

LUNDS UNIVERSITETS ÅRSSKRIFT. N. F. Avd. 1. Bd 29. Nr 6.

**THE VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE
IN THE EPISTLE TO
THE EPHESIANS**

BY

HUGO ODEBERG

LUND
C. W. K. GLEERUP

LUND

PRINTED BY HÅKAN OHLSSON

1934

For the notions of the structure of the universe the passages primarily to be considered are the following.

1³. »Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings *in heavenly places* (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) in Christ.»

1¹⁰. »That he might gather together in one *all things* in Christ (τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ) both which are *in heaven* and which are *on earth* (τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς).

1²⁰. »... in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) ²¹ far above all principality (ἀρχή) and power (ἐξουσία) and might (δύναμις) and dominion (κυριότης) and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, ²² and hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things (κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα) to the church ²³ which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου).

2². »... according to the course of this world (κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), according to the prince of the power of the air (κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἄερος), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all had our conversation in times past ... 4⁶ But God ... hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).»

3⁹. »And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world (ἀπο τῶν αἰώνων) hath been hid in God, who created all things ¹⁰ to the intent that now unto the principalities (ἀρχαί) and powers (ἐξουσίαι) in heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.»

3¹⁴. »For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ¹⁵ of whom every family (παῖσα πατριά) in heaven and earth (ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς) is named.»

4⁶. »One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.»

4⁸. »Wherefore (the Scripture) saith, Gone up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men, ⁹ now, He went up on high, what is that but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth (τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς). ¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.»

6⁹. »... knowing that both their and your Master is in heavens (ἐν οὐρανοῖς). »

6¹². »For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (ἀρχαί), against powers (ἐξουσίαι), against the world-rulers (κοσμοκράτορες) of this darkness, against the spirit-world of evil (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας) in the heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις).»

The »Weltbild» presented by the passages quoted may perhaps first of all be characterised as anti-dualistic; it opposes itself to prevalent notions of a dualistic kind concerning the universe. There is only one God and he is Father of all »above all, through all, and in all» (4⁶). Of him »every family in heaven and earth is named» (3¹⁵) and he is the Creator of the whole universe (3⁹).

In this view of the universe there is no room for two principal, original powers; nor is there room for the idea of two spheres within one universe, mutually excluding each other and separated

from each other. The author lays stress on the fact that heavens and earth are connected with each other. Hence we may here notice a distinct difference between Ephesians and the Johannine literature. The Johannine interest in bringing out the complete exclusion of »this world«, with the beings belonging to it, from the world of the Spirit is in Ephesians replaced by an equally strong interest in showing that there is nothing constitutively or intrinsically separating the lower regions from the higher ones. The Johannine idea that the ruler of this world and those under him are unable to know or see the things belonging to the Divine world is here emphatically opposed by the statement »that now unto the principalities ... might be known ... the manifold wisdom of God« (3¹⁰).

The anti-dualistic tendency of Ephesians, hence, goes beyond that of the author of the Johannine literature. To the latter it is important to convey that the origin of the whole universe goes back to *one* agency: »all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made« (Jn 1³), but it is equally important to accentuate the absolute *other-ness* of the spiritual world. This from a religious interest, viz. to bring home to the reader the *reality* of the spiritual world. It is impossible to enter the world of the spirit, the kingdom of heaven, without being born into that world, as one must be born into this world in order to »come into the world«. His interest thus, is that of *religious realism*. And in accentuating the other-ness of the spiritual world from the earthly, or as we should say, physical world, he is opposing a contemporaneous idea of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven being vouchsafed merely through an external obedience to the Divine Will, or through external knowledge and possession of the Divine Word, or on account of membership of the chosen nation.

Turning to the interest behind the attitude of the author of the Ephesians, we shall find that the difference in attitude goes back

to an identity of interest. Ephesians does not join issue with Jn. The object is here also that of *religious realism*. This is perhaps most clearly apparent from 6¹². The author wishes to impress upon his readers that they are in the midst of a battle of a momentous character and in this battle they are face to face with powers and forces out of the whole universe, of both cosmical and spiritual character. Here is reality and earnest. The situation in which the Christian stands — the faithful saint — is not one to be described only in terms of earthly or mere human («blood and flesh») conditions, nor is it a life of new knowledge or thoughts about truths beyond earthly existence, but it is a contact, yea, a combat, with the realities themselves. »In the middle and heat of the universal battle«, that is the author's description of the believer's standing. But this view of necessity tends towards emphasizing the contiguity and coherence, rather than the disparity, of the universal powers and forces. In the church, as in one point, they are all focussed.

