

Sessio Ad Sinistram :
God the Father's Spatial Manifestation in Heaven

by Judson Greene¹

He descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again.
 He ascended into heaven,
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again to judge the living and the dead.²

These lines from the Apostles' Creed articulate central doctrines of the Christian faith. While Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and coming judgment are obviously central facets of the faith, in a creed of under twenty lines Jesus' session at the Father's right hand may strike us as a surprising inclusion. Further, what does it actually mean that Jesus sits "at the right hand of the Father"? The other lines of the creed read in a very straightforward manner, but the picture that comes to mind when I imagine Jesus seated at the Father's right hand entails—well—the Father seated at Jesus' left hand. Is that accurate to the biblical witness?

This article will explore what is at Jesus' left hand with particular regard to spatiality. By examining (1) the nature of space, (2) the spatiality of heaven, and (3) the Father's spatial presence in heaven, this paper will demonstrate that God the Father possesses a spatial manifestation—that is, a spatially circumscribed theophany of the First Person—at Jesus' left hand in heaven.

The Nature of Space

There are two main views on the nature of space: the "receptacle" (or "absolute") view and the "relational" view.³ The receptacle view of space understands space to be a container of all material objects. This spatial container, or "box space," is spatial whether or not it has any real spatial objects

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² This translation is from the 2019 Book of Common Prayer.

³ For a succinct history of these contrasting theories, see Albert Einstein's foreword to Max Janner, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*, 3rd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2012), xiii–xvii. For the same material from a more theological perspective, see Chan Ho Park, "Concepts of Space," in "Transcendence and Spatiality of the Triune Creator" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003), 22–51; Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 56–59.

within it.⁴ Conversely, the relational view understands space to be a “positional quality” of material objects.⁵ For space to exist, spatial entities must be proximate to one another. Newton advocated the receptacle view since he grounded his thought in absolute views of space and time, but physicists today follow Einstein in holding to the relational view, which allows for the theory of relativity.

The Father would possess a spatial manifestation in heaven if the following syllogisms could be demonstrated.

From the receptacle view:

Premise 1: An entity is spatial if it resides in a spatial receptacle.

Premise 2: God the Father's manifestation resides in a spatial receptacle.

Conclusion: God the Father's manifestation is spatial.

From the relational view:

Premise 1: An entity is spatial if it is spatially related to other spatial entities.

Premise 2: God the Father's manifestation is spatially related to other entities.

Conclusion: God the Father's manifestation is spatial.

Below, Section 2 will argue that heaven is a spatial receptacle containing spatial entities, and Section 3 will argue that the Father manifests himself within heaven in spatial relationship to these entities, demonstrating that the Father manifests himself spatially regardless of one's view of space.

A Better Country: The Spatiality of Heaven

While some theologians argue that heaven is best understood as a state or spiritual metaphor,⁶ biblical authors typically present heaven as a *place*. That heaven is a spatial realm is clear because spatial

⁴ Einstein, xv.

⁵ Park, 24.

⁶ Arthur Tait argues that heaven is a state: when “the cramping influence of this idea of locality” in heaven “has been cast off,” he writes, one can understand that “heaven is no longer a distant kingdom whose boundaries are determined by space . . . but it is a spiritual kingdom the entrance into which lies open before men in this life.” *The Heavenly Session of Our Lord* (London: Robert Scott Roxburghe, 1912), 221. Similarly, Donald Guthrie states that “Paul does not think of heaven as a place, but thinks of it in terms of the presence of God.” *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981), 880. Guthrie's use of the adversative “but” creates an unnecessary bifurcation.

For Wolfhart Pannenberg, heaven is best understood as a metaphor: “To speak of heaven as the place of God is to use a spatial image but it is to express in this way the differentiation between God and the space of earthly creation.” Heaven is “a figure of speech for the eternal presence of God in which he is present to all temporal things.” God dwells in heaven, which means he is “in the sphere of his eternal presence that is inaccessible to us,” a sphere that can hold no bodily forms. *Systematic Theology*, vol 1., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 412–13. Calvin and Augustine also interpreted references to the Father “in heaven” as metaphor. John H. Mazaheri, “Calvin and Augustine's Interpretations of ‘The Father in Heaven,’” *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 106, nos. 3–4 (2011): 440–51.

At times, theologians argue simultaneously that heaven is the place of Christ's ascended body but also not a “place” at all. See Ralph V. Norman, “Beyond the Ultimate Sphere: The Ascension and Eschatology,” *Modern Believing* 42, no. 2 (2001): 7–10. For Millard Erickson, “While heaven is both a place and a state, it is primarily a state.” *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1232. What Erickson means by “primarily” is not very clear.

beings dwell within it. This section will demonstrate that angels and Christ's resurrected body are spatial entities that dwell in heaven, necessitating heaven's spatiality.

Angels Spatially Dwell in Heaven

The following section will demonstrate that angels are (1) spatial entities that (2) dwell in heaven, necessitating heaven's spatiality.

