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Rethinking Eschatologies with Postcolonial and Queer Perspectives: A Provisionary Study toward Multiple *Eschatalogies*

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> "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end/*telos* is not so soon."
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> The Gospel of Luke 21:9
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> The end of the world as we know it seems continually imminent. Yet we live in the debris of many ended worlds, whose inhabitants continue to live on. Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures*[1]

1. Introduction: Smaller Worlds End before the End of the World Comes?

"Coronapocalypse" is a neologism introduced in 2020, reflecting the sense of "the end of the world" with the spread of COVID-19.[2] Apparently, the pandemic did end certain ways of living and create a "new normal." An end has come. A world (we used to know) no longer exists. It was/is, however, not the

1 Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (New York: NYU Press, 2018), 2.

2 https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/coronapocalypse. Accessed December 26th, 2021. The term has also been used as a twitter hashtag.

End of the entire World. It seems, retrospectively, it is always this way: The sense, the anxiety, of "the end of the world" has been always there. Indeed, some smaller worlds inside the World end constantly while the World, whatever it is, seems not to care so much about these smaller ends. While the World might not care about the smaller, or rather trivialized, ends, those who problematize trivialization/marginalization pay attention to these trivialized ends.[3] Such scholars would analyze the discourse of end(s), known as eschatology, asking why certain ends do not count as the End and what exactly is expected to be the End of the World.

Christian eschatologies, assuming the End of the World awaiting in the future – either far or near, depending on their doctrine and belief – seem to have failed to take these "smaller ends" into account. Still, some scholars have attempted to reshape eschatologies with postmodern insights.[4] For example, postcolonial scholars, pointing out the West-centrism in the discourse of Eschatology, recognize that the ends of the colonized worlds – in plural – deserve to be seen as eschatological as the End of the World. Given the postcolonial and queer takes on eschatologies developed in the past few decades, this study seeks to rethink eschatologies in a way that is not *Telos*-oriented. It would pave a way not

3 E.g., those who deal with power dynamics with postcolonial theory, queer theory, critical race theory, and so on.

4 Vítor Westhelle problematizes the limited understanding of eschatology as the chronological End of the history/world. "The use of a Greek word as *eschaton* to name a doctrine (eschatology) does not hold the doctrine ultimately accountable to the etymology of its root-term. But the etymology of the word lifts up dimensions of what 'end' means, and these etymological nuances have been ignored. Moreover, the spatial denotations of *eschaton* have been glaringly absent from Western eschatological discourse. As much as the longitudinal perspective has insisted on an end within history and not beyond it, it is necessary to realize that *eschaton* also implies an end within space and not beyond it." Vítor Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space: The Lost Dimension in Theology Past And Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 79.

only to re-read biblical texts about various ends with a new perspective, but also to re-evaluate the scholarship regarding ends in the New Testament writings.[5] The aim of this paper is not to offer a singular goal/*Telos* for interpreting the texts but to suggest *end*-less possibilities to face various, sometimes fatal, ends in the texts as well as in the lives of the readers of the texts.

Some terminologies need to be clarified. To begin with, I distinguish *Telos*-oriented Eschatology from other eschatologies/*eschata*-*logies* in this study: The former focuses on the *Eschaton* (i.e., the *Telos*, the End of the World, time, or history), and the related matters such as final judgment, death, resurrection, and so on.[6] The latter puts emphasis on the multiplicity and variety of ends/*eschata*, including ends of civilizations, countries, societies, communities, people, and individuals due to wars, political and/or economic corruptions, natural disasters, and so forth. To distinguish from the Eschatology, I call it *eschata*-*logy* (hereafter, *eschatalogy*). Although '*eschatalogy*' is my terminology, it is based on the attempts made in the past years to explore the possibility for non-*Telos*-oriented eschatologies, aiming to deal with multiple, various ends that we face in our life. It also reflects the broad range of the Greek term ἔσχατος (broader than the

5 For example, Lukan Eschatology has been the subject of debate since Hans Conzelmann, but its scholarship can be reviewed from a new perspective with *eschatalogies*. More to be discussed later.

6 I use capitalized E for this Eschatology. When the term "*eschatologia*" was coined by Abraham Calovius in the 17th century, it concerned four topics; death, resurrection, final judgement, and consummation. Abraham Calov, *Systema Locorum Theologicorum* vol. 12 (Witternberg, 1677). Cf., Arland J. Hultgren, "Eschatology in the New Testament: The Current Debate," in *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 68. While the individual eschatology, which focuses on the individual death and the following individual judgment, seems not to be about the End of the World, it is derived from the concern for the End, i.e., what happens to the individuals who passed away before the End of the World. Since the discussion of individual eschatology assumes the End of the World, it is still teleological.

End of the World), including "last" of space ("furthest"), degree ("utmost"), and persons ("lowest") as well as of time.[7] When the term 'eschatology' with lower case 'e' is used, it refers to eschatology, a discourse on an end – any kind of end.

