2 NASB95)

³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, (Ro 9:3–4 NASB95)

- ***³ He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.”... I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” (Is 49:3-6 NASB95)***
- ***² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (Ge 12:2–3 NASB95)***

VII. WORLDVIEW ENTRUSTED TO THE SEED OF ABRAHAM: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

A. The Heavens – An expanse amidst the waters

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens (heb. ‘shamayim’, KJV ‘heaven’) and the earth. ² The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters...⁶ Then God said, “Let there be an expanse (heb. ‘raqia’) in the midst of the waters (heb. ‘mayim’), and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse heaven (heb. ‘shamayim’, NIV/NRSV/NLT ‘sky’)... (Gen 1:1-8 NASB)

⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origen Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, trans. Robert Daly, 1

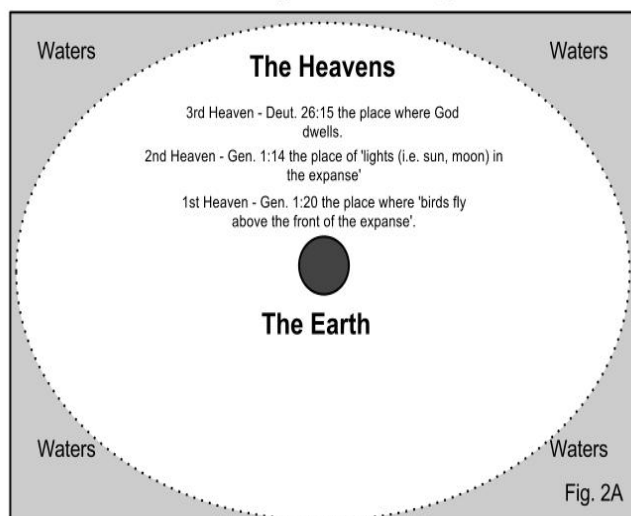
⁸ David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992), 5:47.

- B. The heavens are an expanse (*heb. 'raqia'*)⁹ which lies in the midst of the waters. (cf. Gen. 1:7; Job 9:8; Ps. 104:2; Is. 42:5; 44:24; 51:13; Jer. 10:12; Zech.12:1)

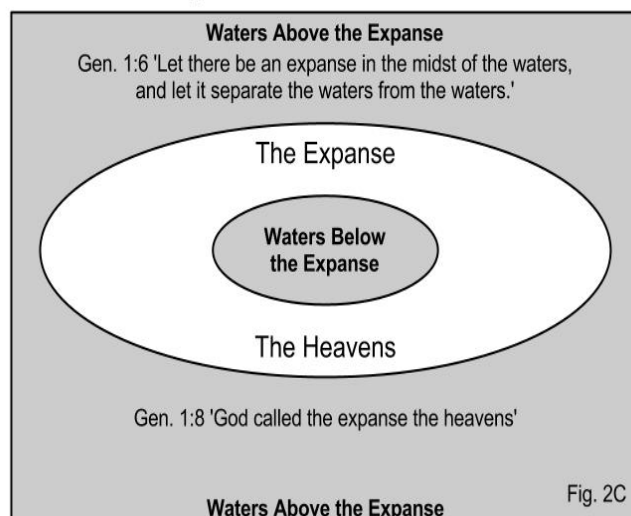
⁵ Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens (*heb. 'shamayim'*) and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it, (Isa 42:5 NASB)

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, ² Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven (*heb. 'shamayim'*) like a tent curtain. ³ He lays the beams (*heb. 'qarah', NLT 'rafters'*) of His upper chambers (*heb. 'aliyah'*) in the waters; ... (Psa 104:1-3 NASB)

Sum total of reality according to the Bible



The expanse amidst the waters



¹ Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! ² Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! ³ Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! ⁴ Praise Him, highest heavens (*heb. 'shamay - h'shamayim'*), And the waters that are above the heavens! ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. (Psa 148:1-5 NASB)

- C. The heavens are located geographically above the earth. (cf. Gen. 6:17; 7:19; 11:4; 28:12; Deut. 4:40; 11:21; 30:12; Jos. 2:11; 1 Ki. 8:22ff; 2 Chr. 7:1; Job 28:24; Ps. 50:4; 85:11; 113:6; Is. 14:12; 24:21; 44:23; 51:6; Jer. 10:11; Mt. 3:16; 28:2; Jn. 1:51; 3:13; 6:33ff; Acts 1:9ff; 7:55f; 10:11ff; Eph. 4:8ff; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 12:10ff; 18:1; 21:2)