Angels Are Spatial

Angels change locations and are not omnipresent.⁷ Daniel 9:21 describes the angel Gabriel coming to Daniel “in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.”⁸ Similarly, Daniel 10 depicts a man of angelic description (Dan 10:5–6; cf. Ezra 9:2; Matt 28:3; Luke 24:4) who touches Daniel (Dan 10:10) and was prevented from coming to the Tigris river by the “prince of Persia” (Dan 10:13).⁹ The context is not visionary, referencing earthly time (Dan 10:1, 2, 4) and place (4b) as well as Daniel's physical

⁷ “There is only one God. All other spirit beings are creatures (Col 1:16). Only God is omnipotent (Rev 20:10). It is natural to infer that only God is omnipresent (Jer 23:24). Hence angels and demons alike operate in some spatially limited way.” Vern S. Poythress, “Territorial Spirits: Some Biblical Perspectives,” *Urban Mission* 13 (December 1995): 37–49. No biblical evidence supports angelic omnipresence. Cf. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940), 638. For the purposes of this paper, the following biblical entities (when contextually appropriate) will be referred to as “angels”: אֱבִיר (“mighty, valiant,” Pss 78:25; 103:20), אֱלֹהִים (“gods,” “divine beings,” Pss 8:6 [LXX: ἄγγελοι]; 82:1; 138:1 [LXX: ἄγγελοι]), בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (“sons of God,” Job 1:6; 2:1; Dan 3:25; Pss 29:1; 89:7), כְּרֻב (“cherub,” Exod 25:18–20; 1 Kgs 6:23–35; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Isa 37:16; Pss 80:2; 99:1; cf. 2 Sam 22:11; Ps 18:11; Ezra 1, 10), גַּבְרִיאֵל (“Gabriel,” Dan 8:16; 9:21; cf. Luke 1:19, 26), מִיכָאֵל (“Michael,” Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; cf. Rev 12:7), מַלְאָךְ (“messenger, angel,” Gen 19:1; 32:1; Ps 91:11), מְשֻׁרְתֵי (“ministers,” Ps 103:21), עֲבָדֵי (“servants,” Job 4:18), עֵיר (“watcher,” Dan 4:10, 14, 20), אֲצִיב (“host,” 1 Kgs 22:19; Neh 9:6; Ps 148:2), קְדוֹשׁ (“holy, sacred,” Ps 89:6, 8; Job 5:1; 15:15; Zech 14:5; Dan 8:2, 13), שֶׁרָף (“seraph,” Isa 6:2–3; 6:6), קְהָל (“the assembly,” Ps 89:5), סוּד (“council,” Ps 89:7), ἄγγελος (“angel,” Matt 1:20; Luke 2:15; Rev 5:2), στρατιᾶς οὐρανοῦ (“heavenly host,” Luke 2:13), πνεύματα (“spirits,” Heb 1:7, 14), ἀρχάγγελος (“archangel,” 1 Thess 4:16; Jude 9). This list draws from the following: Erickson, 408; William G. Heidt, “Angelic Nomenclature,” in *Angelology of the Old Testament: A Study in Biblical Theology*, The Catholic University of America Studies in Sacred Theology (Second Series) (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), 1–17. For a discussion of the possibility of angelic identity for Paul's terms translated as “principalities,” “powers,” “thrones,” “dominions,” and “authorities” (Col 1:16; Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 6:12; Col 2:15), see Ronn A. Johnson, “The Old Testament Background for Paul's Use of ‘Principalities and Powers’” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004).

⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright ©2016 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The participle from נָגַע (“to touch”) may carry the idea “that Gabriel literally ‘touched’ Daniel (KJV); but since the arrival time immediately follows . . . the meaning is that Gabriel reached him, that is, ‘came’ to Daniel.” Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 250. Miller argues that “in swift flight” should be translated “in extreme weariness,” noting that angels did not have wings and that “weariness” fits the context (250–51). However, Daniel's emphasis seems to be on describing Gabriel and his coming, not the circumstances of his previous vision, making “swift flight” the better option. The context is historical narrative. As Daniel L. Smith-Christopher notes, it “is not clear that Daniel is having a vision. Daniel has seen Gabriel before in a vision, and that is why Daniel now recognizes him.” “Daniel,” in *NIB*, vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 126.

⁹ Poythress argues that the “prince of Persia,” “prince of Greece,” and “Michael, your prince” are all references to territorial spirits of “a particular geographical and political area.” “Territorial Spirits,” 39. Cf. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1978), 201.

characteristics (Dan 10:3, 4b, 5a, 10) and surroundings (4b, 7).¹⁰ The parallel between Daniel's three weeks of mourning (Dan 10:2) and the angel's three weeks of delay (Dan 10:13) as well as the effect of the angelophany on Daniel's companions (Dan 10:7) imply that the author intends this section to be taken as historical, not symbolic.¹¹ These changes in location combined with no scriptural reference to angels being omnipresent evinces angelic spatiality.

Other texts corroborate angelic spatiality. Angels roll away stones (Matt 28:23)¹² and are located in physical places ("standing on the right side of the altar of incense," Luke 1:11).¹³ These references along with other passages that use the "language of movement and spatial location in connection with spirits . . . impl[y] that spirits are spatially localized."¹⁴

Angels Spatially Dwell in Heaven

The biblical authors conceive of angels as dwelling in the heavenly realm. Jesus frequently refers to angels residing in heaven (Matt 22:30; 24:36; Mark 12:25; 13:32).¹⁵ Luke describes the "heavenly host (στρατιᾶς οὐρανίου)" coming suddenly to the shepherds and then going "from them [the shepherds' location] into heaven (ἀπ᾿ ἡλθον ἀπ' αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν)."¹⁶ Angels descend "from

¹⁰ "Daniel was beside the Tigris . . . in bodily presence, not in vision, when a heavenly being appeared to him." Miller, *Daniel*, 279.

¹¹ In keeping with a more straightforward narrative, Daniel's editorial note that he understood this vision (10:1) stands in contrast to his lack of understanding concerning his previous vision (8:27). So Baldwin, 199.

¹² Matthew 28:23 presents a "robustly physical" angel who is "rolling a huge stone, sitting on it, and visible not just to the women but also to the guards." R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1100. "The visual description in v. 3 recalls that of other supernatural beings as seen by humans, for example, in Dan 10:5–6 (and cf. the description of God in Dan 7:9); Rev 1:13–16; 1 En. 62:15–16; 71:1; 87:2" (1100).

