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ABSTRACT
The visions of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21) have a utopian feel. This essay suggests that ancient writers from a Graeco-Roman background might have read these visions through the lens of the locus amoenus (pleasant place)- a utopian prototype. Whilst associated primarily with pastoral poetry, the motif also served wider theological and philosophical purposes in the late Roman Republic and early Imperial periods and had spread beyond purely literary confines. The genre also engaged with philosophical, theological and eschatological themes. Thus engaging with Revelation 21 as an locus amoenus, as a contextually appropriate form, may have served as a jumping-off point into the less familiar realms of Judaic eschatological symbolism. Lastly, it is suggested that the appearance of the motif within what would become the Scriptures of emerging Christianity may provide a reason for the later more explicit developments of the genre in patristic writing.
Introduction

The literary character of Revelation embraces many different types and genres. In this article, it is suggested that the literary motif of the *locus amoenus*, found predominantly, but not exclusively, in pastoral poetry provides a literary form which may be helpful in analyzing the visions of the heavenly Jerusalem given in Revelation 21-22. It is worth, as a preliminary question asking whether it is appropriate to explore revelation for a Graeco-Roman literary motif. In support of what follows, Robert Royalty’s words (1998) are apposite:

Few of the Christians who heard the Apocalypse would have had the knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures that John had, whereas all would be conversant in the public aspects of Greco-Roman culture that organized social life in the cities of Asia Minor. (p. 81)

David E. Aune provides an example of this in his excursus which explores a literary phenomenon which identifies with Thomas More’s term: utopia (1998, pp.1191-94). This paper suggests it might be more productive to use the literary motif known as the *locus amoenus* to explore the territory covered by Aune. However, approaching the visions from the perspective of the *locus amoenus* rather than utopia involves a subtle shift in how the material is handled. Thus, the first part of this paper defines the motif as found in classical literature. The visions of the New Jerusalem are then compared to it. At no point is it claimed that it is the only motif or metaphor which shapes these visions: bridal and feminine imagery are also clearly present (Huber, 2007), as well as a significant input from prophetic and apocalyptic traditions. However, it does claim that the *locus amoenus* is one motif which may have shaped the reception of these visions by John’s audience, and attempts to indicate the nature of such a reception.
The Locus Amoenus

In Graeco-Roman texts and images, the locus amoenus is a garden, a pastoral landscape or a group of idyllic islands. From the time of Homer onwards, poets described a land of music, dancing, sunny meadows, flowers and sweet refreshment and repose in shady groves, a land in which death and disease have no dominion and no-one lacks anything (Russell, 2004, p. 21; Pearce, 1988, pp. 292-94). It was identified as a literary motif by Varro and Verrius Flaccus in the first century BCE (Schlapbach, 2007, p.35) and appears across a broad spectrum of prose and poetry from different periods: Homer, Simonides (72 Page), Pindar (Isthm. 6:74 ff.), Theocritus (1:106, 5:31-33; 7:131-57, 11:44-48, 13:39-45, 22:37-43, epigram 4:1-12), Sophocles (Oedipus at Colonus 668-93), Plato (Phaedrus 229a-242a, 279 b; Pearce, 1988, pp. 293-99), and Daphnis and Chloe (Alpers, 2011, p. 324; for the locus horrificus, see Apollonius Rhodius, Argonautica 2.727-751 [Giesecke, 2007, pp. 95-97]).

The motif often blends realistic and unrealistic elements: nymphs and muses in habit such places as well as humanity (Pearce, 1988, p. 276). It is not always perfect: occasionally elements intrude which signify potential danger, such as the foxes in Theocritus 7: 45-54. Ovid, a poet who often parodies and subverts classic poetic forms (e.g., Metamorphoses 8.260-546; Giger, 2004, p. 93; Horsfall, 1979; Lively, 2011, p. 86), contains an even more unsettling account: the Muses have been threatened with rape in their locus amoenus (Metamorphoses 5:288; Lively, 2011, p.64).

