

## CHAPTER 15

*Epilogue: a heaven on earth**Alessandro Scafi*

A celebrated sage of the first century, Rabban Gamaliel, taught his students that in the world to come, “trees will give fruit every day.” The Babylonian Talmud relates that one of Gamaliel’s students scoffed at him, saying, “But it is written, ‘There is nothing new under the sun.’” The Rabbi did not throw the arrogant student out. Instead he replied, “Come, and I will show you an example in this world.” He went outside with the students, and showed them a caper bush. Indeed, during its lengthy flowering season between April and October, the caper produces new flowers every day. Here was something on earth which anticipated the dimension of eternity.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with the challenge of decoding the meaning and explaining the characteristics of the original perfect location described in the Book of Genesis – the earthly paradise – as a garden with trees and rivers, late-antique Jewish and Christian exegetes had to speculate about heaven and earth, letter and allegory, time and eternity. Their task involved discussing polarities such as soul and body, spirit and matter, and speculating on what on earth could anticipate the dimension of eternity. Was the Genesis account to be taken literally or did the sacred text point to a deeper layer of meaning? Was Adam’s paradise a real park somewhere on earth or a heavenly reality? Was the Garden of Eden to be regarded as a state fixed in eternity or as a condition inserted into the flux of history? Where was it? And when was it?

The late-antique debate offered a wide range of answers to these and other questions. The essays contained in this volume demonstrate how those early discussions contributed to the formation of the various elements that would finally come together in the medieval Christian idea of a paradise on earth and its Renaissance and modern manifestations.

<sup>1</sup> *Talmud Babli Shabbat* 30b. I am grateful to Catherine Delano-Smith, Christopher Ligota, and Jemma Street for having read drafts of this paper, and to Mark Geller and Hanna Vorholt for helping me with bibliographical references.

As Guy Stroumsa notes in his introduction, both the Fathers of the Church and the Rabbis of the Talmud struggled to establish some kind of orthodoxy within their religious traditions. Ideas on paradise were not firmly settled, and the biblical narrative led Jewish and early Christian theologians to oscillate between different notions in a fluid process of interpretation. Maren R. Niehoff explains how Philo of Alexandria, for example, sought a new synthesis of literal scholarship and allegorical readings. Richard Bauckham notes that, in a number of early Jewish texts, Eden was sometimes identified with heaven and at other times distinguished from it. Eden's location was always conceived of as inaccessible, but it was variously placed in the lower heavens or at the very edge of the earth, and was sometimes thought of as the dwelling place of the righteous after their resurrection. And in this connection Martin Goodman explores Jewish ideas about an afterlife in the garden of paradise, and Simon Gatercole surveys early Christian texts describing the human soul's heavenly ascent to paradise after death. The complexity of the Jewish and Christian notions of paradise arises from the fact that the idea of a place of delight symbolizing perfection and happiness not only represented nostalgia for the past, but was also seen as a blessing for the present and a promise for the future. The expressions "paradise," "Eden" or "garden of God" were also associated in the Bible with descriptions of the Promised Land, the epoch of messianic salvation and the destination of the righteous in the life to come. As Galit Hasan-Rokem reminds us in her essay, some late-antique Rabbis saw the gift of human offspring and the pleasure of sexuality as a compensation to Adam and his progeny, following the introduction of death and the expulsion from paradise as a punishment for his sin. And yet, after the expulsion, the tree of life could still be seen as available, as Menahem Kister tell us from early Jewish and Christian sources: for Jews, it was the Torah; for Christians, the new tree of life was the Crucified Christ.