¹³ The passive of ὤφθη "is used frequently with the sense of 'to appear', usually but not exclusively (Acts 7:26) of the advent of heavenly visitors and the risen Lord. It denotes a real appearance rather than a dream." I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 55. Joel Green argues that the angel's spatial description emphasizes "Zechariah's presence in the sanctuary." *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 71. This would seem to put Zechariah and the angel in spatial relationship. Darrell L. Bock argues that this is not "Zechariah's spiritual, psychological perception" but a depiction of reality. *Luke*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1:80–81. John Nolland concurs. *Luke 1–9:20*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1989), 29.

¹⁴ Poythress, 40.

¹⁵ "By the use of the phrase, 'the angels which are in heaven' (Mark 13:32), Christ definitely asserts that angels inhabit heavenly spheres." Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 14. Jesus also says that if a sinner repents there is "joy in heaven" (Luke 15:7), a statement he later parallels with "joy before (ἐνώπιον) the angels of God" (v. 10), indicating that angels dwell in heaven. Note the spatial ἐνώπιον ("in the presence of," BDAG, 342). In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd seems to correspond to God, the angels to the neighbors. The rejoicing is "before God's angels. I.e. by God himself in the presence of angels, or perhaps with them." Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X–XXIV)*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1077, 1081 (emphasis original). Cf. Bock, 2:1304; Marshall, 602, 604.

¹⁶ My translation. The spatial relation to the shepherds, who are clearly spatial entities, is significant. Luke uses plural and singular οὐρανός "indifferently for the sky and heaven." Marshall, 112. "The Gospel thus portrays angels as coming to earth to interact with humans." David K. Bryan, "A Revised Cosmic Hierarchy Revealed," in *Ascent into Heaven in Luke-Acts: New Explorations of Luke's Narrative Hinge*, ed. David K. Bryan and David W. Pao (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 75. Bock points out that it is very unusual for the heavenly host to be out of heaven (Dan 7:10; 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18;

heaven (ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ)" (Matt 28:2; Luke 22:43). Perhaps the background for this concept is in Genesis 28:12, where Jacob sees a "ladder" from earth to heaven on which "the angels of God were ascending and descending."¹⁷ This vision comports with the idea that angels typically dwell in heaven, though they can descend to the earth. Paul (Gal 1:18; 2 Thess 1:7) and John (Rev 4:18; 10:1; 12:7; 14:17; 18:1; 20:1) also describe angels as dwelling in and descending from heaven. Since angels spatially dwell in heaven, then heaven must be a spatial realm.

Christ's Resurrected Body Spatially Dwells in Heaven

Christ's resurrected body is a human, spatial body. This same body ascended into heaven where it now resides, necessitating heavenly spatiality.

Christ's Resurrected Body Is Spatial

Christ's resurrection was a bodily resurrection (Matt 28:9; Luke 24:39–40; John 20:20, 24–29). After the resurrection, Jesus' body changed locations (Matt 28:16; Luke 24:15, 28–29, 36; John 20:19, 26), assumed various postures (Luke 24:30, 50; John 20:20; 21:12–13), ate and drank (Luke 24:42–43; Acts 10:41; cf. John 21:9–14), and was touched by other humans (Matt 28:9; John 20:27).¹⁸ Jesus took pains to ensure that the disciples would recognize that he had a physical and haptic body of "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39).¹⁹ Though Jesus' body seems to have had some unique properties, it did not cease from being a real human body.²⁰ The author of Hebrews argues that Jesus was "made like his

4 Macc 4:11). *Luke*, 1:219. Bock takes στρατιᾶς as a "partitive genitive, which means that the multitude is a select group that comes from the entire heavenly array of angels" (219).

¹⁷ "Jacob's ladder" is a misnomer on two fronts. First, the "ladder" (מִלְכָּד, a hapax legomenon) is better translated "stairway," and it likely implies the idea of an ancient ziggurat. Understanding מִלְכָּד as a ziggurat also strengthens the literary parallels with Babel, a self-proclaimed "gate of heaven," yet one that is man-centered and man-made. Second, the ziggurat is clearly God's, not Jacob's, as Jacob's response makes clear (Gen 28:16–17). Cornelis Houtman, "What Did Jacob See in His Dream at Bethel: Some Remarks on Genesis 28:10–22," *VT* 27, no. 3 (1977): 337–51. Cf. Roger B. Stein, "Searching for Jacob's Ladder," *Colby Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2003), 34–54.

¹⁸ In taking hold of Christ's feet "Matthew makes it clear that Jesus' risen body was a real body—the Evangelist is not describing a vision." Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 739. Cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1995), 874. Interestingly, the physicality of Jesus' resurrected body did not provoke Thomas to doubt that Jesus could be true divinity. The contrary is true (John 20:28). The disciples did not consider Jesus' material body a defect or sign of imperfection. Rather, the God who can raise such material back from the dead is the God that they worship.

¹⁹ In Luke 24:39, Jesus uses no less than seven words to refer to himself, including the emphatic αὐτός, emphasize that it is truly he (μου . . . μου . . . ἐγώ εἰμι αὐτός . . . με . . . ἐμὲ). "In this context, there is an incidental (but not unintended) affirmation of the inalienable materiality of the human body (resurrected or not)." John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 1213. Possibly the hands and feet are mentioned because they hold Christ's wounds, as in John 20:25, 27. But in the absence of an explicit reference to his wounds, "the corporeal nature of Jesus" was "foremost in Luke's mind." Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 617. Cf. Green, 854–55. Nolland writes, "I cannot avoid the impression that the extensive scholarly difficulty with this particular resurrection account betrays an underlying tendency to be scandalized by materiality. Ancient Hellenistic dualism lives on!" *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1214.

