

New Testament Studies in Contextual Exegesis
Neutestamentliche Studien zur kontextuellen Exegese

Τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σῶσω.

Toῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σῶσω.

Omnibus omnia factus sum, ut omnes facerem salvos.

Omnibus omnia factus sum, ut omnes facerem salvos.

John Chijioke Madubuko

The “Pauline” Spirit World in Eph 3:10 in the Context of Igbo World View

A Psychological-Hermeneutical Appraisal

Ich bin allen alles geworden, damit ich auf alle Weise einige rette.

Ich bin allen alles geworden, damit ich auf alle Weise einige rette.

Mede me ho meyeɛ ade nyinaa memaa nnipa nyinaa, na eye deen ara a, magye ebinom nkwa.

Mede me ho meyeɛ ade nyinaa memaa nnipa nyinaa, na eye deen ara a, magye ebinom nkwa.

Mi sono fatto tutto a tutti, per poterne salvare in qualche modo alcuni.

Mi sono fatto tutto a tutti, per poterne salvare in qualche modo alcuni.

Pendeknya, saya menjadi segala-galanya untuk semua orang supaya dengan jalan yang bagaimanapun juga saya bisa menyelamatkan sebagian dari mereka.

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Ua ou nua i nwa e tele, ina ia faasaoina le toatasi.

Ua ou nua i nwa e tele, ina ia faasaoina le toatasi.



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0. General Introduction

0.1 The spirit world as object of research – clarifications and delimitations

Spirit¹, a complicated concept as it is, given the varied nuances the term evokes, is in itself centrally a religious phenomenon. The reason is certainly in its primary association to, and the understanding of God as the Spirit, the absolute spirit and “the supreme objective evidence for the existence of spirit... who alone can ultimately explain the origin of finite forms of spirit.”² Though a central religious phenomenon, the attempts at understanding it as a concept is worked out through various religio-philosophical contexts. Though the history of these contexts is not the concern of this work, some brief contact with it is unavoidable. This history runs from the pre-Socratics, through various historical contexts to the present times. It has always played out in man’s bid towards self-understanding (epistemology - anthropology) and the understanding of reality around him (cosmology – theology).

The term “Spirit”, the English rendition of the Latin word “*spiritus*”, communicating the Greek concepts *πνεῦμα* and *πνεύμα* and rendered in German as “*Geist*” is traced back to the Hebrew word רוּחַ – Wind, Breath, etc. Following this German rendition, the term embraces in its fold a wide range of meanings – physical and intellectual, material and spiritual, internal and external, essence, consciousness etc. Appreciated as “wind, breath”, it involves some dynamism, the act of movement that is capable of setting in motion or otherwise.³ Tracing the relationship in meaning between the German word *Geist*, the Latin and Greek equivalents *Spiritus* and *Pneuma* respectively, H. Crouzel observes that in the LXX *Pneuma* is most frequently used to translate *ruah*. According to him, its fundamental meaning is breath, characterizing the substance of every living human being or animal. The connection breath has with life has led to the identification of *pneuma* with life, soul, as differentiated from the body. From this differentiation *pneuma* becomes spiritualized, articulating both the psychological or mental atmosphere of a human condition, as well as the influence of the gods on mortals.⁴

1 The definite article was intentionally left to differentiate the phenomenon under discourse from did “The Spirit” as always exclusively a direct reference to the Holy Spirit.

2 Cf. A.J. McNicholl, “Spirit”, in: NCE 13 (2003) 421–424 (423).

3 Cf. W.H. Schmidt, „Geist. I. Altes Testament“, in: TRE 12 (1993) 170–173.

4 Cf. H. Crouzel, „Geister (Heiliger Geist)“, in: RAC 9 (1976) 490–543. It is plausible to surmise that the intangible and ubiquitous nature of breath (wind and the likes) the

On a further development, tracing the mixing-up of, as well as the differences between the concepts “Nus” and “Pneuma” in the history of thought, *H. Crouzel* credits Anaxagoras with projecting the word unto the divine spheres. According to Anaxagoras “Nus” designates the World Reason, the principle of order that is responsible for the creation and ordering of the universe. Plato, taking up the thought, is credited with establishing the relationship of the Nus to the human, a relationship that in the course of time and through various stages founded the theological understanding of man as *imago Dei*⁵ with all its attending consequences – spiritual (divine) qualities, immortality etc.

The above understanding of spirit as Nus and as Pneuma, as related to, but also as differing from the corporeal as experienced especially in the human, provided the basis for the dualism that is classically presented in Plato’s theory of Forms/Ideas. It became also the philosophical foundation of the theory of hierarchy of beings, with the spiritual (divine) at one extreme, the hylomorphic-corporeal at the other end, necessitating also Plato’s idea of daimon (Symp. 202d/203a) as the mediator between the spiritual (divine) and the material (corporeal). That was the introduction of the idea of the radical transcendence of God, a transcendence that brought about another world-view. It is credited to the Stoics that they radically worked-out all these into a universal theory that provided new horizons for further developments especially in the Judaeo-Christian conceptualizations.⁶ In the light of this universalization, spirit came to be “...primarily identified either with reality as a whole in its inner nature..., with an objective order of transcendent realities..., or with impersonal and collective realms of being...”⁷. In this understanding of spirit, the exclusivity of God as the Spirit *par excellence* stands out. Its discussion, including the issues of Pneumatology in general, is, however, outside the scope of our present study.

basic element in all these associations, has played immense roles in the disquiet and dread the term spirit generally carries with it almost always. On this note, our attention will be more on this other understanding of the term “spirit” that have less to do with third person of the divine trinity. The contributions of C. Colpe and J. Maier in this regard, play important roles. Cf. *idem*, in: RAC 9 (1976) 546ff.