The locus may carry additional layers of meaning. Within pastoral, it often symbolises an emotional interaction between humanity and nature (Karakasis: 2011, p.164). It may represent poetic inspiration through associations with Nymphs and Muses (Pearce, 1988, pp. 301-02; Schlapbach, 2007, pp. 38-40), or erotic encounters (Alpers, 2011, p. 324). It may also function as a locus sanctus: an environment
which is appropriate for encounters between the gods and humanity, notably in Livy 1.21.3 (the grove of Camaenae).

The pastoral poetic tradition predominates in the use of the motif, and comes to employ it to explore the human condition. Theocritus used Sicily, but it was Vergil who gifted the most enduring location to the pastoral tradition: Arcadia—famously said to have been discovered in 41 BCE (Snell, 1953, p. 281). Within the pastoral tradition, Arcadia:

- is a middle country of the imagination, halfway between a past perfection and a present imperfection, a place of becoming rather than being, where the individual’s potencies for the arts of love and poetry are explored and tested. It points two ways therefore, backward into the past and forward into a possible future. (Marinelli, 1971, p. 37)

The locus amoenus is thus both real and unreal, named after a known location, but completely different in its description: Theocritus’ Sicily is no more the real Sicily than Vergil’s Arcadia is a Greek province. It is not simply a cipher for withdrawal from the hurly-burly of urban life, and a retreat to an idyll, but also represents a movement by the poet to embrace some higher concerns:

- The poet comes to Arcadia for a clarification of his artistic, intellectual and moral purpose. (Marinelli, 1971, p. 45)

Thus the locus amoenus also became a philosophical trope, particularly in the hands of Latin poets, though its earlier fitness for this task may be seen earlier, particularly in the Phaedrus, which introduces it as a location for philosophical dialogue (Schlapbach, 2007, pp. 40-41). Lucretius was the first to appropriate the locus amoenus motif to a specifically philosophical purpose by placing Epicurean themes within a pastoral landscape (e.g., de Rerum Natura 2: 29-33 and 5: 1390-96). His ideal society is
described in terms of “rustic simplicity” (Bowditch, 2001, p.6). Poetry becomes a medium for philosophical reflection, embracing both physics and ethics. Giesecke summarises this as indicative of Epicurean goals, not least ἀταραξία:

...by including the locus amoenus in both of these passages, namely the description of the origin of civilization and the description of the ultimate Epicurean lifestyle, Lucretius is providing his audience/readers with a means, on a metaphysical or spiritual level, of returning to the blessed springtime of human existence and its primal harmony with nature. It is with the guidance of Epicurus and the attending withdrawal from the misconceived modern day, urbane value system that this beatific condition, freedom from distress and anxiety, can be attained. (Giesecke 1999, p.6)

Lucretius' literary influence was significant and subsequent poets such as Vergil, Horace and Statius, all of whom appropriated the motif. Indeed the function of the locus amoenus as “the scene of the resolution of the hero’s psychic turmoil in terms of the highest principles the poet brings to bear on the problems” (Piehler, 1988, p. 201) persists into the medieval period.

The Eclogues reveal Vergil’s handling of the motif in his Arcadia. The motif links three worlds: Arcadia itself, the long lost world of the golden age and Rome of the present (Marinelli, 1971, p. 42). Vergil’s Arcadia also:

is the discovery of a realer and more intense reality than life can offer, and its very timelessness and placelessness accommodate all time, past, present, and future, and all place. (Marinelli, 1971, p.43)

This embraced philosophical concerns:
The *Eclogues* are touched by the ideas of Hellenistic philosophy, and even occasionally by technical philosophical language, but it would be wrong to see the world of the *Eclogues* as a blueprint for an achieved state of Epicurean calm. For Lucretius one of the major threats to happiness is the insatiability of sexual desire; the destructiveness of love is a major theme in the Eclogues, as also in the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*. (Hardie, 1998, p.12; but cf. Gigante 2004, esp. pp. 81-82)