⁹ The heavens are frequently described in figurative language as having windows (Gen 7:11; 2Kings 7:2...), gates (Gen 28:7), doors (Psa 78:23), pillars (Job 26:11), and foundations (2Sam 22:8). They are stretched out and spread out like a tent or a curtain (Isa 40:22). The use of such figurative language no more necessitates the adoption of a pagan cosmology than does the modern use of the term 'sunrise' imply astronomical ignorance... Thus a disobedient Israel would find the heavens to be like iron (Lev 26:19) or like bronze (Deut 28:23), not yielding the much-needed rain. Note that if the heavens were conceived of as a metallic vault, as is commonly suggested from Gen 1:8, 14 etc., the above passages would be meaningless, since the skies would already be metal. The word *raqia'* (q.v.) comes from the verb meaning 'to hammer out' and 'stretch (a piece of metal) out' as an overlay. It is the idea of spreading out that carries over to the noun, not the idea of a metallic substance. 'Expanse' is an acceptable translation." ("shamayim," TWOT, 2407a)

¹⁷ I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. (Gen 6:17 NIV)

³⁹ "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. (Deu 4:39 NASB)

¹ Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. (2Ch 7:1 NASB)

¹¹ They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Act 1:11 NASB)

D. The heavens (the 'shamayim') are the dwelling place of God.

¹⁵ 'Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel... (Deu 26:15 NASB)

³⁰ "Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive. (1Ki 8:30 NASB)

²¹ Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²² It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens (heb. 'shamayim') like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. ²³ He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. (Isa 40:21-23 NASB)

E. The Heavenly Temple (cf. Ps. 11:4; 28:2; 29:9; 96:6; Is. 6:1; Mic. 1:2; Hab. 2:20; Jon. 2:7; Heb. 8:2; 9:24; Rev. 11:19; 15:5ff)

⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. ... ¹² The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here"... ^{25:8} "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹ Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. (Exd 24:9-25:9 NIV)

- ³ Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. ⁴ The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. (Rev 8:3-4 NIV)**

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. (Hbr 9:24 NIV)

¹ In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵ Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. (Isa 6:1-6 NASB)

- F. The highest heavens. (cf. Deut. 10:14; 1 Ki. 8:27; 2 Chr. 2:6; 6:18; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:4)

¹⁴ "Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens (heb. shamay h'shamayim), the earth and all that is in it. (Deu 10:14 NASB)

¹⁵ For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place... (Isa 57:15 NASB)

² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven. (2Cr 12:2 NASB)

VIII. THE THRONE OF GOD IN THE HEAVENS

- A. God's throne in the highest heavens. (cf. 1 Ki. 22:19; 2 Ki. 19:15; Ps. 2:4; 103:19; 113:5; 123:1; Is. 6:1; 40:22; 63:15; 66:1; Jer. 17:12; Ez. 1:26ff; 10:1; Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2ff; 20:11)

¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. (Psa 103:19 ESV)

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. (Rev 4:2 NASB)

¹ A Song of Ascents. To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens! (Psa 123:1 NASB)

⁴ The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them. (Psa 11:4 NIV)

- B. Enthroned above the heavens and the earth.

² By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested (Heb. 'shabbot') on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. (Gen 2:2 NASB)

¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned (Heb. 'yashab') above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth (cf. Gen 11 – tower of Babel). You have made heaven and earth. (2Ki 19:15 NASB)

⁴ The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high, ⁶ Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth? (Psa 113:4-6 NASB)²¹ Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²² It is He who sits (Heb. ‘yashab’, NIV ‘enthroned’) above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. (Isa 40:21-22 NASB)

- C. The Powers in the Heavens (cf. Job 1:6f; Ps. 82:1ff; Is. 24:21; 34:5; Dan. 7:9ff; Eph. 1:10; 21; 3:10; 6:12; Phil. 2:10; Col. 1:16; Rev. 12:7ff; 14:6)

²¹ In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. ²² They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. ²³ The moon will be dismayed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders—with great glory. (Is 24:21–23 NIV)

- ²⁶ men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Lk 21:26 NASB95)

¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Col 1:16 NIV)

A PSALM OF ASAPH. ¹ God (heb. ‘elohim’) has taken his place in the divine council (lit. ‘the counsel of el’); in the midst of the gods (heb. ‘elohim’) he holds judgment: ² “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah ³ Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. ⁴ Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” ⁵ They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. ⁶ I said, “You are gods (heb. ‘elohim’), sons of the Most High, all of you; ⁷ nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.” ⁸ Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations! (Ps 82 ESV)

- ⁶ For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, ⁷ A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him? (Ps 89:6–7 NASB95)
- ⁵ For all the gods of the heathen are devils (Gk. ‘diamonios’): but the Lord made the heavens. (Ps 95:5 Brenton LXX En)

⁸ When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. ⁹ But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. (Dt 32:8–9 ESV)

- ⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 1:6 NASB95)

IX. HEAVEN AND TIME

- A. Time and eternity

“The word used to express eternity, αἰών (‘age’), is the same word that is also applied to a limited division of time; otherwise expressed, between what we call eternity and what we call time, that is between everlasting continuing time and limited time, the New Testament makes absolutely no difference in terminology. Eternity is the endless succession of the ages (αἰώνες)”¹⁰

B. Time and heaven

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Ge 1:1 NASB95)

¹ When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (Re 8:1 NASB95)