In late antiquity, Jewish and Christian exegetes were faced with the task of integrating the many pieces of the complex Scriptural "mosaic." In addition to the description of Eden found in the Book of Genesis, other passages of Scripture became involved. "Paradise," the Greek term used in the Septuagint for the Garden of Eden, recurs in the New Testament, as Grant MacAskill points out. Christians read in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus promised paradise to one of the two thieves crucified with him (23.43). Moreover, St. Paul claims that a visionary flight to the "third heaven" had carried him into paradise (2 Corinthians 12.4), and in the Book of Revelation, Christians are promised as a reward for faithfulness a

place called “the paradise of God” (Revelation 2.7). For Christian exegetes, Adam’s paradise prefigured spiritual realities such as the Eden of the end of time, the Church, and the individual soul.<sup>2</sup> The biblical description of Adam in Eden also prompted lively discussion about the existence of a primordial and natural law in paradise (as expounded in Sabrina Inowlocki’s essay) and the original language spoken in paradise (a topic explored by Yonatan Moss). There were also pagan conceptions of a blessed abode or a perfect golden age that challenged the world view of Jewish and Christian exegetes. Augustine’s approach, for example, to Virgil, Cicero, and Plato, is analyzed by Gillian Clark.

In the early centuries of Christianity, the Garden of Eden, the spiritual paradises of the soul and of the Church, and the celestial paradise that was mankind’s final destiny, were often confused or conflated. The foundation for the Church’s teaching throughout the Middle Ages, however, was laid in the fifth century by Augustine of Hippo. As Markus Bockmuehl points out in the final essay, Augustine developed the allegorical interpretation of the garden (seen as a representation both of Adam’s spiritual happiness and of human psychological reality, but also as an image of the life of the blessed and of the Church) while at the same time stressing the absolute necessity of believing in paradise as a real place and in the historical truth of the story of the Fall. This led to a clear distinction between the corporeal paradise of Adam and the heavenly paradise of the saints.<sup>3</sup> As Emile Perreau-Sausine explains in the penultimate essay, Augustine’s vision of a heavenly city of God also implied a heaven both outside time and ever

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, I.1, ed. Joseph Zycha, *CSEL* XXVIII/1 (Prague-Vienna-Leipzig: F. Tempsky-G. Freytag, 1894), I.1, p. 3; *Biblia Latina cum Glossa ordinaria*, facsimile of the *editio princeps*... (Strasbourg: Adolph Rusch 1480/81), ed. by Margaret T. Gibson and Karlfried Fröhlich, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), sig. a2v; Thomas Aquinas, *S Summa theologiae*, ed. by Pietro Caramello, Leonine edition, 3 vols. (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1948–50), I, q.1, a.10, p. 9; Nicholas of Lyre, *Postilla super totam Bibliam*, “Prologus secundus,” in *Biblia sacra cum glossa ordinaria*, eds. Leander de Sancto Martino, J. Gallemart *et al.* (Douai-Antwerp: Baltazar Bellerus-Ioannes Keerbergius, 1617), I, sig. +4r C-E; see also Alastair J. Minnis, A. Brian Scott, eds., *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition* (Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press-Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 203.; Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l’Écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959–64), I, pp. 190–98; Jean Daniélou, “Terre et paradis chez les Pères de l’Église,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 23, 1953, pp. 433–72; H. S. Benjamins, “Paradisiacal Life: The Story of Paradise in the Early Church” and Christoph Auffarth, “Paradise Now – But for the Wall Between: Some Remarks on Paradise in the Middle Ages,” in Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, ed., *Paradise Interpreted: Interpretations of Biblical Paradise: Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden-Boston, MA: Brill, 1999), pp. 153–79.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, VIII.1 (1894), p. 229; see also Reinhold R. Grimm, *Paradisus coelestis, paradisus terrestris: Zur Auslegungsgeschichte des Paradieses im Abendland bis um 1200* (Munich: Fink, 1977), pp. 61–62.

present, a paradoxical “absent presence” that had an important impact on medieval political ideas.

Once accepted, Augustine’s combination of an allegorical and a literal reading of the paradise narrative in Genesis became a legitimate exegetical strategy in the Latin West. A long phase, from the fifth century until about 1200, witnessed the further elaboration of Augustine’s views through a complicated process of reception; for the puzzling features of the paradise narrative continued to challenge theologians and exegetes. The opposition of two models of paradise – a heavenly or spiritual condition on the one hand, an earthly, corporeal location on the other – was reformulated, and the Garden of Eden was isolated from the ultimate celestial bliss and the subtleties of spiritual allegory to be settled firmly on earth.