*Eclogue* 1 echoes the Epicurean practice of hospitality in which an invitation to a meal is an act of friendship when Tityrus invites Meliboeus to share a simple meal: the choice of such food may also reflect Epicurean simplicity (Davis, 2004, pp. 65-67). This poem also demands a refinement, at least from Vergil’s perspective, of Epicurean attitudes to poetry, given the role of music in both the prologue (*Eclogue* 1:1-5). Here the poet’s freedom from stress (*otium*) is the gift of an Epicurean deity (cf. *De Rerum Natura* 5:7-8; Davis, 2004, pp. 65-67). The second Eclogue also shares an Epicurean flavour: Corydon (*Eclogues* 2: 59-73) learns to overcome the frustration of unrequited love (Marinelli, 1971, p.44) through Epicurean sense theory (*Eclogues* 2.27): this learning process may re-appear in *Eclogue* 7
(Bowditch 2001, pp.216-19; Clausen, 1995, p. 74). Frischer’s study of Eclogue 7 also reveals a significant Epicurean dimension: theology, emotions, and poverty (1975, pp. 233-41). The end result is that Corydon appropriates the locus amoenus motif (7:45-46, 53-55) to alert Thyrsis to his own lack of awareness (stultitia) and prompt his conversion to áταραξία (Frischer, 1975, pp. 239-41; Bowditch, 2001, p.216).

The Vergilian idyll is not, however, utopian. Eclogue 9 finishes on a less than optimistic note: Moeris is dispossessed of his farm (Eclogue 9:3-6; Clausen, 1995, pp.266; Fairclough 1916). Vergil thus stands within the tradition which sees potential danger still present in the most pleasant of groves. His Arcadia is not immune from the concerns or realities of the real world. This might reflect the harsh political realities engendered by the successive civil wars of the late Republic.

The Eclogues also took an eschatological turn. The iuvenes (Eclogue 1:42, see also 1:6) has a distinctive Epicurean identity, which remains significant even if the link often made to Octavian (Alpers, 1979, p.68; Smith, 2011, p.65) is rejected (Mayer, 1983; Hardie, 1998, p.12). Both the brutality of extended civil wars and hope for a new, better leadership cry out for resolution.

Vergil’s reflections on an eschatological saviour figure are not confined to the iuvenes. Eclogue 4:5-25 contains a passage which relates the appearance of a child with remarkable powers who signifies a new age or era, in which guilt and fear will be banished and gods and humanity live together in a pastoral idyll (Eclogue 4:5-25; Fairclough, 1916). The identity of the child is disputed: the governor of Spain (Curchin, 1988), the child of Mark Anthony and Octavia (the sister of Octavian/Augustus) who, it was hoped, would unite the two warring factions (Knohl, 2000, p.98), or the Pact of Brundisium (40 BCE) rather than a literal child (Alpers, 1979, p.178; Clausen, 1995, pp.121-22). Yet, this Golden Age may still be “representative of the optimism associated with Octavian’s nascent reign” (Smith, 2011, p. 67).
Whilst connections of this passage to Christian thought have been over-stated (Clausen, 1995, 126-29), more recent research in Second Temple Judaism has raised the question of cross-fertilisation of ideas: O’Neill concludes that Jewish messianic hopes have influenced Vergil (1995, pp. 37-38), Knohl the reverse (2000, p.101).

Horace’s poetry also combines pastoral and philosophical themes. Two Epicurean themes recur in the Odes: *carpe diem* and the call for simplicity (Moles, 2007, p.172). References to Epicureanism in the Odes outstrip the other schools (Moles, 2007, p.173), and provide the dominant philosophical bias in the Epistles (Moles, 2007, p.178). *Ode* 2.3, to Delius, combines Horace’s *carpe diem* with a vision of the *locus amoenus*:

> At first sight, the mood of Horace’s poem oscillates strangely between an invitation to *carpe diem*, with lush descriptions of an *locus amoenus* fit to host Delius, by enjoying exquisite wine, and the melancholy of the final three stanzas, which dwell on death. (Günther, 2012, p. 327)

The themes are resolved through the depiction of Delius as an Epicurean sage, capable of coping with adversity (Günther, 2012, p. 327).