From what has been said already, it also appears that the »Weltbild« of Ephesians is *not static*. To abstract from the dynamic traits of the author's view of the universe, hence, necessarily involves a distortion. No part of the universe is left outside the dynamic scheme.

With due reserve for the impossibility of reproducing the Ephesianic view of the universe statically, the following scheme may be said to obtain. One speaks of higher and lower regions, the one above the other. The regions are connected with each other without any separating gulf of constitutive character. Above all the different regions, in the highest abode of the universe, is the dwelling-place proper of God, the Creator of the whole, who is, however, at the same time in and through all. In this highest abode Christ also has his place »at his own (God's) right hand«. Christ has been raised thither by God after his descent to the earth. Whether Christ before his descent had his place in this highest

abode, at God's right hand or in some lower region yet above that to which he descended is not to be decided with certainty from the material proffered by the text. Possibly the view may be the same as that of Phil. 2⁶⁻¹¹, the pre-existent Christ, accordingly, being in God's likeness as well as the risen Christ. But, on the other hand, although such a likeness or position of Christ is not explicitly denied, it is remarkable that the said elevated position of Christ is repeatedly spoken of and yet always as the result of Christ's descent and of his union with and unification of the Church. It would seem rather that such a view as that of Phil. 2⁶⁻¹¹ was not actual to the writer of Ephesians. In any case it does not seem to be intentionally opposed by him. A comparison with Col. 1^{15, 16} brings us face to face with the same uncertainty. There is nothing in Ephesians which goes positively counter to Col. 1¹⁵⁻¹⁷; on the other hand there is in our epistle no explicit mention of Christ's pre-existent place in the Celestial Hierarchy (apart from the general statement in 2⁸⁻¹⁰) nor of his function at the Creation. Of this more will have to be said in connection with the treatment of the christology of the epistle. Here it may suffice to lay down *that* Christ is explicitly stated to have his place above all the powers and various celestial regions of the universe after his ascent from earthly life and that also the final end of creation is that »God might gather together all things in Christ; but *that* the author is silent with regard to the pre-existent role of Christ, only that he clearly presupposes his pre-existence and his descent from higher regions to the earth. Further it has been made manifest that from a purely static point of view nothing definitely can be said of Christ's place in the Universe. Christ is the very centre of the Dynamic God-willed progress and change of the world towards a definite goal.

Turning next to the different regions and their arrangement and names we are brought up against an oft-recurring expression,

peculiar to Ephesians, viz. ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, rendered by A. V. »in heavenly places«.

It is a much-debated question, which should be regarded as the nominative form to the dative of the expression. The word »epouranios« not occurring in this epistle otherwise than in the said expression, it cannot be decided with any certainty whether the author intended the word as a masculine or a neuter, or even had any definite nominative form in view. The probability, however, rests with the opinion that the word is meant as a plural neuter, i. e. derived from τὰ ἐπουράνια. But what is meant by the expression?

As to the exact meaning of the expression, opinions have been divided mainly on the point whether the sense should be regarded as local or not. It should be noted that this is a different question from that of the gender of the word ἐπουράνιος. Both τὰ ἐπουράνια and οἱ ἐπουράνιοι have been interpreted as local terms and vice versa both as not local. In the former case τὰ ἐπουράνια is taken as a circumlocutory term *contenta pro continente*, οἱ ἐπουράνιοι, again, as short for οἱ ἐπουράνιοι τόποι in the latter case τὰ ἐπουράνια is interpreted in the same sense or similar sense as e. g. in Jn 3¹² Heb. 9²³ (the things pertaining to the heavens, celestial things, celestial conditons) and οἱ ἐπουράνιοι as in Phil. 2¹⁰ (the heavenly beings).