After Augustine, the fact that Adam and Eve had lived in a region on earth before the Fall was accepted as beyond question. Both Isidore and Bede were followers of the Augustinian view of paradise.<sup>4</sup> The *Glossa* and Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* confirmed Augustine’s teaching that Adam had a body and that paradise was a real garden.<sup>5</sup> However, the concept of a paradise on earth involved problems and tensions that remained unresolved. Broadly speaking, it may be said that once the divine garden had been located on earth, difficulties arose as to how to explain its intermediate character. The debate about paradise was destined to shift, as it were, from heaven to earth: after the difference between the terrestrial and the celestial paradise was established, the focus switched to the opposite problem of distinguishing Eden from earth. The questions asked were no longer whether the garden of Adam and Eve was a corporeal place or an allegory for spiritual and celestial realities, or whether our first parents were corporeal human beings or godlike angels after all; Scripture and tradition asserted categorically that the Garden of Eden existed on earth and was the dwelling place of a human couple. What continued to trouble were issues such as the location of Eden and how it was possible for our first parents, made of flesh and blood, to be eternal. These problems had preoccupied those who wrote on the earthly paradise for many centuries. Between the middle of the twelfth and the end of the thirteenth century, however, when

<sup>4</sup> Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV.3.2–4, ed. by Wallace Martin Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911); Bede, *Libri quatuor in principium Genesis usque ad nativitatem Isaac et electionem Israhelis annotationum*, I.1.1; I.1.31–2.1; I.2.4–9, ed. by Charles W. Jones, *CCSL CXVIII* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), pp. 3, 32, 39–46; see also Grimm, *Paradisus* (1977), pp. 73–77 and 80–82.

<sup>5</sup> *Biblia latina cum Glossa ordinaria* (1480/1481; 1992), I, p. 21; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, II. d. 12, ed. by Ignatius C. Brady, 3rd edn., 2 vols. (Grottaferrata, Rome: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, 1971), I, pp. 384–89.

a complex system of thought based on Greek science and Aristotelian philosophy, transmitted by Arabic and Jewish thinkers, was introduced into the West, these questions were posed and answered with greater clarity and more intellectually rich arguments. The new science and philosophy challenged the traditional Christian notion of an earthly paradise, since exegetes and theologians had to reconcile the biblical account of Eden with newly acquired geographical knowledge and improved understanding of the physical constitution of the human body. The biblical narrative had for centuries resisted the allegorical and Platonizing philosophical speculations that tended to blur the distinction between the Garden of Eden and heaven. Now the literalness of the account had been questioned by the new Aristotelian science: if on earth, then precisely where was the place? Thomas Aquinas wanted to demonstrate that there was a “natural fit” between the science of his day and mainstream Christian beliefs, including the idea of a paradise on earth and of an intermediate state of perfection enjoyed by Adam and Eve in Eden.<sup>6</sup> Such a synthesis of natural philosophy and theology, however, provided neither a stable nor a long-lasting solution to the problem of the earthly paradise. Any effort to make rational sense of the mystery of the Garden of Eden contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Once the divine region of Eden had been distinguished from heaven, the attempt to locate it on earth involved a wide range of paradoxes and problems. So too, did the project of explaining the perfection of the first humans in scientific terms, once it had been established that they were not godlike or angelic creatures. The very act of examining a sacred geography and a mythical state of being with scientific tools – the great undertaking of the thirteenth century – was bound to produce dissatisfaction, which duly emerged in the fourteenth century. The passionate search for a rational explanation of paradise on the natural level in the thirteenth century resulted, in the fourteenth century, in the acknowledgement that such an attempt to unite human reason and revealed truth was ultimately destined to fail.<sup>7</sup>

The fifteenth century inherited various problems left unresolved by the medieval debate surrounding the geography and the topography of the terrestrial paradise: its whereabouts and the height of the mountain on which it was located, if, indeed, it was so located. In the previous century, John

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 102, a. 1–2, ed. by Pietro Caramello, Leonine edn., 3 vols. (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1948–50), I (1950), pp. 483–85.

<sup>7</sup> I discuss the history of the notion of the earthly paradise in the Western tradition in *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (London-Chicago: British Library-University of Chicago Press, 2006). For the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, see esp. pp. 170–98; 258–61.