Two of Horace’s Epistles refer to his country estate and so the *locus amoenus*: *Epistles* 1.14 (to his bailiff) and 1.16 (to Quinctius; Bowditch, 2001, p.211), 1.14.1 (*mihi me reddentis agelli*) suggest that the farm restores Horace’s equilibrium, a state of ἀταραξία, and its address to his bailiff, the egalitarian nature of the Epicurean community (Bowditch, 2001, p. 221). Both Horace and the bailiff are presented as equals, “in need of philosophical therapy” (Bowditch, 2001, p. 222). Horace’s absence from his farm is like a “division of his own being”, and the desire for the land, or farm, “connotes a wish for the philosophical
study that returns Horace to himself” (Bowditch, 2001, p. 223). Part of this process of healing is Horace’s rejection of his city life-style and an embracing of Epicurean simplicity (Horace, *Ep.*, 1.14.31-39; Kline, 2005).

Bowditch sums up Horace’s vision of his farm, whatever the real social picture, in the following way:

> Horace accesses for himself the properties associated with Epicureanism’s *ataraxia*. The mental state of the *aequus animus*, Epicurean in its emphasis on the absence of disturbance, particularly derives from the poet’s intellectual appreciation of the images – as memory- of his physical contentment, a perception structured by the associations with pleasure (*voluptas*) attached to the word *amoenus*. (2001, p. 232)

*Epistle* 1.16 starts with a glowing account of Horace’s estate which stresses how the farm provides for Horace’s good health. The description of the farm as a retreat (*latebrae*) where Horace is healthy (*incolumem*) ties in with Epicurean *ἀταραξία* (Bowditch, 2001, p.242). This second poem is different in its aim from 1.14. In his remarks to Quinctius, Horace describes his farm “as a site of pleasure, not profit (*voluptatis plena, quasi amunia*)*, a sensuous and libidinized landscape that rhetorically recalls the pastoral ideal of the *Eclogues*” (Bowditch, 2001, p.246).

Whilst the farm has to be a business (*negotia*), Horace recognizes its true value lies in the philosophical and aesthetic qualities (*otium*) it brings to him. In so doing, he claims a detachment from materialism and an Epicurean simplicity, a manifestation of *ἀταραξία*, which mirrors the *otium* seen as supremely significant in the depiction of the farm. As in Vergil, the landscape embodies Epicurean ideals.

The final writer under consideration, Statius (50 CE- 95CE) also drew on the *locus amoenus* motif to illustrate Epicurean philosophy, to which he addressed himself in his later years (Shackleton Bailey,

In the *Silvae* 1.3, Statius uses Pollius' villa to reflect his Epicureanism (*Silvae* 1.3.92-93,136; Nagle, 2004, p.16) : it is a place where he may reflect on his “model”, Epicurus. (*Silvae* 2.2.146; Nagle, 2004, p.78). The comparison of villa life as a calm sea compared to the turbulent sea of public life is a common Epicurean motif (*Silvae* 2.2.95; Nagle, 2004, p.76; van Dam, 1984, p.210). However, Statius’ *locus amoenus* differs dramatically from earlier pastoral landscapes. A much greater emphasis has been placed on the villa: “a building in the country designed for its owner’s working farm or estate” (Ackerman, 1985, p.9)which is “economically, socially and artistically dependent on urban culture” (Newlands, 2002, p.122) and “served as a site for both pleasure and for the bold articulation of personal power, interests and worth” (p.123). Within this new landscape, previous natural blessings such as shade and water are replaced by manufactured equivalents: elaborate plumbing and shady areas (Newlands, 2002, p.123). The villa becomes a fusion of nature and technology (Newlands, 2002, p.132), which provides a vital content for the acquisition of ἀταραξία. (p.138). This is a far cry from the rustic simplicity of his predecessors (Newlands, 2002, pp. 130-31). Statius even seems to claim that Epicurus would have preferred Vopiscus’ estate to the garden of the community (*Silvae* 1.3.93-4; Newlands, 2002, pp. 131-32). Thus, he drastically reconfigures the nature of the *locus amoenus*: a luxurious estate becomes symbolic of the simple Epicurean life-style. Wealth, privilege and Epicureanism are depicted as going hand-in-hand (Newlands, 2002, p.137): “In Statius’ villa poetry luxury is celebrated as a sign not of moral decadence but as an essential component of moral virtue and philosophical value” (p.126).
This reconfiguration of luxury seems to indicate a development of Epicureanism peculiar to its Roman context in which patronage was defined according to the ideals of the school. This is visible in the writings of Philodemus. On Household Economics shows which occupations and ways of earning a living are compatible with the philosophic life: the combination of gentleman farmer and philosopher is exemplary (Asmis, 2004, pp. 164-72). It is not an egalitarian picture: it depends on the sweat of others, (slaves, for example), but also makes demands on how subordinates are to be treated- with kindness (Asmis, 2004, pp. 172-73). The Statian villa as locus amoenus appears to function as an analogue for the philosophic life. It also seems to mark a new stage in the development of Roman values: the business (negotium) of Cato (Newlands, 2002, p. 122) has been replaced by the rustic simplicity and otium of Horace which still rejected luxury (Newlands, 2002, p.130), and finds a further development in the doctum otium (cultivated tranquillity) of Statius’poetry in which rural bliss, technology and the philosophic life combine to make for an idyllic life. The locus amoenus stands as a revelation of the philosophic telos in terms of environment and landscape. Statius’ combination of the technological and the rural may also be considered part of a wider movement in which the urban and rural were brought together in a utopian schema, often focused on a villa: Epicurus, Lucretius, Varro (De Re Rustica, 2.1.3-5), Plato, Pliny the Elder Pliny the Elder (Natural History, 19.19.50-51) , and Vitruvius (De Architectura, 7.5.3) all contribute to the development of this phenomenon and show that an appropriation of such ideas is not dependent on the Silvae alone (Giesecke, 2007, pp.79-125).