The first consideration to be made with a view to determining the meaning of the phrase is this: the word occurring only in the precise phrase in question, this phrase again recurring five times in the epistle, the expression most obviously must be regarded as stereotypical. And this stereotypical character of the phrase at least makes one thing certain, viz. that the word must have the same meaning in all passages of occurrence. It can not be taken as local in one passage and as relational or personal in another. Now it cannot be denied that the significance is, basically if not totally, determinative of space in 1²⁰, 2⁶ and 3¹⁰. Hence, it may

be concluded, the expression has in all five passages in the epistle a significance referring in some way to space. And from this it follows, so it would seem, that the expression, provided it has any meaning at all, must refer *either* to some definite parts or region of the universe *or* to the universe as a whole.

An examination of the relevant passages will soon convince us that the phrase cannot refer to some single definite part of the universe. Neither can it be stated to refer to some definite group of the celestial regions with the exclusion of other regions. In the ἐπουρανόις are God, Christ, the spiritual powers, the cosmical powers, the evil agencies. The highest as well as the lowest celestial regions are included in the ἐπουρανόις.

If so, the expression, it might perhaps be urged, should be interpreted as a general, inclusive term for the celestial region in their totality, for the celestial world. The expression would be identical in sense with »in the heavens«. It would then, with the last-named phrase, stand over against the expression »on earth«. Or it would be possible and expedient to adduce Phil. 2¹⁰: »that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven (ἐπουρανόων), of those on earth (ἐπιγείων) and of those in the underworld (καταχθονίων)»; or the contradistinction of ἐπουράνια and ἐπίγεια in Jn 3¹², of ἐπουράνιος and ἐπίγειος in 1 Cor 15⁴⁰. For this interpretation we might furthermore quote no less an authority than *e. g.* DIBELIUS who in his Commentary rules: »Für den Autor ad Eph gilt nur der einfache Sinn 'im Himmel', der aus 1²⁰ f. leicht zu gewinnen ist.«

On a closer examination, however, it becomes rather doubtful, whether ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανόις may be correctly defined as a mere equivalent to ἐν (τοῖς) οὐρανοῖς.

Firstly the simple rendering »in heaven« loses sight of the fact that the author clearly makes use of the phrase under debate as a peculiar expression, setting it off from the current and familiar use of οὐρανοί in different connections. The stereotypical,

unchanging use of ἐπουράνιος exclusively in the said phrase differs perceptibly from the varying and familiar use of οὐράνιος, no importance being ascribed to the phraseology of the expressions in which it occurs.

Secondly — and this is of greater consequence — we miss in Ephesians precisely the contraposition of ἐπουράνια and ἐπίγεια required by the supposed equivalence of ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις and ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. The former expression is on the whole nowhere used in contraposition to another expression, possibly with the one exception of 6¹², where it might be held to stand in contrast to »blood and flesh«, at least indirectly. But we shall see that this is a contrast exactly reverse to the contrast between ἐπουράνιος and ἐπίγειος. This is not a mere *argumentum e silentio*, since the contraposition of heavens and earth really occurs in the epistle; but in this case the term οὐράνιος, and not ἐπουράνιος is used: 1¹⁰, 3¹⁵ and especially 9¹⁰.

If the absence of a contrasting ἐπίγειος is intentional the question concerning the meaning of ἐπουράνιος in our epistle might perhaps be put a step further: does the expression possibly refer not only to all the celestial regions generally without any further local distinction but also to the terrestrial sphere? The seemingly absurd hypothesis that in Ephesians ἐπουράνιος includes that which elsewhere is expressed by that term *and* the term signifying its opposite viz. ἐπίγειος actually seems to find its support in the fact that earthly man, *scilicet* the believer, whereas expressly not in »heaven« (6⁹), already in his earthly life is in the midst of τὰ ἐπουράνια: 2⁶ (has waked us up with Him from the dead and placed us with Him in the ἐπουρανίοις) and 6¹². For it is evidently begging the question to regard 2⁶ as an anticipation and not as a real present, referring to the earthly conditions of the believers. This is even more apparent from a comparison with 1³ and following passages. The blessings conferred upon the believers are not something of the future to the exclusion of the pre-

sent. Neither are they on account of their being present exclusive of the thought of future fulfilment according to the Divine dispensation (οἰκονομία). Hence, we may conclude, the believer, according to Ephesians, is already now in his earthly life ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