Duns Scotus had been aware of these issues but had reached the conclusion that there was no need for biblical exegetes to validate the description of Eden found in Scripture with empirical proofs or rational demonstrations.<sup>8</sup> The discussion which developed in the fifteenth century confirmed the awkwardness of establishing a consistent geographical account of the location of the Garden of Eden.

Fifteenth-century geographical and theological debates about the Garden of Eden failed to unravel the mystery of paradise. Both humanist writers and learned theologians concluded that it was impossible to discover its location through scientific enquiry and that its existence had to be accepted on faith and on the authority of revelation. This outcome confirmed the fourteenth-century tendency to separate a purely religious sphere of belief from the realm of natural science. Contrasting theories had been formulated regarding the altitude of Eden and how it had escaped the Flood, but without any resolution. Likewise, no final agreement had emerged on the whereabouts of paradise, only conflicting suppositions. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, for example, confined his speculations about the geography of Eden to a work of fiction, the *Somnium*, and did not include the description of paradise in his scientific treatise on geography, the *Cosmographia* (he left both works unfinished).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, either through explicitly accepting Duns Scotus' anthropology, as in the case of Gabriel Biel, or through summing up the late medieval debate on the condition of Adam and Eve in the Garden, as Dionysius the Carthusian had done, theologians came to the view that man's condition was in itself imperfect, regardless of the Fall.<sup>10</sup> The notion of an intermediate state of

<sup>8</sup> John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in librum II Sententiarum*, d 17 q 2, in *Opera omnia* (1639), VI/1, pp. 788–90; see also Edward D. O'Connor, "The Scientific Character of Theology according to Scotus," in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti*, Acta Congressus Scotistici Internationalis Oxonii et Edimburgi, 11–17 September 1966, 4 vols. (Rome: Cura Commissionis Scotisticae, 1968), III, pp. 3–50; Efreim Bettoni, "The Originality of the Scotistic Synthesis," in Bernardine M. Bonansea and John K. Ryan, eds., *John Duns Scotus: 1265–1965* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *Opera inedita*, ed. by Giuseppe Cugnoni (Rome: Salviucci, 1883; repr. Farnborough: Gregg, 1968), pp. 234–99. See also Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Dialogo su un sogno. Dialogo de somnio quodam*, ed. by Alessandro Scafi (Turin: Aragno: 2004); Alessandro Scafi, "Nel mondo dei sogni: Enea Silvio Piccolomini e l'uso letterario delle teorie oniriche tardo-medievali," in *Pio II Piccolomini: Il papa del Rinascimento a Siena*, ed. by Fabrizio Nevola (Siena: Protagon and Comune di Siena, 2009), pp. 227–44; "Un Senese in Paradiso: Il viaggio letterario di Enea Silvio Piccolomini nell'aldilà di Dante e Virgilio," in *Conferenze su Pio II di Luca D'Ascia, Arnold Esch, Alessandro Scafi, Francesco Ricci nel sesto centenario della nascita di Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–2005)*, ed. by Enzo Mecacci (Siena: Accademia degli Intronati, 2006), pp. 67–108.

<sup>10</sup> Gabriel Biel, *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*, ed. by Wilfridus Werbeck and Udo Hofmann, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973–92), II, 17 q. 2; 20; d. 16, q. unica; s. 2, q. unica; d. 23, q. unica, a. 3; d. 24, q. unica; d. 28, q. unica, pp. 403, 405–06, 425–34, 466–79, 527–45. See also

human perfection on earth was gradually played down and replaced by a renewed tendency to transfer the perfect human condition to heaven. This attitude was similar to the allegorizing interpretations of the early Church Fathers, even though fifteenth-century theologians did not always describe the gulf between Creator and creation in Neo-Platonic terms.