²⁰ Jesus' resurrected "body is flesh and bone transformed into a form that is able to move through material matter. . . . There is no way to distinguish the person of Jesus from the risen Christ except that his existence now takes place at an

brothers in every respect,” including a body of “blood and flesh” (2:14), so that he could become a high priest for humanity (Heb 2:17), an office he holds permanently (Heb 7:23–25). Christendom has historically affirmed that the God-Man Jesus Christ, having been incarnated, shall never become discarnate.²¹ Because human bodies are spatial, spatiality is a necessary property of Christ's human body.²²

Christ's Resurrected Body Is in Heaven

NT authors explicitly state that Jesus is in heaven. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul argues that the saints will have resurrected bodies that will be glorified as “spiritual bodies” like Jesus' “heavenly” (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ) body,²³ in the “image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:44, 47, 49).²⁴ Paul's description of Jesus as the “heavenly man” may imply he possesses a body suited for a new heavenly location.²⁵ In Ephesians 1:20 and 2:6, Paul speaks of Christ as being “in heavenly places.” Brannon argues that “the

additional dimension of reality. They are basically one and the same. A spirit has not taken his place, nor is he just a spirit.” Bock, *Luke*, 2:1933–34. Wayne Grudem, however, argues that these unique abilities some theologians have pointed out—such as the ability to appear/disappear (Luke 24:31) and pass through walls (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 26)—may not be as radical when these texts are studied closely. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 608–14. “Paul stresses the transformed nature of the body of the exalted Christ, but nevertheless maintains its physical nature.” Peter Orr, *Exalted above the Heavens: The Risen and Ascended Christ*, NSBT (London: IVP Academic, 2018), 114. Perhaps Christ's resurrected body could not pass between walls but could pass between the earthly and heavenly dimensions, giving that appearance.

²¹ “[Jesus'] human nature [has] not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body. . . . These two natures are so closely united in one person, that they were not separated even by his death.” Belgic Confession, article 19. Cf. SHC 6–8; WCF 8.2; WSC Q. 21; WLC Q. 36. Quotation from Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson, eds., *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 66–67.

²² “Fleshly bodies, because they're bodies, are also matter extended in spacetime” that possess “temporal and spatial . . . boundaries.” Paul J. Griffiths, *Christian Flesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 2. Peter Orr argues Christ “remains localizable” in his “on-going humanity and possession of a discrete, localizable body that cannot be collapsed into believers” (78).

²³ “This qualitative interpretation of ἐξ οὐρανοῦ is confirmed when we note that in verses 48, 49 ἐπουράνιος is used as its equivalent and applied to believers as well as to Christ, and this can hardly mean that believers have come from heaven. . . . The category of the heavenly dimension is associated with Christ as the inaugurator of the resurrection life of the age to come.” A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology*, SNTSMS 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 46. Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1287.

²⁴ The phrase σῶμα πνευματικόν does not refer to a non-bodily spiritual reality, but rather a “supernatural” body “animated and enlivened by God's Spirit.” Πνευματικόν bears the -ικός ending, which generally implies an ethical or functional meaning, not a one of material or substance (which would be -ικός). Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life*, WUNT 2. Reihe 283 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2010), 95–96. “The risen Christ in heaven remains a human being. Finally, Christ's humanity has an important eschatological transformative function in that believers will be transformed to bear his image (εἰκῶν), just as they have borne the image of Adam (15:49).” Peter Orr, “The Bodily Absence of Christ in Paul,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 3, no. 1 (2013): 115.

²⁵ John McClean, “A Search for the Body: Is There Space for Christ's Body in Pannenberg's Eschatology?” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14, no. 1 (2012): 91–103.

appearances of ἐν τοῖς ἐπουράνιοις in Ephesians demand a local translation.”²⁶ Paul (Acts 9:3–6; Rom 10:6; Eph 4:8–10; 6:9; Col 3:1–2; 1 Tim 3:16), Peter (Acts 11:5, 9–10; 1 Pet 1:4, 12; cf. John 14:32; 15:26; 16:7; 1 Pet 3:18, 22), the author of Hebrews (Heb 4:14–15; 7:24–26; 8:1; 9:24), John (Rev 5:6), and Stephen (Acts 7:55–56) all locate Christ in heaven.

Conclusion: Heaven Is Spatial

The foregoing data demonstrate that the following polysyllogism is warranted:

Premise 1: Only a spatial realm can contain spatial entities.

Premise 2: Angels and Christ's resurrected body are spatial entities.

Premise 3: Angels and Christ's resurrected body are contained in heaven.

Conclusion: Angelic and Christological spatiality necessitates heavenly spatiality.

To reject that heaven is a spatial realm, one must argue that either angels and Christ's resurrected body are not spatial or that these entities do not inhabit heaven. If either of these entities both is spatial and dwells in heaven, heaven must be a spatial realm. As Berkhof observes, “Some Christian scholars of recent date consider heaven to be a condition rather than a place.” But the “local conception” is indicated by the way that “heaven is represented in Scripture as the dwelling place of created beings (angels, saints, the human nature of Christ). These are all in some way related to space.”²⁷

“Before the Face of God”: The Father's Spatial Manifestation

To ascribe spatiality to the Father's heavenly manifestation, one of the following must be demonstrated. (1) If one espouses the relational view of space, then it must be demonstrated that the Father's manifestation is proximate to other spatial entities. (2) If one espouses the receptacle view of space, then it must be demonstrated that the Father's manifestation dwells within a spatial realm.

The Father's Manifestation Is Proximate to Angels

The following section will make two arguments. (1) OT texts present angels as spatially proximate to Yahweh in the heavenly divine council, and (2) NT texts understand the character of Yahweh enthroned in the divine council to be God the Father.

²⁶ M. Jeff Brannon, *The Heavens in Ephesians: A Lexical, Exegetical, and Conceptual Analysis*, Library of New Testament Studies (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011), 13. While “ἐπουράνιοις can have various meanings and nuances, it always refers to that which is spatially distinct from the earth. As a result, from our examination of ἐπουράνιοις in the NT, we conclude that there is no precedent or basis for a spiritualization of the heavens in Ephesians” (100).