Below, I first attempt to show the trajectory of the *Telos*-oriented understanding of 'Eschatology/Eschatological Jesus' in the Gospels. Then, I review a few examples of challenges against the academic consensus of Eschatological ('apocalyptic') Jesus in the late twentieth century. This section contributes to indicate the openings for alternative eschatologies in biblical studies. Next, I turn to postmodern insights on multiple *eschata*. We will see the *Telos*-oriented Eschatology being criticized by postcolonial and queer criticisms, attesting to the needs for different kinds of *eschatalogies*. Finally, I propose possible ways to apply *eschatalogies* to biblical texts.

2. Conventional Understandings of Eschatology in the New Testament Studies

2. 1. The Development of *Telos*-Oriented Eschatology

Eschatology is, in general, understood as the study of the End of the World and the related matters. Such a simplification is found not only in the secular world but also in the New Testament studies: Put simply, eschatology was (and still is), erroneously, regarded as interchangeable with apocalypticism,[8] and Jesus' 'apocalyptic' expectation was emphasized in the beginning of the 20th century. The confusion in taxonomy and definitions of the terms (such as eschatology, apocalypse, apocalyptic, and apocalypticism) is well recognized today in the field of biblical studies, and most of scholars do not regard them interchangeable

7 "ἔσχατος" in LSJ 699–700. Cf., Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space*, 55–56. Westhelle argues to recover broader denotations of the Greek term ἔσχατος, including the spatial one. More will be discussed below in section 3.1.

8 The confusion is also seen in the term "conorapocalypse."

anymore.[9] At the end of the century, there was no longer such a consensus of an 'apocalyptic'/Eschatological Jesus.

The works of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer made the idea of an 'apocalyptic' Jesus dominant.[10] Their thesis is that Jesus understood himself as a herald of the End-time and expected the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. This argument emerged as an opposition against the German liberal theology which spiritualized the kingdom of God. In this scholarly position, Eschatology and apocalypticism were almost, if not totally, identical. Rudolf Bultmann agrees with Weiss on the kingdom of God being Eschatological and being the central message of Jesus. Through his task of demythologizing, however, Bultmann's Eschatology has become a realized/existential one that puts emphasis on the present point in the history rather than focusing on the future End of the history.[11] Charles H. Dodd, the contemporary of Bultmann, also proposed the realized Eschatology; it sees the Eschaton, the coming of the kingdom of God,

9 E.g., 'apocalypse' is a literature genre; 'apocalypticism' is a thought, found in such a genre, that there is a hidden cosmic/heavenly mystery, which often reflects the earthly crisis, to be revealed through visions. While I do not intend to explain the taxonomy and definitions of these terms in detail, one thing to note is that none of the terms, in their original meaning, are equivalent to the discourse on the End of the world. For a detailed review on the confusion in taxonomy and definitions of the terms related to eschatology, see e.g., John J. Collins, "The Apocalyptic Genre," in *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 1–42; Lorenzo DiTommaso, "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity (Part I)," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5 no. 2 (2007, 238–250).

10 Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892); Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1906).

11 Rudolf Bultmann, "Geschichte und Eschatologie im Neuen Testament," in *Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze* vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1962),106; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology*, The Gifford Lectures 1955 (New York: Harper, 1957), 155.

as not in the distant future but already realized in the present experience.[12] In responding to the idea of the realized Eschatology, later scholars developed the so-called "already/not yet" scheme.[13]

In the middle of the twentieth century, scholars attempted to synthesize the above two positions, arguing that the kingdom of God is simultaneously a present reality and a future expectation. It was during this period when Oscar Cullmann published his book, *Christ and Time*.[14] It proposed to understand the concept of time and history as a salvation history by centralizing Christ. The history of salvation, according to Cullmann, is characterized by the central event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and stretches towards the past and the future from there. Thus, time/history is linear, starting with the creation, running towards the *parousia* and the consummation. And, the new era that leads to the End of time has already begun with the resurrection. In such a view, today's Christianity lives in the final stage of the salvation history, expecting the End of the world in the future.

This scholarly obsession with the linear understanding of history and its *Telos*-orientation is also reflected in the scholarship of Lukan Eschatology. Cullmann's framework is applied to the Lukan writings by Hans Conzelmann. As the original title of his work indicates (*Die Mitte der Zeit* "the center/middle of the time"),[15] Conzelmann argues that Luke portrays Jesus as the center of the time that divides the old time, represented by the Hebrew Bible, and the new time, realized in church, started with the Acts of the Apostles and ends with the *parousia*

12 C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner, 1961).

13 This scheme is supported also by, e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Scribner, 1972); Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

14 Oscar Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit: Die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung*, 2e Auflage (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948).