Within the field of scholastic theology, the idea of human perfection had gradually shifted away from earth and back to heaven. Paralleling this movement, the increasing importance of Neo-Platonism in the fifteenth century promoted a revival of the purely allegorical tradition of biblical exegesis.<sup>11</sup> An important example of this tendency can be found in the works of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who interpreted the Garden of Eden in Neo-Platonic and Cabalistic terms, conceiving of it as a divine state of perfection in opposition to the lowest world of materiality. The interpretation of the Garden of Eden and of the condition of Adam put forward in the Christian Cabala of the Renaissance may be regarded as a revival of the Origenist and allegorical tradition of biblical exegesis. Working within a syncretist framework and in the new humanist cultural context, Pico considered the Garden of Eden to be an image of angelic perfection rather than an original human state of perfection in an earthly garden. When Pico interpreted paradise in a Platonic manner, he envisaged it as the angelic mind, a garden where the trees are the ideas planted by God and the four rivers are philosophical virtues.<sup>12</sup> In his Christian Cabalist interpretation, on the other hand, paradise is described as a stage in the process of divine emanation, whereby the four rivers of the Garden of Eden correspond with particular channels of divine energy as described in Jewish mystical tradition and known as the *Sefiroth*.<sup>13</sup> Pico's Cabalist view of Adam is that of a being of godlike beauty, not yet embodied in the flesh. Although his vision involves the notion of the unity of the universe and a close association between matter and spirit,<sup>14</sup> we do not find in his writings any idea of a material paradise on earth, in the manner of Thomas

Heiko Obermann, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, 2nd edn. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), pp. 62–68; Dionysius the Carthusian, *In librum II Sententiarum*, d. 17, q. 4–5, in *Opera omnia*, XXII, p. 142–57; *Enarratio in Genesim*, I, a. 14, in *Opera omnia*, I, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> For the importance of Neo-Platonism in the fifteenth century, see James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Commento sopra una canzone d'amore*, ed. by Paolo De Angelis (Palermo: Novecento, 1994), pp. 25, 48, 62–74, 102–03.

<sup>13</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones nongentae: le novecento tesi dell'anno 1486*, ed. by Albano Biondi (Florence: Olschki, 1995), p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> See Fernand Roullet, *Jean Pic de la Mirandole (1463–1494): Humaniste, philosophe et théologien* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1989), pp. 330–34.

Aquinas and the orthodox medieval interpretation. For Pico, nothing connected to matter and belonging to the sublunary world could be perfect. Thus, Pico's view of paradise, while containing novel Cabalist elements, nonetheless returns to an earlier tradition of exegesis, which goes back to Philo and Origen.<sup>15</sup>

The fifteenth century undoubtedly represents a turning point in the history of the notion of an earthly paradise; for in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the belief in a real and still extant Eden on earth disappeared. From 1500 onwards the general tendency of exegetes – with some exceptions, of course – was to conceptualize of the Garden of Eden as no longer part of the present world. The question of Eden's precise location on earth began to be treated as a purely historical problem: paradise retreated to its origins. In the seventeenth century the debate on the location of Eden was definitively focused on the past, as for example in Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Traité de la situation du paradis terrestre* (1691).<sup>16</sup>

At first glance, it would seem that in the fifteenth century speculations on Eden represented a return to Origen and Philo and the debate in the Renaissance only meant a return to the late-antique Jewish and Christian debate, sanctioning the final victory of the spiritual or allegorical interpretation of the paradise narrative in Genesis, as already postulated in late antiquity. But, in fact, the Renaissance outcome of the debate on the earthly paradise described in the Book of Genesis involved a crucial paradigm shift rather than a return to earlier ideas. This is most evident when the main originality of the medieval vision of the Garden of Eden is taken into account, namely its temporal dimension, a feature that had been absent from the late-antique debate.

For medieval thinkers, geographical space could not exist without time and the Garden of Eden was seen not simply as a place but as an event/place. It was considered as a localized occurrence essential to human history, pinpointing the original sin of Adam and Eve as having occurred at a given time in a given place. Paradise belonged to both the earth and to the past. In the twelfth century, for example, the theologian and exegete Hugh of Saint Victor taught that God's plan for mankind had unfolded, and was

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that Pico defended Origen's opinion on the pre-existence of the soul against the charge of heresy, maintaining that in Origen's time the doctrine was not yet firmly established: Crouzel, *Une controverse sur Origène à la Renaissance: Jean Pic de la Mirandole et Pierre Garcia* (Paris: Vrin, 1977), pp. 41 and 130–39; Max Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1979), pp. 126–43.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Traité de la situation du Paradis Terrestre* (Paris: Jean Anisson, 1691). On the Renaissance turning point in the history of the notion of the earthly paradise see chapters 9 and 10 of my *Mapping Paradise*.