²⁷ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1958; reprint, Bath: The Bath, 1998), 350.

Angels Assemble in the Divine Council

The divine council is “the heavenly host, the pantheon of divine beings who administer the affairs of the cosmos.”²⁸ The divine-council scenes form a type scene in the OT.²⁹ A type scene is “an indispensable narratorial framework” that uses “a fixed sequence of motifs common to the type-scene” that occurs at a critical point in a narrative.³⁰ The following table catalogs major divine-council type scenes with their accompanying motifs.³¹

| | Yahweh Central | Yahweh Enthroned | Attendants Near By | Deliberation/ Judgment |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Kgs 22:19–23 (2 Chr 18:18–22) | • | • | • | • |
| Isa 6 | • | • | • | • |
| Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6 | • | | • | • |
| Ps 82 | • | | • | • |
| Zech 3 | • (?) ³² | | • | • |
| Dan 7:9–14 | • | • | • | • |
| Rev 4–5 | • | • | • | • (Rev 6) |

²⁸ Michael S. Heiser, “Divine Council,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 112. H. Wheeler Robinson, one of the first to trace the divine-council theme through the OT, offers a helpful primer on the subject. “The Council of Yahweh,” *JTS* 45 nos. 179–180 (July 1944): 151–57.

²⁹ David Marron Fleming, “The Divine Council as Type Scene in the Hebrew Bible” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); Min Suc Kee, “The Heavenly Council and Its Type-Scene,” *JSOT* 3 (2007): 259; idem, “A Study of the Heavenly Council in the Ancient Near Eastern Texts, and Its Employment as a Type-Scene in the Hebrew Bible” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Manchester, 2003).

³⁰ Fleming, 37. While agreeing overall with Kee, Fleming categorizes Isaiah 40:1–11 as a divine-council type scene and questions whether Daniel 7:9–14, though a divine-council scene, ought to be classified as a type scene due to its lack of obvious narrative time (230–31). Conversely, Kee thinks that seeing Isaiah 40:1–11 as a divine-council scene is “highly speculative.” “A Study of the Heavenly Council,” 24. It is somewhat surprising that Kee missed Fleming’s work in his bibliography despite post-dating it by over thirteen years. Kee also does not interact with Robert Alter despite the latter’s extensive work with the idea of the type scene. See Robert Alter, “How Convention Helps Us Read: The Case of the Bible’s Annunciation Type-Scene,” *Prooftexts* 3, no. 2 (1983): 115–30. These oversights, however, may indicate that these works are not suffering from an echo chamber. On another defense of Isaiah 40 as a divine-council scene, see Frank M. Cross, “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” *JNES* 12, no. 4 (1953): 275–76.

³¹ Table 1 is partly adapted from Kee, “A Study of the Heavenly Council,” 19–24; “The Heavenly Council,” 259; Marylyn Ellen White, “The Council of Yahweh: Its Structure and Membership” (PhD diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2012), ii.

³² The Angel of Yahweh takes center stage in this account. Kee thinks the implication is that “YHWH is withdrawn in the background of the scene of the heavenly council but the angel of YHWH appears in the foreground.” “A Study of the Heavenly Council,” 23.

Kee argues that these motifs are largely “derived from the royal court-scene” (Exod 18:13; 1 Sam 22:6ff; Zech 6:13).³³ Like a king over his royal court, Yahweh presides over his council, depicting God in spatial relationship to the other members of the council.

In 1 Kings 22:19–23, Micaiah sees Yahweh “sitting on his throne (יָשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּאֵוֹ)” with all the host of heaven standing on his right and left (עֹמְדֵי עָלָיו מִיְמִינוֹ וּמִשְׂמָאלָיו) (v. 19). As Yahweh and the council debate how to make Ahab go to war, “a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD (וַיָּצֵא הָרוּחַ וַיַּעֲמֵד לְפָנַי יְהוָה)” (v. 21).

Micaiah's oracle is not parabolic, metaphorical, or symbolic. A prophet would reveal the application behind the parable and explain the metaphors in it (e.g., 2 Sam 12:7), but Micaiah's interpretation confirms the literal details of his account (1 Kgs 22:23). Additionally, note the parallel between kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat each “sitting on his throne (יָשֵׁבִים אִישׁ עַל־כִּסֵּאוֹ)” in their court with their councilors “prophesying before them (לְפָנֵיהֶם)” (1 Kgs 22:10) and Yahweh on his throne and his councilors coming before him. This parallel indicates that the account of Yahweh's council is also a narrative.³⁴ Micaiah says, “That which Yahweh says to me, it I will speak (כִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר יְהוָה יֹאמַר אֲדַבֵּר אֵלַי אֲתוֹ אֲדַבֵּר)” (1 Kgs 22:14).³⁵ Rather than inventing a parable or metaphor, “[t]he oracle was merely the relaying of what Micaiah had seen and heard.”³⁶ Therefore, the aspects of the account that point to a narrative genre indicate that the original readers and hearers would have understood this vision as a glimpse into the reality of the divine council in the heavenly sphere. Thus, the spirits described should be understood as being in spatial relationship with Yahweh: some spirits are on his right and left hands, and one comes before him.

The divine-council scene in Daniel 7:9–14 presents the Ancient of Days with white hair and a white robe, his court in session, thousands standing before him.³⁷ The “one like a son of man” coming with the clouds “came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him (מָטָה וּקְדָמוּהִי הִקְרִיבוּהָ)” (Dan 7:13). Daniel 7 depicts Yahweh in spatial relationship both with his courtiers and the “son of man.”