Such a statement, now, immediately suggests an idea familiar in Christian thinking and especially in the interpretation of certain New Testament writings viz. that of a spiritualization of eschatology. Against the primitive or, as one is also wont to say, the Judaistic or Palestinian, fulfilment in a life to come, in a new age would stand a later introduced idea of individual entrance into the Divine World or possession of the Divine Life already in the present, an idea necessarily incompatible with the genuine eschatological view. The older idea being so rooted in tradition that it could not altogether be eradicated, there was thus evolved a combination of both ideas without possibility, however, of their being united in a real synthesis. As a classical example of such a preservation of the older ideas in a »spiritualized» view altogether incompatible with them one points with preference to Jn 5²⁴⁻²⁹. The present writer in commenting upon Jn 5²⁴⁻²⁹ has tried to show that the ideas of a present entrance into the Divine World and of a future consummation are not incompatible ideas from different origins, but belong together, constitutively and intrinsically, in a genuine experience of the Spiritual Reality. Even from a purely religio-historical point of view it is evident that the two ideas form intrinsic elements of Oriental thought long before the Christian era and hence that their combination cannot be regarded as a result of problems connected with the interpretation of facts of Christian history. It is necessary to enter at some length into a discussion of this question in order to evade falling into a similar error in the interpretation of the Weltbild of Ephesians.

Whence the notion that the two ideas in question are incompatible? This notion will be comprehended only from the introduc-

tion in the critic's thinking of a third and quite different idea from Greek philosophical thought, an idea which has become deeply rooted in our Western mind, viz. the idea of so-called eternal truths and eternal realities. With eternal, then, is meant, independent of time, without determination of time. Further, such eternal truths and realities are identified with spiritual truth and reality. The spiritual world itself being independent of the time-order, the idea of a present, individual entrance into the spiritual world would appear more compatible with a »spiritual« view than the eschatological idea of a future fulfilment within the Spiritual world. The former would appear to mean no more than that man took cognizance of, opened himself to, the Spiritual world, which latter then could through this cognizance be determinative of the individual's life, work a change in him, whereas the Spiritual world itself would in no way be changed or introduced into the time-order. The eschatological idea, again, would seem to involve a time-process within the eternal, timeless reality, a *contradictio in adjecto*. From this standpoint, then, the ideas in question are regarded as mutually exclusive. And through such an intellectual process, not on account of facts, the eschatological idea has been termed primitive. From this it was easy to proceed to construing an evolution within early Christian thought: Jesus and the first apostles, being unlearned and untrained in higher Greek thinking, living further in Palestine, incorrectly supposed to be immune to Hellenistic ideas, would naturally have primitive ideas. When therefore we meet with the more »spiritualized« idea, this is of necessity to be regarded as a later element.

With this contraposition of a supposedly primitive eschatological idea and a supposedly spiritualized conception of later origin one has then confused a wholly different process in the history of early Christian experience, viz. the change in the expectation of Christ's immediate *parousia*. Here it is quite correct to state that with the protracted expectation of Christ's second

coming, the spiritual experience of the faithful naturally was moved to concentrate more and more on Christ's actual presence in the Church as a source of encouragement and comfort and strengthening of faith. But such a concentration in no way necessitated a break with the belief in the final consummation in Christ, still less was thereby a new idea introduced which was constitutively counter to the earlier idea or experience of the faithful. Such a change is noticeable and generally acknowledged in the Pauline writings. In another connection the conceptions of Ephesians with regard to the *παρουσία* will have to be treated more fully. Here it shall only be agreed that the idea of the imminent *παρουσία* has fallen into the background, while at the same time the idea of the coming fulfilment through Christ is stressed to a degree not surpassed in any other New Testament writing.

Before, however, entering upon the question of the relation of our epistle to the idea of a present entrance during earthly life into the celestial, spiritual or eternal reality or the Divine world, another remark concerning the representation of this idea must be made. Under the influence of the kind of philosophical propensity sketched above, this idea has been construed in the direction of a false emphasizing of the individual aspect. This individualism has no real basis in the documents treated. Even when speaking in the singular, no N. T. writer depicts the individual's entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, or his being saved et sim., as »an affair between the individual alone and his God«. There is always a community aspect. There exists, one might say, no individual in the strict sense of the word, a personality wholly cut off and 'defined' from the greater whole. When a man is saved, he is not as an individual transformed into a new being, but he is taken out of a community of Sin or Darkness and made a member of, brought into, a new community of partakers of the Divine Life and *thereby* made a new man. This is the way, in which spi-

ritual experience in varying words depicts the attainment of the Divine. This community aspect, now, is in the Ephesians too apparent to require further demonstration.