still unfolding, through time and space. According to Hugh, a spatially ordered sequence of historical events followed a preordained transfer of human imperial power and cultural excellence. The sequence ran from east to west. History had begun in the extreme east of the world, where God had put Adam into an earthly paradise, and the historical center of gravity (comprising the most important events, as defined according to a global perspective) moved progressively westwards, following the sun's daily course. History was proceeding from the Orient to the Occident, from Adam to Christ, from the early kingdoms in the eastern regions to the Roman Empire, towards its culmination in the Passion of Christ in Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> Paradise was located on the eastern edge of Asia, to mark the beginning of time and space, at the very boundary of history and geography as there could be nothing on earth beyond a place that was both in the remotest past and the extreme east. The Garden of Eden was at the dawn of time and at the sunrise of space. The Garden of Eden meant both the event, the Fall of Adam at the beginning of history, and the place, the region of the earth in the furthest east. Paradise belonged to history but it continued to exist, despite remaining inaccessible from the inhabited earth.

By the fifteenth century the historico-geographical comprehensiveness of the medieval notion of paradise had been gradually reduced to the purely geographical dimension, with an emphasis on contemporary geography, and paradise had become a purely spatial notion. The medieval idea that the Garden of Eden belonged to the present world was then abandoned and instead of a paradise vaguely located in the east, Renaissance scholars identified with modern precision the earthly location where, in the remote past, the earthly paradise had once existed. During the Middle Ages, the Garden of Eden was located in an inaccessible and eastern "nowhere," but also distanced in the past, in the world before the Fall, on a quite different plane from the contemporary human realm. Around 1500, the idea that paradise existed in the past was taken in a more explicit and more exclusive way. The new exegetical solution was that paradise had once been on earth, but had disappeared after the Flood.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Hugh of Saint Victor, *De archa Noe*, IV.9, ed. by Patrice Sicard, *CCCM* CLXXVI (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 111–12. See also my *Mapping Paradise*, pp. 125–28.

<sup>18</sup> The first exegete to advocate that the Garden of Eden had disappeared was Augustinus Steuchus, head of the Vatican Library, *Recognitio Veteris Testamenti ad hebraicam veritatem* (Venice: Aldus, 1529), fols 22v–24r, but it was Martin Luther who insisted that paradise had completely vanished: Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1–5*, in *Luther's Works*, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan (St Louis, MO: Concordia, 1958), I, p. 88; *Genesisvorlesung*, ed. by Gustav Koffmane and Otto Reichert, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, XLII (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1911), p. 67. The idea was taken up by subsequent thinkers, including John Calvin.



Late-antique ideas of paradise, however, continued to shape the post-Renaissance and modern notion of a paradise lost from the face of the earth. The tendency to elevate Eden from the realm of geography into a spiritual dimension and to consider all the elements of the paradise narrative in Genesis as merely figurative expressions and as an allegory of deeper realities, for example, still appeared in the debate about Eden after the Renaissance. The emphasis in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) was on the individual's search for an inner paradise and the ultimate, celestial paradise, and the poet here anticipated later theological arguments.<sup>19</sup> Mainstream Christian churches and most Christian theologians also today prefer to stress the symbolic meaning of the paradise narrative in Genesis, even when they accept its historical validity. As the theologian Balthasar Rhau put it at the end of the seventeenth century, only ruins of the Garden of Eden could be found in Mesopotamia and this was why it was much better to search for the spiritual paradise available to man within the human soul, the Church, and in heaven.<sup>20</sup>

Eden came to be identified with heaven and the afterlife on several occasions in the modern exegetical debate, as it had sometimes been in late antiquity. The Renaissance claim that paradise had once comprised the whole earth (an idea put forward in the sixteenth century by thinkers such as Joachim Van Watt, Jan Van Gorp, Ludovicus Fidelis, Ludovico Nogarola, and Juan de Pineda)<sup>21</sup> and the vision of a vanished perfect world that was no longer to be found, presented a striking similarity to the late-antique allegorical exegesis of the paradise narrative. Philo, for instance, had thought of paradise as the whole universe.<sup>22</sup> The positing of paradise

<sup>19</sup> See Joseph E. Duncan, *Milton's Earthly Paradise* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), especially pp. 15–18, 29–37, 115–87, 220–68. Helen Wilcox, "Milton and Genesis: Interpretation as Persuasion," in Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, ed., *Paradise Interpreted: Interpretations of Biblical Paradise: Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden-Boston, MA: Brill, 1999), pp. 197–208.