15 Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

of Christ. By moving *parousia* to the distant future, Conzelmann asserts, Luke replaced the imminent "Eschatological" hope with a salvation history. In short, he historicized the "Eschatology." Since Conzelmann, Lukan Eschatology has been heavily debated.[16] The focal topic has been Luke's Eschatological program, that is, whether Luke regarded the *parousia* as imminent or delayed. The backlash followed Conzelmann's historicized Eschatology, however. For example, A. J. Mattill understands Luke as an apocalyptic activist whose books are responding to two extremes; the 'apocalyptists' who believed the End is imminent and those who doubted the *parousia* itself.[17] Thus, Luke, Mattill argues, had to include both the delay motif and the imminence motif. Such a tension reminds us of the 'already/not-yet' tension,[18] and some scholars regard the 'already' part (e.g., the realization of eschatological kingdom of God in the present) as central to Lukan Eschatology.[19] In contrast, C.H. Talbert sees Luke's works as a 'correction' of the over-realized, spiritual Eschatology of Gnosticism.[20] Although diverse as the interpretations of Lukan Eschatology are, they expect the linear timeline and the End of the world, whether it is already realized, waiting in the distant future, or both at the same time and creating a tension. Such an obsession with the End would overlook the *eschatalogical* aspects of various ends, nevertheless. For

16 See the summary in François Bovon, "The Plan of God, Salvation History, and Eschatology," in *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 1–85.

17 A. J. Mattill, Jr., *Luke and the Last Things: A Perspective for the Understanding of Lukan Thought* (Dillsboro: Western North Carolina Press, 1979).

18 It is also apparent in Robert H. Smith, "History and Eschatology in Luke-Acts," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29 no. 12 (1958), 881–901.

19 E.g., Hoberth Kenneth Farrell, "The Eschatological Perspective of Luke-Acts" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1972); Robert James Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

20 Charles H. Talbert, "Luke-Acts," in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1989), 297–320.

example, teleological Eschatology would require clarification on when, where and how the fall of Jerusalem (mentioned four times in Luke; 13:34–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24; 23:28–31) is situated in the Lukan Eschatological program, while missing the opportunity to interpret each account as an *eschatalogical* grappling with an end, full of grief, resentment, and call for empathy.

To locate such a possibility of *eschatalogical* interpretations in the scholarly endeavor, I turn to challenges raised by New Testament scholars regarding Eschatological Jesus. In the challenges, we can find an opening to undermine the *Telos*-oriented Eschatology and to read various accounts on ends as *eschatalogical*.

2. 2. Beyond the End-Time Discourse

The scholarly consensus on Eschatological/apocalyptic Jesus faded in the mid-1980s. Some scholars reveal, intentionally or unintentionally, possibilities (or even necessity) of *eschatalogies* in their challenges against the conventional view of an Eschatological Jesus. Marcus Borg's essay "A Temperate Case for Non-Eschatological Jesus"[21] marked a milestone as such a challenge. In this essay, he limits the meaning of the term 'eschatology' only to the things related to the End of the World. It is to distinguish certain ends, including "a dramatic change in Israel's history" and "a radical change in the individual's subjectivity which one might describe by speaking of the (old) world coming to an end for that individual"[22] from Eschatology.[23] In his very rejection of calling non-*Telos*-

21 Ibid., 81–102.

22 Ibid., 82, n1.

23 Simply put, Borg's concern is a terminological issue of what 'eschatological' means. While he insists that "[w]hen these meanings are meant, I think other adjectives are more apt than 'eschatological'" (Ibid.), I suggest otherwise: When eschatology is used to indicate exclusively the End of the World, other adjectives such as teleological should be added since the Greek term itself is not equal to the End of the World.

like ends 'eschatological,' however, Borg's essay shows an interesting opening for the non-*Telos*-oriented eschatology. For he acknowledges that there are other kinds of ends such as "a dramatic internal or subjective change that might be referred to as 'end of world' for one who experiences it."[24]

Another approach for non-apocalyptic Jesus is to regard him as a teacher of wisdom. John Dominic Crossan portrays Jesus as a Jewish peasant, a social revolutionary, and a Cynic-like teacher, whose wisdom contained a radical power of reversal, threatening the social order of the time. While Borg defines the term "eschatological" as related to the End-time, Crossan's definition is broader: For him, eschatology is a radical critique against the world that causes one to reject the world ("world negation") out of grief, anger, disappointment, and so on. With such a world-negation, one would look for another world, and the wider definition of eschatology covers "all types of ideal or perfect worlds," including "mystical, utopian, ascetic, libertarian, or anarchistic eschatologies or world-negations."[25] In Crossan's view, then, Jesus is eschatological in a sense that he was longing and living for the better world but not apocalyptic/expecting the End. Here, we see another possibility for *eschatalogies*.

For another example of undermining the academic consensus on Eschatological Jesus, Bruce Malina points out the different understandings of time in the modern and the ancient. [26] In the present-oriented ancient world, which is contrasted with the future-oriented modern world, the sense of present was broader and included immediate future and immediate past, lasting for some decades.[27] In such a temporality, the 'eschatological' sayings are not about the End happening

24 Ibid., 98, n46.

25 John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 59.

26 Bruce J. Malina, "Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?," *CBQ* 51 no. 1 (1989), 1–31.

27 In contrast, the modern world is future-oriented. Ibid., 12–13, 21.

in the distant future but concerning the contemporary time of Jesus.[28] According to Malina, therefore, to read the 'eschatological' texts in the NT exclusively as the End-of-the-World discourse may be a reflection of the modern future-oriented temporality.