Now, in Ephesians, it may rightly be maintained, there is indeed an idea of a participation under earthly conditions, during earthly life, in the Divine Reality. But the subject of this participation is the Church, the body of Christ. Living in the Church the faithful lives in Christ and thereby is »brought near» (ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς 2¹³).

When, therefore, it is said in 2⁶: »He has waked us up with Him and placed us with Him in the ἐπουρανόις in Christ Jesus», the question might be put, whether the ἐπουράνια should perhaps be interpreted as a term designating the whole of the Spiritual Reality, the Divine World, including not only the »heavens» but also that spiritual life, in which the Church partakes in its earthly conditions. Hereby a distinction had been found between the use of the two similar terms οὐρανοί and ἐπουράνια.

Such an interpretation may indeed be regarded as satisfactory, only that some qualifications must first be made in order to preclude a misunderstanding.

Firstly, τὰ ἐπουράνια must not be taken as equivalent with Divine Reality, Spiritual Realm, straight out. For with Spiritual Realm we are wont to associate the idea of a life wholly in accordance with the Divine Will. But we have already found that the ἐπουράνια include even the cosmical powers, and also that the author speaks of evil *spiritual* agencies, which latter likewise are located in the ἐπουράνια. The ἐπουράνια are decidedly not identical with the realm of Life, Light and Truth of Johannine terminology. Neither is the expression ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανόις synonymical with »in Christ Jesus» (2⁶).

Secondly, the vision of the spiritual situation which the author wants to express by the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανόις will be

best apprehended by focussing the first and last passage of occurrence together, viz. 1³ and 6¹². For in these two passages we meet with the two extreme poles of that spiritual situation. In the first passage the Church is said to possess every spiritual blessing in Christ in the ἐπουρανίους, in the last it is pictured as *in the* ἐπουρανίους being involved in a conflict of war with cosmical and evil *spiritual* powers of that realm. Spiritual blessing and cosmical and spiritual warfare are the consequences of the Church being ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίους.

These qualifications made, we may proceed one step further. Although ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίους is not equivalent with »in Christ«, yet it is closely bound up with it from the point of view of the Church. And it is in fact with reference to the Church that the expression is made use of. This might perhaps be stated thus: by being in Christ — the body of Christ — the Church is brought in contact with, brought into, exactly the realm, in which Christ is and in which he works. Thus the Church participates in the Divine blessings, is placed together with Christ Jesus in God's presence, is in and with Christ the medium of revelation of the Divine Mystery to all the cosmical powers, and participates in the universal warfare waged by Christ against cosmical and evil spiritual powers. This realm as a condition of the Church in Christ the author designates by the term ἐπουράνια. And precisely because he constantly has in view the in-being of the Church, the work and conflict of the Church, in this realm, he uses it only in the stereotypical phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίους.

The vision behind this expression is evidently quite different from that behind the Pauline utterance in Phil. 3²⁰: »our citizenship is in heavens« (ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει); but it would be too rash an assumption to maintain that the corresponding expressions represent two mutually exclusive conceptions. The aspects only are different.

The interpretation here brought forth differs altogether from the ingenious definition made by SCHLIER (*Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief* p. 6 n. 1):

»Τὰ ἐπουράνια bezeichnen also — auf ihren sachlichen Gehalt gesehen — die »Räume«, in die hinein sich das Dasein erstreckt, entweder geschützt und gesichert als Kirche oder preisgegeben und vergewaltigt als Welt. Das heisst nun aber 1. das τὰ ἐπουράνια ganz allgemein das ist, wodurch das Leben einen Raum, eine Tiefe hat in dem Sinn, dass es ein Wohin hat, eine Möglichkeit hinzukommen. Es hat ja Aussicht auf, es hat Hoffnung zu. Ihm stehen die Himmel offen, entweder der eigene des eigenen Herrschers or der von Gott im Leibe Christi ihm geöffnete. Und zwar stehen ihm 2. »die Himmel« in der Weise offen, dass es je in einem schon steht, dass es je von einer Macht mit Beschlag belegt ist, und je in einem Lebensraum bedroht und bedrängt ist in den anderen hinüberzuwechseln. Denn alles lebt ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. Und die Gemeinde, die ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ lebt (1³, 2⁶), ist darin durchaus angreifbar und auch fortwährend angegriffen (6¹¹ ff.). Umgekehrt hat die Welt, die ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις unter der Herrschaft der Mächte lebt (2¹¹ ff.), darin keine Ruhe und ist nicht endgültig. Denn sie ist angegriffen von der Kirche, die unter ihr als der andere Raum, die andere Möglichkeit aufgetreten ist (3¹⁰). Damit ist 3. schon gesagt, dass in den ἐπουράνια und durch die ἐπουράνια das Leben in keiner Weise ein neutraler Ort ist ...»