The pastoral traditions did not remain confined to literature. They also featured in the design and decoration of houses in the late republic and Early Empire: second-style wall paintings (circa 40-20 BCE) included pastoral scenes (Clarke 2002, p.49). Thus, pastoral landscapes adorn the Villa Farnesina in Rome (Spencer, 2010, pp.149-54), whilst porticus 102 of the Villa San Marco (Naples) incorporates...
pastoral depictions of mythological figures (Zarmapouki, 2014, pp.262-63). Contrapuntal designs at the Villa of the Papyri are an architectural embodiment of Epicurean values (Zarmapouki, 2014, pp.43-44). Public architecture and design also embraced the pastoral: Vitruvius numbers it along with the tragic and comic as a theatre setting (Brockett & Ball, 2014, p.114). Thus the genre’s sphere of influence extends beyond the literary and includes those who might encounter visual depictions of it either in the private or the public sphere.

To summarise, the *locus amoenus* has the following identifying features and purposes:

- A mixture of real and unreal elements
- Elements desirable for life
- The potential for encounter between the human, the mythical and/or the divine
- An eschatological or teleological function

**An Early Christian Locus amoenus?**

It is now appropriate to see whether the themes associated with the *locus amoenus* figure in the pictures of the heavenly Jerusalem given within the Revelation of John, an example of apocalyptic writing (Collins, 1998) which often describes teleology in graphic language. The prehistory of these visions is complex. Scholars see a number of sources or traditions being woven together but there is no commonly held view about the unity of the text. Whilst some see it as a single unity (Caird, 1984, pp.261-88; Malina & Pilch ,2000, p. 249; Royalty, 1998, pp.214-39), others consider it a combination or earlier independent visions (Aune, 1998, p. 1115; Witherington, 2003, p.254; Ford, 1975, pp. 330-46, 360-70). Whatever the pre-history of the text, it is sufficient for the purposes of this paper to note that
material which resonates with the *locus amoenus* motif is found throughout the visions, and is not restricted to one particular segment. The motif suggests that the city functions as a place, a realisation of hopes and promises, not just a symbol for the saints of God: the situation of the audience, narrative – rhetorical reading, the sources of the imagery and Graeco-Roman discourse all support such a view (thus Royalty, 1998, 215-18; contra Gundry, 1987).

*Mixture of Real and Unreal*

The mixing of real and unreal, or natural and unnatural elements begins at the very start of the visions. The adjective “new” injects an element of unreality into the picture. Thus the reader is presented with a picture of a “new heaven and a new earth”. “New” functions to distinguish what is appearing from what has been experienced.