³³ Kee, “A Study of the Heavenly Council,” 23. Kee classifies minor divine-council scenes as those that seem to hint at the council's presence but do not have all of the motifs of the type scene: Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Exod 15:11; Deut 4:19; 17:3; 32:8; 33:2–3; Judg 5:20; 1 Chr 16:25; Neh 9:6; Job 15:8; 38:7; Pss 25:14; 29:1–2; 49:19; 58:1–2; 73:15; 89:5–8; 96:4–5; 97:7, 9; 148:2–3; Isa 14:13; Jer 8:2; 23:18, 22a; Amos 8:14; Zech 14:5. “The Heavenly Council,” 260–62.

³⁴ Zedekiah likely parallels the “lying spirit” (רוּחַ שָׁקֵר). Cf. Ezra 14:9.

³⁵ My translation.

³⁶ Edwin C. Kingsbury, “The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 280. As Job 15:8 says, “Have you listened in the council of God?” (אֲלֹהֵי הַבְּסוֹ). A true prophet must be able to answer, “Yes.” Polley says, “The heart of the prophetic credentials is to have stood within the council of Yahweh.” Max E. Polley, “Hebrew Prophecy within the Council of Yahweh, Examined in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting,” in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. Dikran Y. Hadidian (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980), 148. The “true prophets have stood and listened in Yahweh's divine council; false prophets have not.” Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2015), 239.

³⁷ The “Ancient of Days” is a title for Yahweh. John J. Collins, “The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism,” *NTS* 38, no. 3 (1992): 464.

³⁸ Citing this verse, HALOT gives קָדַם the sense “with spatial significance, in front of the king.”

Isaiah 6, Job 1–2, Psalm 82, and Zechariah 3 all depict Yahweh surrounded by his angelic entourage. At times, the texts foreground a human's physical presence (Isa 6:5; Zech 3:3). Angels move from Yahweh to physically interact with Isaiah (Isa 6:6). Thus, these texts also place Yahweh in spatial relationship to angels.

The NT Authors Considered God the Father to Be in the Divine Council

The NT authors likely would have considered God the Father to be the Yahweh character in these divine-council scenes. First, the NT authors conceive of the Father as enthroned in heaven, like Yahweh in his council (Heb 8:1; Acts 7:55–56). Second, Jesus indicates that the Father is the central character in divine-council scenes. When Jesus is on trial, he is charged with blasphemy for saying that he will be seated at the right hand of God (Luke 22:69) and come with the clouds of heaven (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62). This “coming” is discussed elsewhere as coming with “the glory of the Father” and with “angels” (Matt 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Collated, Jesus' sayings contain all the motifs that demarcate a divine-council scene: the Father is given a central position,³⁹ seated on a throne, surrounded by angelic heavenly attendants, and executing judgment. Third, the NT's only divine-council type scene (Rev 4–5) presents the Father enthroned in the divine council.⁴⁰

Viewing the Father as the enthroned character comports with Daniel's vision as well. Daniel 7 presents the Messiah, “one like a son of man,”⁴¹ in spatial proximity to God the Father. Luke describes Jesus' ascension as a literal going up of his body (Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:9–10), and “one like a son of man” indicates that it is a human that is in proximity to “the Ancient of Days.” Due to the substantial continuity in the divine-council motifs, the NT authors likely would have seen the Father as the enthroned character of 1 Kings 22, Isaiah 6, Job 1–2, Psalm 82, and possibly in the background of Zechariah 3.⁴²

³⁹ The Son's position (“at the right hand”) is described in relation to the Father's position, indicating the Father has the central position (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69).

⁴⁰ That Revelation 4–5 is a divine-council type scene can be drawn from the scene's heavenly location (Rev 4:1), where God is in the central position on his throne (Rev 4:2–3), surrounded by divine beings (Rev 4:4, 6–8, 9–10), deliberating (Rev 5:2) and passing judgment (Rev 5:5, 12; Rev 6). See R. Dean Davis, “The Heavenly Court Scene of Revelation 4–5” (PhD diss., Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1986), 104–33. Note the shared motifs in Table 1. Alan S. Bandy also concludes that Revelation 4–5 is a divine-council scene. “The Prophetic Lawsuit in the Book of Revelation: An Analysis of the Lawsuit Motif in Revelation with Reference to the Use of the Old Testament” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 229–31. The elders may be members of the divine council (cf. Isa 24:21–23). See Timothy Willis, “Yahweh's Elders (Isa 24:23): Senior Officials of the Divine Court,” *ZAW*, 103, no. 3 (1991): 375–85.

⁴¹ “The Son of Man” is Jesus' favorite self-designation. See, for example, Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; 22:69.

⁴² Some might think the preincarnate Son is the enthroned character in these texts, citing as evidence John's citation of Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 and John's explanation that “Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him” (John 12:41). Does this mean Isaiah 6 is a vision of the enthroned Jesus? Catrin H. Williams makes a good case that John is referring to Isaiah's foreseeing Jesus' earthly glory, not the Temple vision specifically. “Isaiah in John's Gospel,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament: The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. M. J. J. Menken and Steve Moyise (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 110–13. If one does not find Williams's interpretation compelling, one should at least concede that seeing Christ as the enthroned character of Isaiah 6 is inferential and that the dual quotations of Isaiah 6 and 53 likely

These conceptual categories can be used to understand the NT’s depiction of the Father in spatial relationship to angels. Angels dwell in heaven,⁴³ where the Father is.⁴⁴ Thus, the Father and angels are frequently associated.⁴⁵ Jesus taught that some angels “always see the face of [his] Father who is in heaven” (Matt 18:10). R. T. France notes that the description of the angels as those “who always behold the face of God” is “a phrase derived from courtly language for personal access to the king.”⁴⁶

point to a broader referent. So Vern S. Poythress, *Theophany: A Biblical Theology of God’s Appearing* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 309–10; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 605.