Just as Malina pointed out the influence of the modern future-orientation on the *Telos*-oriented Eschatology, Stephen Patterson also highlights the impact of the social, cultural, and political environment on academic works on eschatology. Patterson argues that the cultural pessimism in the early twentieth century is one of the main reasons for the scholarly enthusiasm for apocalyptic Jesus.[29] And, he suggests to achieve a (not so) new consensus that "Jesus did not conceive of it as a future, apocalyptic event, but as a present reality to be experienced as breaking in upon the present world of human existence."[30] Although his conclusion is opposed by Dale Allison,[31] Patterson's emphasis on the impact of the social environment needs to be taken seriously.[32]

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28 Ibid., 15, cf. 28.

29 Stephen J. Patterson, "The End of Apocalypse: Rethinking the Eschatological Jesus," *Theology Today* 52 no. 1 (1995), 41. Patterson argues that Schweitzer's 'apocalyptic' Jesus (published right before the World War I) became popular due to the cultural pessimism (more popular than when Weiss proposed it in the age of the German liberal theology). In the US, the trend of eschatological Jesus looks different from that of Europe, since the U.S. did not experience the Wars as intensely as Europe did and was more "oriented toward progress and hope in the future." Such an optimistic environment changed with the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the nuclear disaster, environmental destruction, and so forth (Ibid., 33). Hence, "as in European theology during the first half of this century, so also in North America since the 1950s the optimistic strains of the social gospel and its liberal Jesus have gradually given way to the assumption that Jesus preached an apocalyptic eschatology" (Ibid.).

30 Ibid., 41.

31 Dale C. Allison, "Eschatology of Jesus," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 122–128.

32 The irony lies in that Patterson is also criticized by Taylor, who supports the Escha-

Lastly, spatial eschatology needs to be noted here. It is another form of eschatology that does not focus on the temporal End of the World. Rather, it illustrates the reign of God not as approaching temporally but as coming down to the earth from above. This idea is found not only in Jesus' understanding of the reign of God reflected in the gospels but also in Colossians, Hebrews, and the Revelations, sometimes with the images of new heavenly Jerusalem (Hebr 12:22; Rev 6–19).[33] Even though it does destabilize the idea of Eschatology as the End-time discourse, it seems to be still *Telos*-oriented so long as it holds the spatial *telos*. With this regard, it needs to be distinguished from Westhelle's spatial eschatol-

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tological Jesus, as being "a bit slow in applying his point to his own context, and in recognising corresponding factors in North America which may have influenced scholarship of the Cold War era and subsequently." N. H. Taylor, "Prolegomena to Reconstructing the Eschatological Teaching of Jesus," *Neotestamentica* 33 no. 1 (1999), 147. "[T]he current trend against eschatology in the teaching of Jesus is the product of a North America traumatised by the failure of its imperialism in Vietnam, and of academic communities hostile to the apocalypticism manifested in Cold War propaganda and the Reagan 'Star Wars' programme" (Ibid., 148). Even though I agree with Taylor when he states, "[s]cholars need to be critically aware of their own ideological preconceptions, and of the social and political influences which have shaped their cultural context and the consciousness of the societies in which they live and work," I need to part my way as he assumes "[i]f scholarship is to *move beyond* culturally determined interpretations of the teaching of Jesus […]" (Emphasis added. Ibid., 148). In my view, scholars need to recognize our social, political, economic, and cultural context(s) because we *cannot* move beyond our "ideological preconceptions." There are always ideologies and contexts that scholars are blind to. Hence, it seems fair to acknowledge our limited subjective views and our contextualized motives that shape our reading.

33 E.g., Onuki Takashi, *Shumatsuron no Keifu: Shoki Yudayakyou kara Gunosisu made* [Eschatology: From Early Judaism to Gnosticism] (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 2019),169–174; Jeremy Punt, "Eschatology of Colossians: 'At Home in the World,'" in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 283–301; Gert J. Stein, "The Eschatology of Hebrews: As Understood within a Cultic Setting," in *Eschatology of the New Testament*, 429–450.

ogy to which I turn in the following section. For Westhelle brings margins, not *telos*, to the center of eschatology.

3. Toward *Eschatalogies*

3. 1. Centralizing the Margin/Eschaton: Spatial Eschatology by Vítor Westhelle

With the postmodernist turn in theology and biblical studies,[34] eschatologies have been reimagined in different ways.[35] In this section and the following, I discuss alternative eschatologies that are/can be developed into *eschatalogies*. First, I briefly review Westhelle's spatial eschatology, which regards the margin and the marginalized as eschatological.[36] It gives us the basis to understand the postcolonial and queer takes of eschatologies which centralize the marginalized.