The motif continues with the identification of the city as the “New Jerusalem”, implying a contrast with the earthly Jerusalem of history and experience (Gundry, 1987, p. 259; Huber, 2007, p.167). This New Jerusalem originates in heaven and comes down from God: it is thus distinguished from the historical Jerusalem (Huber, 2007, p.167). If categories familiar from social scientific studies which have explored how honour and shame are indicated by origins, such a claim about the city’s origins suggests it comes from a the highest possible manufacturer (God) and place of origin (heaven- Neyrey 1998, pp.95-97; 2007, p.15).

The theme of unreality is further seen in the scale and composition of the city. Its dimensions are unreal: the dimensions, if taken literally, would be structurally unsound (21:16-17; Caird, 1984, pp. 273-74), and of little defensive value. (Witherington, 2003, pp.278-79). It is manufactured from luxurious materials (21:18-21) which are far from conventional or realistic, as in the size of the pearls which make each gate
At this point, the locus amoenus motif resonates with the late first century CE. The Silvae effectively combines themes of technology, luxury and nature. A similar juxtaposition of elements is found within these descriptions: technology in the description of both wall and city structure (21:12, 16-17), luxury in the elements from which the city is constructed (18-21: Royalty, 1998, pp.226-28; for a variety of detailed interpretations, Caird, 1984, pp.374-78; Jart, 1970; Reader, 1981), and nature in light (21:23, 22:5), waters (21:6, 22:1-2a) and foliage (22:2). Luxury functions to portray a higher philosophical or theological value, not some materialism desirable only in itself: there is a difference in quantity and quality of the wealth of Babylon and the New Jerusalem (Royalty, 1998, pp.230-31).

The quality of light in the new city also makes a departure from the real, obviating the need for sun, moon (21:24), or lamp (22:5). Again the light has the highest quality source; God (22:5). The absence of the usual cycle of day and night re-iterates the difference (21:25, 22:5).

The foliage of the new city is also unreal. The tree of life (22:2b) produces fruit throughout the year, bypassing usual cycles of harvest, and acts a medicine (22:2c). The translation is contested: some translate ξύλον as a singular (Witherington, 2003, p.273), others as a collective plural, alluding to Ezekiel 47:12. (Aune, 1998, p.1177, comparing to Lucian, Verae Historiae 2.13; see further Georgiadou & Larmour, 1998, p.192; Betz, 1961, pp. 92-94). In either case, the degree of unreality is sustained. As with light, the absence of the usual cycle is an indicator of both unreality and a superior order.

A common theme prevails. The functions or purpose of these different features also import a further degree of unreality, which are better explored in the context of desirability, teleology or eschatology. Similarly, the absence of any temple (21:22) marks an unreal departure from ancient cities, but that is better left until the discussion of the locus amoenus as a place where humanity meets the divine.
Elements desirable for life

Like the *locus amoenus* of Greek and Latin literature, the heavenly city contains number of features which are desirable. Initially, the city is described as “holy”, which contrasts it with its predecessor, Babylon, in the narrative of Revelation (Huber, 2007, p.166).

Not only is it holy, but it is also free of what is termed undesirable (21:4, 22:4)- and these include both spiritual and physical conditions. Other verses take this absence further, noting that undesirable people are also absent from the city (21:8, 27). All the absences - of sea (21:1), death (21:4), mourning, wailing, pain (21:4), accused items and persons (22:3), and night (21:25, 22:5)- symbolise the triumph of life over death, of good over evil (Richards, 2000, p. 160).

Positive features are also recognised. One of the hallmarks of the *locus amoenus* is water: the visions see water as an element present in the city. Not only that, the water found in the city is of a high quality (τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς -21:6; ὕδατος ζωῆς 22:1-2a); a source of both physical and spiritual well-being (Aune, 1998, pp. 1127-29). The desirability of the city is also seen in the quality of its light (21:23, 22:5) which is counterbalanced by a lack of darkness. This has an additional layer of meaning, for darkness has a moral value (22:5), and light may stand for Torah (Aune, 1998, p. 1171). The New Jerusalem is thus free from negative influences and experiences. A further need is addressed by the foliage of the city which is a constant source of sustenance (22:2b-c). Three basic physical needs are met by the presence of water, light and trees.