Viewing the Son as the enthroned Yahweh ignores the transition that Christ undergoes. In Daniel 7, which clearly distinguishes the two characters, it is the Ancient of Days (the Father) seated on a throne in the central position (Dan 7:9–10) when the Son of Man comes to him (cf. Rev 4–5). Both Daniel 7 and Psalm 110 were not depictions of a current reality but prophecies of a future one. It is when Jesus ascends with the clouds (Acts 1:9) that he comes to receive his kingdom. It is after Jesus arrives in the heavenly sanctuary that the words of Psalm 110:1 and 4 are spoken and Christ takes his seat. See Robert B. Jamieson, *Jesus’ Death and Heavenly Offering in Hebrews*, SNTSMS (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 34. This transition into Jesus’ session is also indicated by the verb tenses that predict or describe it:

| Time period | Tense | Text | Verb |
|----------------|-----------|------------------------------------|--|
| Pre-ascension | Future | Matt 26:64 | ὄψεσθε, they “will see” Jesus at the right hand |
| | | Mark 14:62 | ὄψεσθε, they “will see” Jesus at the right hand |
| | | Luke 22:69 | ἔσται . . . καθήμενος, Jesus “will be seated” at the right hand |
| Post-ascension | Aorist | Mark 16:19; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12 | ἐκάθισεν, Jesus “sat down” at the right hand |
| | | Eph 1:20 | καθίσας, Jesus “was caused to sit” at the right hand |
| | Perfect | Heb 12:2 | κεκάθικεν, Jesus “has sat down” at the right hand |
| | | Present | 1 Cor 15:25 |
| | Rom 8:34 | | ἐστίν, Jesus “is” at the right hand |
| | Col 3:1 | | καθήμενος, Jesus “is, seated” at the right hand |
| | Heb 10:13 | | ἐκδεχόμενος, Jesus “is waiting” at the right hand (alludes to Ps 110:1b) |
| | | 1 Pet 3:22 | ἐστίν, Jesus “is” at the right hand |

Thus, the NT authors more likely would have understood the Father to be the centrally enthroned figure, not the Son.

⁴³ Matt 18:10; Mark 12:25; Luke 2:13; John 1:51; Gal 1:7; Heb 12:22.

⁴⁴ Matt 5:16; 7:11; Mark 11:25; Luke 15:7, 10; John 12:28; Acts 7:55–56; Heb 12:9; Jas 1:17.

⁴⁵ “The glory of the Father” is associated with “the holy angels” (Matt 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Jesus assumed that angels are typically privy to the Father’s council (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32).

⁴⁶ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985), 276 (emphasis original). Leon Morris argues that “certainly the angels to whom Jesus refers are *in heaven*; he further says that they *continually see the face of my Father*. . . . The whole expression is surely a way of saying that these angels have immediate access to God.” *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 465 (emphasis original). “In line with the belief which finds expression elsewhere in the Bible (Gen xlvi 16; Dan x 11, 20) Jesus asserts that those apt to be despised because of their status have representatives in the heavenly courts, just as nations have such representatives (cf. also Acts xii 15). Such representatives naturally have access to the Father.” W. F. Albright and Christopher Stephen Mann, *Matthew*, AB (Garden City, NY:

These texts likely reflect the OT depictions of the divine council, conceiving of the Father's manifestation as spatially related to angels.

The Father's Manifestation Is Proximate to Christ's Body

While there are many texts that present Jesus as absent from the Father during his earthly ministry⁴⁷ and present Jesus with the Father after his ascension,⁴⁸ Hebrews offers the clearest presentation of Jesus' spatial proximity to the Father. Hebrews presents a heavenly tabernacle that is a spatial realm, as demonstrated by the fact that (1) the heavenly tabernacle was the pattern for the earthly tabernacle (Heb 8:2, 5; 9:23; cf. Exod 25:9; Acts 7:44), and (2) Jesus ascends to and enters this tabernacle in his human body.⁴⁹

Christ has not entered into the earthly "hand-made sanctuary . . . but into heaven itself, now to make an appearance before the face of God (τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ) on behalf of us . . . to offer himself" (Heb 9:24–25).⁵⁰ Several factors indicate Jesus enters heaven in his humanity. (1) How could Christ's God-ness enter into the presence of God (cf. John 1:18)? (2) How can Christ offer "himself" (Heb 9:14), his material body and blood (10:10, 19), except in his humanity? (3) It is Christ's humanity that qualifies him to act on behalf of humanity in the heavenly tabernacle (Heb 2:16–18; 10:5). This means that Christ offered his body in the heavenly tabernacle in a unique spatial relationship with the Father (Heb 9:24).

Christ's enthronement in heaven brings his spatial relationship to the Father into clear focus. Like his entrance into the heavenly tabernacle, Jesus' session on the heavenly throne must also be in his body. (1) The session marks the completion of his embodied priestly work (Heb 1:3; 4:14–15; 7:23–

Doubleday, 1971), 218. Cf. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 276. There seem to be what have been called "angels of the face" (Jub. 2:2, 18; 1QH 6:13; 1QSb 4:26; Luke 1:19), while "some angels may not look directly at God (Isa 6:2; 1 En. 14:21)." R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 686. Hagner points out that the present tense "behold" (βλέπουσιν) seems to rule out notion that the "angels" are the departed spirits of the "little ones." Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1995), 526. Cf. Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 680–81; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 450–51. Contra D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *EBCRev*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9:454–55. Angelic presence before God is underscored by Gabriel's words to Zechariah (Luke 1:19) previously discussed.

⁴⁷ Matt 3:16–17; Matt 5:16–17, 45, 48; 6:1, 9, 14, 26, 32; 7:11, 21; 10:32–35; 12:50; 15:13; 16:17; 17:5–6; 18:10, 14, 19, 35; 23:9; 26:64; Mark 1:10–11; 14:62; Luke 3:21–22; 22:69; John 3:12–13; 6:32–35, 38; 12:28–29; 13:1–4; 15:15; 16:5–7, 28–30.