This very fine analysis does not satisfy, since it has not grasped, what according to the preceding is the essential, viz. that the author is moved to choose this stereotypical phrase by his religious interest in focussing the attention of his readers on the situation of the Church.

The oft-quoted interpretation by LIGHTFOOT is also unsatisfactory:

»It is the heaven which lies within and about the true Christian.« Or »Those spiritual blessings conferred on us create heaven

within us, and the scenes of Divine benefaction are »heavenly places»; for wherever the light and love of God's presence are to be enjoyed, there is heaven» (HARLESS/EADIE, cited by ABBOTT ICC, Ephesians p. 5) .

This interpretation loses sight of the fact that ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις is not equivalent with *in Christ*, and takes »heavenly» and »spiritual» in a more restricted sense than does Ephesians.

It remains now to treat of the other terms for different spheres of the universe. As such terms come into consideration:

(1) Οὐρανοί (2) γῆ (3) τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς (4) ἄήρ (5) ὁ κόσμος οὐτος (6) τὸ σκότος τοῦτο (7) ὁ αἰὼν οὐτος and (8) ὁ αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων.

Of (1) Heavens and (2) Earth as terms not much remains to be said beyond what has already been pointed out above. Οὐρανοί and γῆ occur in the common contraposition in 1¹⁰ (where, however, one notices the peculiar use of ἐπί before τοῖς οὐρανόις, the usual preposition being ἐν), 3¹⁵. Οὐρανοί alone in 4⁸ (all heavens) and 6⁹.

Of the arrangement of the heavens no clear and distinct picture is given by the scant material of the epistle, beyond their plurality. Neither is it clear, in what relation the terms »air» and »this darkness» stand to the term »heavens». Certain or comparatively certain seems to be that the »air» designates a region below the heavens and above the earth or else the lowest of the heavens. A comparison with the so-called pseudoepigraphical literature has often been made, when the subject of the number and arrangements of the heavens has been treated of. In the present connection the most interesting parallell has been called attention to by EITREM and FRIDRICHSEN in *Ein christliches Amulett* (the expression ἀέριοι δαίμονες). A survey of the whole of the relevant literature, with the inclusion also of material hitherto not adduced, viz. the eschatological and apocalyptic literature in Hebrew and Aramaic, brings home the fact, that in the first cen-

tury of our era there was no systematic doctrine of the heavens on which there was general agreement. Each writing has its own system, different from that of others. Only the number seven of the heavens and their names had by this time won comparatively general acknowledgement.

The names of the heavens may be of some interest here. They are: (1) *Uilon* (2) *Rāki^a* = Firmament (3) *Š^ehākim* (4) *Z^ebul* (5) *Mā'on* (6) *Mākon* and (7) *'Arāboṭ*. Interesting is that *Rāki^a* in this literature is the region of the cosmical powers and their leaders, rulers or princes, the planets and constellations as animated beings but also the elements. The first heaven, or *Uilon*, again, designates the region veiling off the celestial light and itself bereft of this light. If the author of Ephesians be familiar with this system, there is no doubt, but that *this darkness*, τὸ σκότος τοῦτο, corresponds with *Uilon*, the first heaven, and the *air*, ἀήρ, with the second heaven, the *Rāki^a* or Firmament. It has to be noted, though, that in a still earlier system the name ἀήρ in Greek is associated not with the name *Rāki^a* but with *Š^ehākim*, as in the LXX the word *Š^ehākim* of Ps. 18¹² (the passage from which the name in question is deduced) is rendered by ἄερων, the genitive plural of ἀήρ.