The description of the city also highlights desirable features. Even if it seems odd defensively in terms of the ratio between walls and city, it is guarded by the angels (21:12b), and by the presence of God: the city is secure (Aune, 1998, pp. 1154-55; Royalty, 1998, p. 226; Witherington, 2003, p.269). Indeed, the
imagery goes further: this is a place of victory (21:7- Bauckham, 1993, p.213), to the extent that other kings go there to give glory (21:24, 26) rather than material wealth (Royalty, 1998, pp.231-33).

Indeed, the presence of positive elements and absence of the undesirable suggest that the heavenly city is well-suited to be an *locus amoenus*; the scene of the resolution of all that might harm the people of God.

*Humanity Encountering the Mythical or Divine*

The *locus amoenus* may be used to signify the encounter between the human and the supernatural or divine. The description of the city as “holy” points to this, characterising it as “acting in a way worthy of God and the Lamb” (Huber, 2007, p. 166).

The visions give further indications of this new relationship. In 21:3, a permanent relationship is promised with God. This is further developed by a motif of intimacy and relationship: son-ship through adoption (21:7- Aune, 1998, pp. 1129-30), by the best of patrons. (Malina & Pilch, 2000, p.246). This intimacy is confirmed in two ways by 22:4. Firstly, believers are described as known to God by name, signifying that they are subject to his authority (Malina & Pilch, 2000, pp. 56-57), fulfilling one of the promises set out in the Letters to the Seven Churches (2:17, 3:5,12). Secondly, the people of God see God face to face (22:4- Gilman, 2006, pp. 72-74). Such an immediate experience of God again obviates the need for mediation or distance between the believer and God.

The construction of the city makes the same point through an apparent omission. It would be hard to imagine a city built without temples, given the place of religion is not just devotional, but part of public
life and social order. Yet the city described here lacks a temple of any kind (22:2). This marks a departure from both the historical Jerusalem and Judaic tradition (Richards, 2000, p. 163) and any contemporary Graeco-Roman city (Malina & Pilch, 2000, p.247; Witherington, 2003, p.271- for the absence of temple from Roman utopias, see Aune, 1998, p.1167). The lack of any temple also signifies an intimate and immediate relationship with God. Temples function to make present the deity who is perceived as absent or distant: they are places of mediation or visitation (Malina & Pilch, 2000, p. 247; Witherington, 2003, p. 271), perhaps even of exploitation (Rowland, 2004, p. 568). There is no need for a temple here because God is immediately present: no place of mediation is necessary.

22:5 continues the theme, drawing on the unreal light which is characteristic of the city: the light which enlightens the city comes not from a creature, any of sun, moon or lamp, but directly from God.

The heavenly city conforms to the role of the locus amoenus in its basic design; an indicator of the encounter of humanity and the supernatural, in this instance, with God and the Lamb (Witherington, 2003, p. 271).

*Teleological or Eschatological Function*

The placing of these visions at the climax of the book as a whole is the first indicator of a teleological function: they provide the climax, the end-point of the work. This element of the motif is greatly enhanced by two further strategies.

The first of these is the connection of the visions to the earlier narrative. Two factors are key here: the juxtaposition of the New Jerusalem with the earthly city of Revelation 17 (Babylon- Aune , 1998, p.1187), and the fulfillment of promises made earlier in the narrative, particularly in the Letters to the Seven Churches (tree of life-2:7/ 22:2; name- 3:5, 12/21:27; throne of God- 3:21/22:3).
The second is John’s appropriation of motifs and imagery from the Jewish Scriptures, especially prophetic and apocalyptic traditions, which provide a contextual focus far more precise than the usual elements of the *loca amoenus*: they add specific theological significance. Recipients unaware of these traditions may recognise the *loca amoenus* motif, particularly from the more straightforward phraseology (21:4), but those more familiar with the scriptural traditions will discern further layers of meaning. Thus the scale of the city (12:12a- Zechariah 2:2, Ezekiel 40-48, Isaiah 54:11-12, Tobit 13:16, see Aune, 1998, p.1160), the precious stones (Reader,1981, p.p. 456-57), its angelic guards (12:12b- Aune, 1998, pp.1154-55; Royalty, 1998, p.226), its victorious status (Bauckham, 1993, p.213), its identification as a bride, (12:9- Huber, 2007, pp. 174-76), and its receipt of glory from the kings of the earth (21:26-) all fulfill eschatological hopes familiar from earlier scriptures. The lack of a temple is a significant departure from much Jewish eschatological thinking, but not all ( Aune, 1998, pp. 1166-68, 1189-91). This does not mean that the Temple and all it stands for have been rejected. It is possible that the whole city functions as the Temple was meant to. The inclusion of the throne of God, the river and the tree of life (22:12) echoes traditional understandings of Eden, and suggest the city is a restored Eden ( compare Bockmuehl, 2010, pp. 194-204 for eschatological depictions of Eden). Ritualised forms of these items were also present in the Temple: temple design, architecture and liturgy represented of the cosmic order including the Garden of Eden and Paradise (Barker, 1991, pp. 57-103; 2003, p. 47 & 129). Here the design of the city is the Holy of Holies, and therefore no further simulacrum is needed (Gundry, 1987, p.261). The promise is fulfilled, so no model is needed which manifests promises yet to come.