Westhelle problematizes the limited understanding of Eschatology as the chronological End of the history/World. He points out there is a "lost dimension" to eschatology, that is, space. Deploying postcolonial and poststructuralist perspectives, he attempts to recover broader denotations, especially the spatial aspect, of the Greek term ἔσχατος to reshape our understanding of eschatology/-gies.

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34 Cf. A. K. M. Adam, *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

35 Besides the works I refer to below, e.g., Barbara Rossing, "Reimagining Eschatology: Toward Healing and Hope for a World at the Eschatos," in *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice,* ed. Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P. Koster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 325–347.

36 "The word 'margin' receives a thick soteriological meaning and it is not restricted to its geographic or socioeconomic denotations. Margin stands for the Greek *eschaton* as the place/time of judgment where salvation or condemnation, liberation or enslavement is pronounced." Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space*, 79.

> If eschatology […] is the discourse about "ending" or "endings," it can entail different meanings derived from the Greek noun *eschatos* or the plural *eschata*. It may denote a limit or a border (and here it is connected to the word *peras*) or an opening, a passage (*peratos*). It may also refer to *telos*, which indicates a goal to be reached or achieved. And then it may also refer to an ultimate value or appraise either the highest (*axios*), or the lowest (*anaxios*). All these terms are denotations of, and possible synonyms for the word *eschatos*.[37]

For, as long as the concern of eschatology is salvation, which can be paraphrased as realization of justice or the *end* of the suffering, the marginal or liminal space and its related matters (e.g., national borders, displacement, migration, and so on) are eschatological matters. Westhelle's spatial eschatology is, therefore, "to frame eschatological thinking in a way that addresses the experience of those who live in and through the *eschata [e.g., margins]* on a daily basis with regard to the places in which it happens."[38] The marginalized people become the starting point of rethinking eschatologies, and this centralization of the marginalized is what we see in new approaches to eschatologies reviewed below.

3. 2. Postcolonial Criticisms on Eschatologies

One of the most significant challenges to the conventional understanding of Eschatology is postcolonial/decolonial one. Postcolonial criticisms on eschatologies focus on the palpable changes (both positive and negative) in this world rather than the coming End as a utopia. In this section, I first take a look into the idea of the positive changes being eschatological proposed by African theologians who attempt to redirect eschatology from utopian escapism to actual social

37 Ibid., 55–56.

38 Ibid., XII.

changes. Next, I turn to the idea of negative changes/ends being eschatological conveyed by indigenous and black scholars.

In African theologies, we can find an effort to 'decolonize' Eschatology. The key pioneer in this field is John S. Mbiti, a Kenyan-born scholar. Mbiti distinguishes African temporality from European one[39] and argues there is no notion of "a final destruction of the world"[40] in African traditional thought on history. Engaging with Mbiti's studies, other African scholars develop eschatologies that engage with present social issues. Chammah J. Kaunda and Mutale M. Kaunda, for example, attempt to develop decolonial eschatology, using Bemba thought.[41] The Bemba is an ethnic group in northeastern Zambia and neighboring areas of Congo and Zimbabwe. As their society is matrilineal, their understanding of femininity (and gender in general), reflected in their myths, is different from the West according to Kaunda and Kaunda. The African scholars utilize a Bemba creation myth to explain Bemba eschatology as a quest for intricate balance of and solidarity between both gender.

> [The Bemba eschatology] is conceived as a process that began with the creation of two genderless beings by *Lesa* (the Supreme Being) who also sent them on a mission to reach an intrinsic mutuality and relational equilibrium before opening the two parcels that contained undisclosed gifts [from *Lesa*]. […] The Bemba notion of God […] is conceived as com-

39 "The linear concept of time, with a Past, Present and Future, stretching from infinity to infinity, is foreign to Africans' thinking, in which the dominant factor is a virtual absence of the future." John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in the African Background: A Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 159.

40 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 23.

41 Chammah J. Kaunda and Mutale M. Kaunda, "In Search of Decolonial Eschatology: Engaging Christian Eschatology with Bemba Futurism," *Theology Today* 75 no. 4 (2019), 469–481.

> plete, possessing both a male and female model of being human. […] However, one being was not patient enough to overcome the contradictions that come with the search for relational solidarity and mutuality. When one of the parcels started stinking, the impatient being decided to throw it off without consulting either the other being or *Lesa*. In the same manner, it decided to open the remaining parcel before relational solidarity and mutuality was reached. This very action resulted in the distortion of what it means to be human beings in mutual and solidarity relationship. He[42] constructed his own masculinity apart from the femininity and divinity. […] His masculinity became the ultimately alienating foundation of patriarchy and other negative aspects that characterize social order. Its underpinning was self-interest and the need for domination. The results of such distortive constructions are evident in that each immediately began to see the other as a sex object rather than a human being.[43]

In their rethinking of eschatology, therefore, Kaunda and Kaunda highlight the followings: (1) The sensitivity to the relationality, that is, the consciousness about that human beings live together with the others, including non-human species as well as diverse human beings; (2) social justice (e.g., climate justice and gender justice) as eschatological issue, and (3) present-orientation. Kaunda and Kaunda require more emphasis on "what is taking place rather than what is to come."[44] Similarly, Elian Kifon Bongmba regards the traditional Eschatology as "speculation about escaping the world"[45] to the temporarily- and spatially-