So far, however, it seems reasonable to conjecture that ἀήρ and τὸ σκότος τοῦτο as terms have their background in conceptions of celestial spheres and regions, and that the two terms in question represent the lowest two heavenly spheres. With regard to the term σκότος it remains to be pointed out that the word applies not only to the lowest heaven but also to the regions below the heavens, the earth or the regions below the earth. But the rulers or princes, the dominating and ruling forces of the Darkness have their abode in the *celestial* sphere. From this they extend their activity and authority to the regions below them. Of this more further on.

But from what has been said there is already an explanation and justification for the expression »*this* Darkness». »*This*» denotes presence either in time or space. »*This Darkness*», hence, as a term for a region, which it undoubtedly is, refers to the earthly condition of man. And the church is in that region, but, as being ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, is also in conflict with the ruling powers of the darkness, who are located in the lowest celestial region, above the earth.

»*This Darkness*» is closely related to the expression »*This world*». Much confusion has been caused in the discussion of the connotation of this expression through an undue emphasis of a supposed contrast between the temporal and spacial imports. There is sufficient documentation, even regardless of the origins of the concepts in question, for the synthesis in contemporaneous thought of the idea of *this world* in contrast to *the world to come* on one hand and the concept of *this world* in contrast to the *higher world* or *celestial world* on the other. And such documentation is found no less in Palestinian Jewish extra-Rabbinical literature than in early Christian. There is therefore slight doubt that Ephesians uses the expression in the current sense, i. e. that of the present world, the order in which we live here »below» and in the present time.

But it should be of real importance to notice the change of the connotation of the O. T. term '*olām* in this connection. '*Olām* at this time has decidedly become an exact equivalent of the Greek word κόσμος and has, by its side, as equivalent for αἰών the word *dōr* (generation, age). *Hā'olām hazzā*, thus, is properly, in Greek, ὁ κόσμος οὗτος, whereas ὁ αἰών οὗτος corresponds with *haddor hazzā*. ὁ αἰών ὁ μέλλων is perhaps still *hā'olām habbā*, but the exact equivalent is *hā'atīd lābo*. This evolution has a history of its own, on which we must refrain from expatiating here. Suffice it to add, that the use of *dōr* for the Greek αἰών is

attested in plural, in the expressions *haddorot habbā'im* or *dorot hā'atid* (coming, future ages or generations).

In Ephesians it may be noticed that the use of the words κόσμος and αἰών clearly corresponds to the above-mentioned use of the words *olām* and *dor* respectively.

Κόσμος, ὁ κόσμος or ὁ κόσμος οὗτος, it might be concluded, in Ephesians denote the earthly conditions of the present, in which mankind lives. But the aspect is correlative to the aspect of the expression ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. The latter has reference to the conditions of the militant Church *in Christ*, the former to the conditions of mankind without and outside Christ; most significative is here 2¹²: »at that time ye were *without Christ* (χωρὶς Χριστοῦ), being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and *without God in the world*, (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ)».

In the light of the above the meaning of the beginning of 2² also would seem to receive a natural interpretation. Κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου would exactly correspond to *l'fi dorō šäl hā'olām hazzä*, i. e. »according to the age of this world.» Ἄτων, thus, would not denote a cosmical power or »der innerweltliche Zeit-Gott» (DIBELIUS after REITZENSTEIN, *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium*); but the background for the expression is the idea of the different world-aeons, world-ages, which in contemporaneous Jewish extra-Rabbinical speculation and through this in the Synagogue had been couched in the terms of *dor*, *dorot*, *dorot hā'olām*, and, by the way, involved the conception of different rulers or »heads» of the *dorot* (cf. my *Die mandäische Religionsanschauung*, p. 24).

It now remains to say a few words about the problem of the expression τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς (the lower parts of the earth) in 4⁹. Does this mean the underworld, something like the expression τῶν καταχθονίων (those under the earth) of Phil 2¹⁰? SCHLIER (*op. cit.* pp. 6, 17) denies this. His reason is

mainly the following: The evil powers have their abode in a supraterrrestrial region. This view excludes the idea of an underworld, a hell, as the abode for the evil and the condemned. The background for 4⁸⁻¹⁰ (where the expression in question occurs) is the conception of an ascent of the Saviour from earth, in which ascent the Saviour liberates the spirits of the condemned, held captive in the supraterrrestrial region. A descent of the Saviour into the underworld could have any meaning, only if the spirits of the condemned were incarcerated in this underworld and had to be set free from their bondage in the underworld. Consequently τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς cannot signify the underworld, but must mean something like »as far below as to the earth«. SCHLIER, thus, in his translation of the Greek phrase, adopts the old appositive interpretation of the genitive: τῆς γῆς.