The features of the city thus embrace a teleological or eschatological function. The motif indicates the positive resolution of disturbance, and, for those aware of the scriptural and Temple traditions, fulfillment of the promises of God in the end times.
Conclusion

If the *locus amoenus* is assessed using the four functions of (un)reality, desirability, encounter with the mythic/divine, and teleology, there are strong grounds for seeing it present in the heavenly visions of 21:1-22:5. Teleology is particularly significant, being invested with layers of symbolic meaning through the use of imagery found in prophetic and apocalyptic traditions. Yet, the recipient does not need a knowledge of this detailed imagery to pick up the teleological promises manifested in the visions. In that regard, the motif would function as a means for even an audience unfamiliar with the scriptural imagery to gain some understanding of the teleology outlined in the visions, and perhaps an introit for them to the deeper significance of the prophetic and apocalyptic traditions. The *locus amoenus* would thus function as an interpretive lens enabling a deepening of understanding, by engaging with the symbolic layers added to the core elements of the motif.

One last point must be addressed. In many cases, the *locus amoenus* motif appears to place the rural location in opposition to the urban. Does, then, the combination of urban and rural motifs in the visions of the New Jerusalem set them apart from the conventions of the figure? The motif is not static: this can be seen by tracing the changes which occurred between Vergil and Statius, which significantly saw the integration of technology into the rural landscape, never mind its longer history (see Giesecke, 2007, p. xii, 79-155 for the combination of urban and rustic themes). This becomes even more obvious in some, but not all, subsequent Christian appropriation of the motif. Whilst writers as diverse as the desert solitaries of Egypt, Cyprian, Basil of Caesarea, *Apocalypse of Paul*, Gregory Nazianzus, Jerome, Epiphanius, John Chrysostom, and Eucherius adopt it to indicate serenity (Fleischer, 2004, pp. 152-54; Schlapbach, 2007, pp.46-49) in a handling of the motif which does not focus so much on teleology or
eschatology, Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei* is a significant example of writing which blends the *locus amoenus* (inasmuch as it represents a literal or allegorical Edenic bliss- Bockmuehl, 2010, p. 199; Fleischer, 2004, p. 154) with an urban setting (Maier, 1999), as do *Tundale’s Vision*, the monk of Evesham, *Thurkil’s Vision*, Giacomino da Verona’s *De Ierusalem celesti*, and the Pearl. All of these mix urban and rural elements (Barolini, 1995, p. 325 fn. 13). Strikingly, Christian aesthetes would also incorporate the motif in church architecture: a concrete, so as to speak, manifestation of the fusion of technology and the *locus amoenus* (Fleischer, 2004, pp. 155-63; Giesecke, 2007, pp. 118-25). This suggests that assessing the appropriation of the motif in Revelation will ultimately be shaped not just by reference to its predecessors, but also by later writers who viewed it as a source and predecessor for their own versions of the *locus amoenus*. In this regard, those who subsequently adopted the imagery of the heavenly city located it within the acceptable parameters of the motif. The images contained within Revelation occupy a pivotal role in the wider history and development of the *locus amoenus* as it moves along the human route “from Eden to the City of God” (Hunt, 1997, p. 311).
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