42 The other being is gifted femininity by *Lesa*. Thus, the one who opened the parcel is the masculine one.

43 Kaunda and Kaunda, "In Search of Decolonial Eschatology," 473.

44 Ibid., 480.

45 Elias Kifon Bongmba, "Eschatology in Africa," in *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology*, ed. Elias Kifon Bongmba (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2020),

distanced utopia.[46] He therefore suggests redirecting eschatology, using a "post-colonial theological imagination,"47[47] to "transformative social and ecological relationships"[48]

Kaunda and Kaunda well demonstrate how their attempt to reorient eschatology is decolonial work. Rejecting future-oriented, other-worldly Eschatology, they assert that "cosmic destructions [in the Biblical texts] *must never* be taken literally but metaphors of the process of transformation *already* taking place in the world as people are becoming more and more conscientized about issues of justice in their diverse ways."[49] Since future-oriented Eschatology is not the only eschatology in the west (just as reviewed in section 2. 2.), Kaunda and Kaunda could look for a way to cultivate their decolonial project together with alternative (western) views on eschatologies. Still, their strong statement offers a significant contribution, that is, "a critique of universalism around colonial missions that imposed a Euro-American vision of the future."[50] Their wrestling with the traditional, future-oriented Eschatology is nothing less than their struggle with European violence of colonization. Thus, Kaunda and Kaunda emphasize the "eschato-decolonial vision"[51] for "authentic social relationality" that would bring "fullness of life for all" and entail deconstructing the colonial products,

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517.

46 It needs to be noted that not all eschatologies explored in New Testament studies are escapist, drawn to other-worldly imaginations. Some regards Jesus not as apocalyptic but as a revolutionary rooted in and bringing change to specific socio-political situations. The latter view seems to correspond with the decolonial project of African decolonial scholars, and more dialogue needs to be developed among the postcolonial/decolonial works and other works in New Testament studies.

47 Ibid., 510.

48 Ibid., 511.

49 Kaunda and Kaunda, "In Search of Decolonial Eschatology," 481. Emphasis added.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 480.

including the utopian, teleological Eschatology.

Besides the African scholars, indigenous and black scholars in North America also criticize the Euro-centrism in eschatological discourses. They point out that the plural worlds of the colonized, marginalized, conquered people have "in fact already ended" with genocide, ruination of the land, and so on.[52] And, "they base these arguments on the concrete historical experience of marginalised people with colonialism and the violent destruction of their lifeworlds."[53] This insight would redirect us to recognize and be haunted by the worlds that had been ended but never has been qualified to take space in the discourse of Eschatology.[54] For, there is only one end that matters in Eschatology; the end of "*the* world (in singular),"[55] that is, the West.

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52 Delf Rothe, "Governing the End Times? Planet Politics and the Secular Eschatology of the Anthropocene," *Millennium* 48 no. 2 (2020), 156. See also Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) on racial violence, Black deaths, and the haunted lives of Black people as afterlives of slavery. In the age of Black Lives Matter movement, it has received wide acclaim from those who are concerned with racism and (post)colonial violence. Furthermore, various ends (i.e., drastic changes) in the colonized worlds also impact (i.e., change and end) the colonizer's world in a sense.

53 Rothe, "Governing the End Times?," 156.

54 This intense focus on the present reality is another feature of postcolonial eschatology. In African NT studies and theologies, for example, scholars demand more emphasis on "what is taking place rather than what is to come." Kaunda, "In Search of Decolonial Eschatology," 480. The traditional Eschatology is criticized as "speculation about escaping the world" (Bongmba, "Eschatology in Africa," 509) to utopia, and the present-day-oriented eschatology is required. In the present-oriented eschatology, *eschaton* would be realized with actual change for social justice, especially gender-justice and eco-justice. I think these critiques against the utopian Eschatology are important as they point out the necessity of treating this-worldly ends with eschatological seriousness. Eschatology needs to serve for living through this world today, not for escape.

55 Rothe, "Governing the End Times?," 156.

3. 3. Queer Criticisms on Eschatologies

As seen above, the postcolonial and decolonial challenges against Western Eschatology signal the possibility of postcolonial *eschatalogies* by decentralizing the End (or the idea of future) of the West. Queer *eschatalogies*, on the other hand, would become possible by (1) revealing how *Telos*-oriented Eschatology forms and is formed by heteronormative (i.e., anti-queer) understanding of time and (2) remembering, or rather being haunted by, the ends of queer people that bear eschatological graveness. The study of queer temporalities prepared foundations for these views.[56] For the purpose of this study, it would suffice to highlight a few characterizations, among numerous, of queer temporalities; first, it resists the linear, progressive, future-oriented, and heteronormative understanding of time. Second, it refuses (or is born out of the collapse of) the *straight*-forward meaning-making of the past through either identification with it or differentiation from it. It rather looks for other ways of touching the past (e.g., being haunted