It would take us too far to review here the numerous variant interpretations of 4⁸⁻¹⁰ as a whole. In the present connection we shall content ourselves with discussing the meaning of the passage only so far as it is necessary for determining the significance of the expression under debate, i. e. τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς.

First it may be stated: the acceptance of the idea of Christ's descent into an underworld is *not* bound up with that of the liberation of condemned spirits. It is the dangerous risk of the religio-historical analysis of ideas, that one definite system is construed and then the consistencies of this system interpreted into the document, on the elucidation of which it is brought to bear. The specific frame and structure and the intrinsic concepts of the documents are thereby easily neglected. Such is the case, if we are unable to appreciate the specific way, in which the various ideas, forming the background of the present passage, have been made use of by the author. The religio-historical view, then, is guilty of the same fallacy as the patristic commentators, with whom their dogmatical prepossessions prevented an unbiased

reproduction of the author's purpose of thought. An undue emphasis of the religio-historical back-ground, now, and of one system of ideas within this, is to be discerned in the argumentation by SCHLIER.

There is another aspect, under which Christ's descent may be viewed and has been viewed. That is the aspect which may be reproduced by the simple expression: descent into the lowest depths. Christ's descent has a cosmical, universal import. To save mankind he must grapple with and become victor over, vanquish, the cosmical powers and the evil agencies in their totality and he must pursue them into the farthest recesses of their activity. He must, hence, go beyond the surface-world, in which fallen mankind dwells, to the depths of Darkness, the utmost sphere of the authority of evil. This view is also sustained by the universal function of Christ in the Divine dispensation (oikonomia). He is the one, in whom God is to »gather together all things«, from the lowest to the highest. Hence it is a fit observation, that in Christ not only the contrasts of »heavens and earth« are brought together, but beyond that, the extreme poles of »far above all heavens« and »in the lower regions of the earth« (4¹⁰ and 4⁹). So He is to »fill the universe« (ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα): 4¹⁰.

Lastly a few observations have to be made with regard to the different names of celestial, cosmical and evil powers. The material contained in the Ephesians does not permit a reconstruction of the angelological or demonological system of the author. It is doubtful, whether he adhered to any definite system. Some elucidating hints might, however, be obtained from contemporaneous literature. And here it is of special interest to note of what value the extra-Rabbinical literature of early Judaism can be. BILLERBECK on 1²¹ proffers an illustration of this. He nowhere recurs to this literature, as it is practically unknown to him, since his work was completed before this literature was recognized. So also here. And hence the result is that he finds excellent parallels

to the angelological terms of Eph. 1²¹ in the pseudepigraphical literature, but then in the Rabbinical literature no continuation of this material. Now, the truth is, that the continuation of the pseudepigraphical material is to be found precisely in the extra-Rabbinical literature, to which the former was known and further speculated upon. What, then, may be gathered from this literature beyond the parallels of the pseudepigrapha? Firstly, that there is no generally recognized system of angelology or demonology. Each writing makes use of the different names and terms with great freedom. The aim of this kind of literature is impressionistic rather than systematic or dogmatic. Secondly, all the terms found in Ephesians recur in the great arsenal of terms, from which the element of the pictures of celestial splendours and of the awe-inspiring cosmical powers and conflict of powers are made up. Thus ἀρχή corresponds with *rešut*, ἐξουσία with *mamlākā*, *šālṭānūt* or *malkūt*, δύναμις with *g^eburā*, κυριότης with *māmšālā*, κοσμοκράτωρ with *šar ‘olām*, τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας with *nišmot hā-rā’*, ἄρχων τῆς ἐξουσίας with *šar hammalkūt*. »Πατριά in heaven and on earth«, again, finds its exact equivalent in the frequent expressions *pamīlia šāl ma‘lā* and *pamīlia šāl maṭṭā!* Also in Ephesians the terms in question, probably, do not form part of a definite system but are freely used to impress upon the Church the far-reaching and momentous importance of its spiritual situation.

The Weltbild of Ephesians may be summed up in the motto: ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ, Χριστὸς ὁ τὰ πάντα ἐν παῖσιν πληρούμενος.