⁴⁸ Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; John 15:26; Acts 2:30–35; 5:31–32; 7:55; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; 1 Pet 3:18–21.

⁴⁹ "The heavenly sanctuary is a place where Christ goes, not a metaphor for something else. Christ went there, remains there, and from there will return (6:19–20; 8:1–5; 9:11–12, 24, 28; 10:12–13; cf. 1:3; 12:2). Any reading of the sequence of Christ's sacrifice that makes 'metaphor' programmatic founders on the intractably referential quality of Hebrews' assertions that Jesus entered heaven. Jesus' entry to the heavenly sanctuary not only explains how he obtained redemption but specifies his present location (8:1; 9:24)." Jamieson, 92. In Scott D. Mackie's words, "As the place where Jesus' sacrifice is completed, the Heavenly Sanctuary must be as 'real' for both author and audience as the cross where Jesus' self-offering began." *Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, WUNT 2/223 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2007), 159.

⁵⁰ My translation. English speakers frequently use the word "appear" to connote a lack of reality. The phrase "make an appearance" better conveys the idea of true presence (as ἐμφανίζω does, Matt 27:53).

8:2; 9:11–12; 10:10–12; 12:24), and (2) the session was granted to Jesus because of work accomplished in his capacity as a human, not because of his divine status, as the contrast with the angels (whom he has “become” greater than) clarifies (Heb 1:4, 7, 9, 13–14; 2:5–18). Additionally, (3) Hebrews embeds Christ’s session within contexts that emphasize Jesus’ bodily death, resurrection, and ascension (Heb 1:3–4; 7:23–8:6; 10:1–14; 12:2; cf. Acts 2:22–35; 5:30–32; Rom 8:32–34; Eph 1:20; 1 Pet 3:18–21),⁵¹ contexts that imply a physical understanding of Christ’s session.

Since Jesus has appeared “before the face of God (τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ)” (Heb 9:24) and taken his seat “at the right hand of the throne of God (ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ κεκάθικεν)” (Heb 12:2) in his humanity, what should we make of the Father at Jesus’ left hand? The biblical evidence demonstrates that from the relational view of space:

Premise 1: Entities that are spatially related to other entities are spatial.

Premise 2: Angels and Christ’s resurrected body are spatial.

Premise 3: The Father’s manifestation is spatially related to angels and Christ’s body.

Conclusion: The Father’s manifestation is spatial.

And from the receptacle view of space:

Premise 1: Entities within a spatial receptacle are spatial.

Premise 2: Heaven is a spatial receptacle.

Premise 3: The Father’s manifestation resides in heaven.

Conclusion: The Father’s manifestation is spatial.

Conclusion

So the language of the Apostles’ Creed is precise after all. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. But perhaps we would benefit from more precision concerning what exactly a “spatial manifestation” is. When we say that God the Father possesses a spatial manifestation, we are not saying that God is an essentially spatial being.⁵² All that is being asserted is that God the Father has a theophany located in heaven.

That God reveals himself through theophany is supported by many OT examples. OT narratives depict people seeing God (Gen 32:30; Exod 24:10; 33:23; Num 12:8; Judg 6:22; 13:22; Isa 6:1; Amos 7:7) and being touched by him (Exod 33:22; Jer 1:9). God and humans share a meal (Gen 18:1–8)

⁵¹ Richard D. Nelson terms this smooth movement from crucifixion to session a “single sacrificial script” (though the timing and location of Jesus’ sacrifice in Hebrews is debated). “He Offered Himself: Sacrifice in Hebrews,” *Interpretation* 57 (2003): 255.

⁵² For an argument that spatiality is one of God’s perfections, see Chan Ho Park, “Transcendence and Spatiality of the Triune Creator” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003). For an argument that materiality is one of God’s perfections, see Stephen Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

and even have a wrestling match (Gen 32:24–32).⁵³ God's manifestation is described as a "likeness like an appearance of a man (דְמוּת כְּמַרְאֵה אָדָם)" (Ezek 1:26), complete with hair and clothing (Dan 7:9). Any theology that accounts for a God who can make such appearances need only copy and paste: the God who can manifest himself before Moses and the elders with sapphire stones "under his feet" (Exod 24:10) can just as easily appear in heaven in a spatial, even bodily, manifestation. To assume de facto that only the Son can manifest himself spatially belies a tacit essential subordinationism, as though the Father or Spirit were endowed with a greater measure of the divine essence, or a latent Arianism that assumes that becoming incarnate is incompatible with full deity (Col 1:19).

A doctrine of the Father's spatial heavenly presence contributes to theologies of revelation, immanence, cosmology, and eschatology. With regard to revelation, God's spatial manifestation is simply another way that God reveals himself to his creatures, whether they be on earth or in heaven, human or angelic. In his immanence, the Father participates in his creation by presiding over his angelic court. Biblical cosmology must account for the spatiality of heaven and the Father's place within it. And our eschatology looks forward in hope to a time when the dwelling place of God will be with man and the pure of heart shall see God face to face (Matt 5:8; Rev 21:3; 22:4).

⁵³ Esther J. Hamori observes that nothing in Hittite and Greek mythology—the closest parallel being "the story of Kothar's visit to Danil in Aqhat (KTU 1:17 V 2–33)"—displays "this type of anthropomorphic realism in the depiction of the visiting god. . . . In the two Genesis theophanies [Gen 18; 32], God appears in human form and is in fact indistinguishable from humans." *When Gods Were Men: The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature*, BZAW 384 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 150. Hamori's work demonstrates that even the radically transcendent perfect being of classical theism can be reconciled with such theophanies.