56 Foundational studies that theorized queer temporalities include the following works. Carolyn Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13 no. 2–3 (2007), 177–195. Some works by the participants of the Roundtable Discussion became the established 'classic' of the queer temporalities: Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005). Edelman's work provoked debates mainly because of its 'negative' view on queerness (i.e., claiming negativity as the power of queerness). Jose Esteban Munoz offered a critical response in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), another 'classic' of the field. For the application to biblical studies, see ed. Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Stephen D. Moore, "The Inhuman Acts of the Holy Ghost," in *Gospel Jesuses and Other Nonhumans: Biblical Criticism Post-Poststructuralism* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 85–106.

by it) while not trying to make sense of it.[57] With these characteristics, queer temporalities unfold queer *eschatalogies* as follows.

First, queer *eschatalogies* would be better understood in contrast with queer *Telos*-oriented Eschatology, and Noreen Giffney explains well the difference between those.[58] Queer Eschatology would, Giffney argues, "[look] constantly towards the future in order to prepare for the arrival (of queer) and the end (of heteronormativity)" while queer (non-*Telos*-oriented) eschatology would point out "the immediacy of that endpoint as it unfolds."[59] Queer Eschatology would, in other words, fantasize a queer heaven, full of sex-positivity, gay orgies, and so on, in the future or afterlife, not confronting (enough) the cruelty of the "now" in our heteronormative world.[60] It also reflects the naïve belief in the progress that

57 For the "touch across time," see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), and for its application to queer biblical interpretation, see Joseph A. Marchal, "'"Making History" Queerly: Touches across Time through a Biblical Behind,'" *Biblical Interpretation* 19 no. 4–5 (2011), 373–395.

58 Giffney clarifies the distinction between the two as optimistic "queer eschatology" versus negative "queer apocalypticism." Noreen Giffney, "Queer Apocal(o)ptic/Ism: The Death Drive and the Human," in *Queering the Non/Human*, ed. Myra J. Hird and Noreen Giffney (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 61.

59 Ibid.

60 It seems to be popular also in the queer theologies and queer criticisms of the Bible regarding eschatology to reimagine heaven or the world after the End as 'licentious' and pro-queer, offering a counternarrative against the stigmatized queerness and 'deviancy.' Cf. Robert E. Goss, "Proleptic Sexual Love: God's Promiscuity Reflected in Christian Polyamory," *Theology & Sexuality* 11 no. 1 (2004), 52–63; Richard W. McCarty, "Eschatological Sex," *Theology & Sexuality* 19 no. 2 (2013), 163–178. Elizabeth Stuart argues that queer people in the heteronormative world needed to slide their queer desires into the (expectations of/for) afterlife, for it was (and still is) hard, if not impossible, to find a space for their dreams to flourish. Elizabeth Stuart, "Sex in Heaven: The Queering of Theological Discourse on Sexuality," in *Sex These Days: Essays on Theology, Sexuality and Society*, ed. Jon Davies and Gerard Loughlin (Shef-

would be achieved in the linear timeline moving forward to the desired *Telos*. Queer temporalities, however, refuse such understanding of time and instead proposes other kinds of *eschato-*/*eschatalogies* by revealing the *ends*/*deaths* brought by the violence of heteronormative future-orientation as well as confronting and requiring its *end*. The violence lies in the reproduction futurism[61] at the core of the machinery of this world (i.e., the way the society operates and does meaning-making); the society relies on the (heterosexual) reproduction for (re)producing future, excludes/demonizes the queer people in the process of social reproduction, and values (heteronormative) future over queer people's present life, resulting in the (literal and metaphorical) killing of queer people.[62] This in turn signifies that queerness is a position, or functions, to reveal such cruelty of the heteronormative world's machinery. "The end – positive or negative – is not coming for queer apocalypticism, it is here; it is queer and now."[63] Here opens a way to see queer ends/deaths in the ongoing present as bearing witness to the (required) end of Eschatology intertwined with reproductive futurism.

Second, the indeterminability of queer ends is significant for queer *eschatalogies*. As is often pointed out, not a few queer people experience(d) the ends/

field: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 184–204), 204. While such a queer vision is crucial for queer survival, it does not deconstruct the concept of the End itself. It shares the same framework with the traditional Eschatology as long as it awaits the *Telos*. As such, the "sliding" of queer desires into afterlife could be criticized as utopian escapism just as the African theologians did against the western Eschatology.

61 "Reproductive futurism is, what I call, 'heterocycloptic', bound up with the desiring gaze and the setting-out of a developmental trajectory of 'progress' moving endlessly towards a 'better' future, in the process imposing a panopticon- like self-surveillance." Giffney, "Queer Apocal(o)ptic/ism," 64.

62 This opposition between reproduction futurism and queerness is easily detected in the public. Anti-queer politicians, for instance, are not ashamed to express hate against queer people with a cliché like "gays will destroy the society."