<sup>20</sup> Balthasar Rhau, *Disputatio geographica de Paradiso Terrestri* (Frankfurt an der Oder: Johannes Coepselius, 1696), pp. 47–49.

<sup>21</sup> Jan van Gorp (Goropius Becanus), *Origines Antwerpianae, sive Cimmericorum Beceselana novem libros complexa* (Antwerp: Ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1569), pp. 481–82, 495–98; Juan de Pineda, *Los treynta libros de la Monarchia ecclesiastica o Historia universal del mundo*, I, 1, 5 vols. (Barcelona: Hieronymo Margarit, 1620), I, pp. 16–18, 28–29; Ludovicus Fidelis, *De mundi structura* (Paris: [n.p.], 1556), p. 294; Vadianus (Joachim Van Watt), *Pomponii Melae de orbis situ libri tres* (Paris: Apud Christianum Wechelum, 1540), sig. U2; Vadianus, *Epitome trium terrae partium, Asiae, Africae et Europae compendiarum locorum descriptionem* (Zurich: apud Christophorus Frosch, 1534), p. 192; Ludovico Nogarola, *Dialogus qui inscribitur Timotheus, sive de Nilo* (Venice: Apud V. Valgrysium 1552), pp. 20–21. See also Joseph Duncan, "Paradise as the Whole Earth," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 30 (1969), pp. 171–86; Duncan, *Milton's Earthly Paradise* (1972), pp. 199–202.

<sup>22</sup> Philo, *De plantatione*, II.111, [Works], Loeb Classical Library, trans. by Francis H. Colson and George H. Whitaker, 10 vols. and 2 supplementary vols. (London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam's Sons, 1926–62), III (1930), pp. 235–37.

in Mesopotamia, a common solution adopted by a number of post-Renaissance thinkers, also evoked the late-antique idea of an enclosed garden and the ancient connection between gardens and kings, a feature even more striking in nineteenth-century Assyriologists' speculations about a Babylonian Garden of Eden.<sup>23</sup>

The Christian interpretation of the Garden of Eden as a prefiguration of Christian realities also continued well beyond the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Locating Eden in the Holy Land, for example (an idea promoted by scholars such as Jacques d'Auzoles Lapeyre, Iohannes Herbinius, and Jean Hardouin in the seventeenth century), bears witness to the long-standing Christian tendency to associate Adam and Christ, the land of Eden, and the land of Crucifixion.<sup>24</sup> Other issues that were discussed in late antiquity were destined to last in the Western debate about the Garden of Eden, such as the problem of the language originally spoken in paradise, the relationship between the original perfection and human sexuality, and the ongoing interest in locating on earth the (now vanished) Garden of Eden.

In 1961 Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, declared on his return that he had not encountered God during his flight. Scientists and politicians continue to advocate further exploration of the "final frontier" as essential for the fulfillment of human potential, without ever seriously considering the possibility of finding the Creator there. Nonetheless, countless people persist in worshipping a Father who is somewhere up there in heaven. A great tradition lies behind these two impulses, one reaching towards heaven, the other towards the heavens, which are understood to be roughly in the same direction. A great tradition lies behind our curiosity, perhaps unacknowledged, as to whether we can actually come into contact with a place known to us only through the Bible. Long before Gagarin, however, the biblical Garden of Eden had been conceived of as not only remote in space but also distanced back in time. The past, however, may sometimes anticipate the future. As Rabban Gamaliel had taught his students, somewhere and somehow, there is something on earth which anticipates the dimension of eternity.

<sup>23</sup> See my *Mapping Paradise*, pp. 270–77, 291–317, 347–51.

<sup>24</sup> *Mapping Paradise*, pp. 322–34.