⁸ But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. (2 Pe 3:8 NASB95)

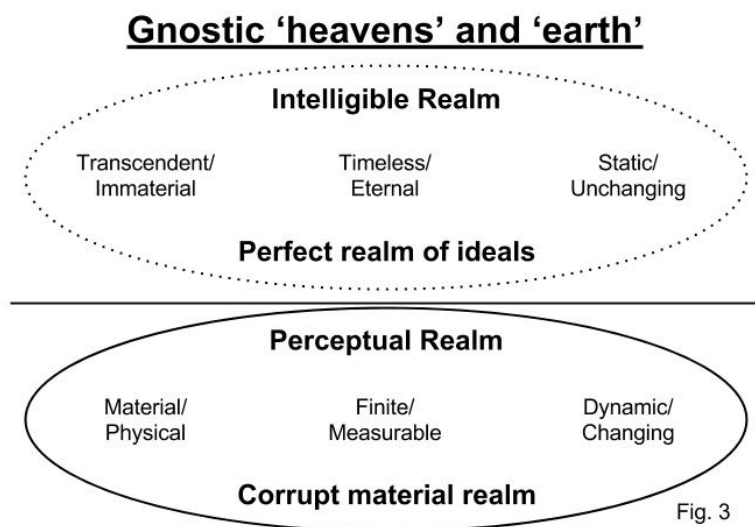
- **⁴ For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night. (Ps 90:4 NASB95)**

¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, ¹³ waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. (Heb 10:12–13 NASB95)

X. THE BEGINNING: PAGAN VS BIBLICAL

All Christian theology is dependent, to an extent at least, on contemporary Greek philosophy, primarily Platonism, but some Christian thinkers fall particularly strongly under Platonic influence, and properly merit the title of Christian Platonists.¹¹

A. Pagan Cosmology

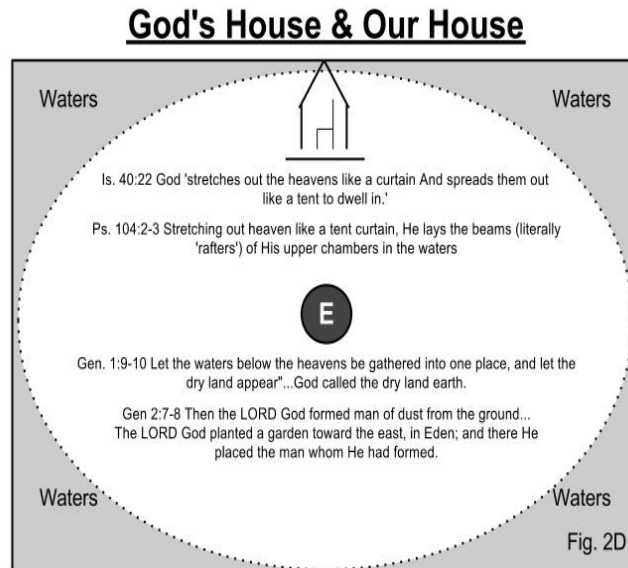


¹⁰ Oscar Cullman (Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History) Westminster 1950 Pg. 62

¹¹ David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Bible Dictionary (New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992), 5:380.

B. Biblical Tradition: The heavens and the earth

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1 NASB)



⁴⁵ “But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?” (Jn 5:45–47 NIV)

³¹ “But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’ ” (Lk 16:31 NASB95)

XI. THE END: PAGAN VS. BIBLICAL

A. Pagan salvation

“Origen clearly represents and develops a construction of the Christian faith in which eschatology has been swallowed up in an emphasis upon transcendence... “Heaven” as cosmographic place now occupies the central position once occupied by the eschatological kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching.” ¹²

Having sketched, then, so far as we could understand, these three opinions regarding the end of all things, and the supreme blessedness... we must suppose that an incorporeal existence is possible, after all things have become subject to Christ, and through Christ to God the Father, when God will be all and in all... then the bodily substance itself also being united to most pure and excellent spirits, and being changed into an ethereal condition in proportion to the quality or merits of those who assume it (according to the apostle’s words, “We also shall be changed”), will shine forth in splendor; or at least that when the fashion of those things which are seen passes away, and all corruption has been shaken off and cleansed away, and when the whole of the space occupied by this world, in which the spheres of the planets are said to

¹² Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton, *Jewish and Christian Doctrines* [Routledge, 2000], 183

be, has been left behind and beneath, then is reached the fixed abode of the pious and the good situated above that sphere, which is called non-wandering (ἀπλαινής), as in a good land, in a land of the living, which will be inherited by the meek and gentle... which is called truly and chiefly "heaven," in which heaven and earth, the end and perfection of all things, may be safely and most confidently placed. (Origen, On First Principles 2.3.7)

B. Biblical Salvation

*"Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, godless, and foolish... For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines delivered by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this truth, and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians... But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare."*¹³

¹³ Justin Martyr (103-165), *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 80