63 Ibid., 61.

deaths of the fellow queer as unabsolute;[64] With the spread of HIV/AIDS, for example, some queer people felt as if they were surrounded by the haunting shadow when they faced the deaths of friends and one's own death approaching too fast. The haunted people could hear the shadow whispering that their life would/should have been ended already (just like their deceased friends' did). Still, survivors' life keeps going, ruthlessly, somehow. As the ends/deaths are not so absolute as we expect them to be, the haunted queer people could feel that the dead returns, crossing the boundary of time, to remind them that the ends are always already here. For, one end or some does not signify the End of the entire World, contrary to what the Western Eschatology assumed (i.e., the End of the World is equated with the End of the West).

According to Kotrosits, this haunted survival and the unabsoluteness of an end pave a path for an antiteleological reading of the Gospel of Mark, a story with an ending without closure.

> The Gospel of Mark, as a book written in the waves of grief after having seen not only dreams of Judean political sovereignty fall, but simply after having suffered the loss of too many lives, is *not* a charter for meaning and justice in the face of death. It is rather […] a reckoning with survival and a barbed flirtation with connection and possibility when meaning and justice collapse.[65]

The same can be said of Luke's gospel, for example. For Lukan eschatology has been troubling the scholars with its seemingly conflicting views on when/if what

64 Maia Kotrosits, "Queer Persistence: On Death, History, and Longing for Endings," in *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, ed. Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 133–144.

65 Ibid., 140. Emphasis added.

kind of an end is coming/has come (see above, section 2.1.). The tangled visions about the past ends are reflected in Lukan accounts on the fall of Jerusalem and the cross as well as the future ends in the accounts of catastrophes whose timings are not known (cf., Luke 21). Following Kotrosits' idea, it is possible to read these Lukan texts as traces of survival after an end. The texts would not be stabilizing nor absolute; they are of the struggle to make sense out of nonsense and injustice.[66]

4. Concluding Remarks

Eschatology, often hand in hand with apocalypticism, has been perceived as the discourse on the End of the World. It is not an exception in the New Testament studies. For some decades since Weiss and Schweitzer, *Telos*-oriented Eschatology has prevailed as a key to understand the core message of Gospels and its main character, Jesus. However, some studies, as early as in 1980s, hint that there are more than one End and that the teleological Eschatology is an imposition of the modern temporality and/or pessimism.

66 Among the postmodern approaches to challenge the teleological Eschatology, there are a few works that explicitly questions, challenges, and disrupts the linear understanding of history and Eschatology in Lukan writings. See Adam F. Braun, "The End of Eschatology: Derrida's Specters of Marx and the Futures of Luke's Christ," *Siwô' Revista de Teología/Revista de Estudios Sociorreligiosos* 12 no. 1 (2019), 119–130; Adam F. Braun, "Negativity in Luke's Rich Fool and the Abyss of the Cross," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 43 no. 1 (2021), 51–69. Distinguishing narrative telos/teloi (i.e., narrative fulfillment) from eschatological fulfillment (i.e., *eschaton*/*eshcata*), Braun's Christ in Luke does not fulfill the "eschatological proclamations" around his kingship/(eschatological) reign; rather, Christ corrects people's expectation for him to be a king and suggests open futures when he, the resurrected Christ, i.e., the revenant, comes back and embodies the *différance*. In my view, Christ as *revenant* indicates the unabsoluteness of his death that cast a haunting shadow to the open futures (or, in my words, multiple *eschata*).

Postmodern approaches, especially postcolonial and queer studies inside and outside the biblical studies, challenge the conventional Eschatology and its *Telos*-orientation. For it becomes obvious that the linear, *Telos*-oriented, and singular Eschatology is not sufficient when we face the actual ends/margins in our plural worlds. Postcolonial approaches require to decentralize the End of the West, treat the ends of the marginalized worlds with eschatological seriousness, and to achieve palpable social changes (i.e., an end of certain socio-political system) which count as *eschata*. Queer temporalities, filled with the unending deaths/ends of the queer people, reveal the cruelty of the linear timeline and its Eschatology, which is intertwined with reproductive (queer-killing) futurism. What is common to these approaches is that they name the haunting weight of the trivialized ends.

What if, then, we read the biblical texts around various ends from this vantage point? It would, for example, pave a way to rethink the conventional Eschatology (just as demonstrated in the beginning of this study) and its related biblical texts. For the Lukan scholarship, it might give an alternative insight to see the tangled arguments on Lukan eschatology. It would also suggest to inspect how we can apply Kotrosits' view on Marks' ending to Lukan eschatology. As such, it would be a task for biblical studies to excavate the old futures, the futures of the past, that are dismissed, marginalized, concealed, and erased, because today's "here and now" is not built only upon the 'validated' past but composed also of unrecognized pasts; there are old futures, "the debris of many ended worlds," that did not unfold, with which today's marginalized would find a refuge. Anticipated is the endless possibilities of reading with *eschatalogies* as we set aside, if not leave behind, Eschatology which has ended too many colonized and/or queer people's lives.