- 5 Cf. *ibid.*, 492–494, 495. Even when the relationship between Nus and Pneuma is thought not to be so clear cut, the tendency tilts towards the understanding of Nus as referring to the purely immaterial, and the Pneuma as the manifestation of the immaterial in the material/corporeal sphere, a manifestation that however retains the invisibility/intangibility of the purely immaterial.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 498. See also F. Stolz, „Geist. I. Religionswissenschaftlich“, in: RGG⁴ 3 (2000), 556–558; F. Mussner, 1968, 13–14.
- 7 Cf. A.J. McNicholl, “Spirit”, in: NCE 13 (2003), 421.

Understood in the above light, the term 'spirit world' would then be representing some strict distinction between the world of spiritual/invisible realities on the one hand, and the material/visible world on the other. The terminology is the product of a world-view perceptive of a wide range of reality, beings and agencies, whose nature and existence constitute some controversy since they are not fully perceptible to the ordinary human eye. They are often neither fully explained for what they are, nor successfully denied outrightly. What has come to be termed 'spirit world' becomes then part of the patrimony of the ancient religious world-view that shared the belief in spirits to be part and parcel of its life, religious and cultural situation.⁸ Unlike certain patrimonies of the antiquities that merely decorate museums, the spirit world patrimony presents itself as an ever-lively riddle-like stuff for discussion. It often swings in the pendant of seemingly unsatisfactory dismissal on one hand, and uncomfortable admittance on the other. There is often the tension between the literal belief in their existence as "*facts*" of human experience, and the critical stance that understands them as evidence of the transposing of ideas into reality, the "ontological dumping" that *Whitehead* referred to as fallacy of misplaced concreteness.

With regard to the content(s) of this terminology, the German word "*Geister*" comes appropriately to aid in deciphering the nuances and delimitations. It refers to the supernatural 'beings' perceived to be lower than the gods but at the same time superior to man as a result of the powers they are believed to wield. They may be technically referred to as intermediary beings *Zwischenwesen*. In line with this intermediary nature of theirs and the ancient cosmological configurations that are expressed with the terminologies heaven(s) and world, they are apportioned the space (*Luftraum*)¹⁰ as their abode. Ambivalent in nature and

8 M. Mach, clearly establishes that various religions brought individual aspects of life in connection to various divinities, deities, gods, that are often placed in different ranks. However the ranks and their relationships to one another came to be conceived and developed, the numerosity of their numbers merely served to accommodate and associate the different aspects of life to one divinity or the other. Cf. *idem*, 1992, 2.

9 C. Colpe, relates „*Geister*“ to „*Dämonen*“, noting the plural character of the latter as almost always presenting a collective. They lack personal character, and are mostly known through the activities that are brought in connection with them. The originally neutral Greek word "daimon" took up negative connotations from OT in its conflict with the gods of other religions. The words „*Geister*“ and „*Dämonen*“ would apply to all such supernatural figures and beings - angels, ghosts, phantoms, imps etc. Cf. C. Colpe, loc. cit, in: RAC 9 (1976) 546–548, 599.

10 The term "space" refers to the extension that is seen from the earth to the physically visible sky. The ancient understanding of the planets as heavens affords a pre-scientific

character, they are thought to be constitutive of all religions in their ‘non-reflected’ stages, in the common and superstitious beliefs of peoples.

This belief system is founded in the animistic view that sees the whole of human world as animated, as filled with spirits. Even when it seems very agreeable that the beginnings of such beliefs be sought in the evolutionary theories of animism as earlier stages in the course of the development towards monotheism, such views have been contested. Part of the argument for such objections is that the pre-conditions that lead to the existence of such beliefs among peoples are often as different as the peoples. Belief in God and belief in the existence of such other supernatural beings are rather seen as paralleling each other within the internal pluralism characteristic of religion.¹¹

Conditions that give rise to such beliefs range from the human tendency to personify and deify incomprehensible and unforeseen natural phenomena, moods or dispositions, the divisions or multiplications of the gods, to hallucination-related experiences. A typical example of such incomprehensible phenomena would be the problem of evil. Original attempts at explaining it accounts for the stories about the fallen angels and their progenies, found in the Jewish apocryphal writings,¹² motifs that find replete resonance in the Bible. The taking-up of older religions by a new one, generating the degradation and portrayal of the numinous beings and gods of the former in negative light, often lead to these living on in the minds of the people concerned in the forms of spirits and supernatural beings. Having been so negated, perhaps in order to justify the newly introduced

representation of this idea. Some ancient documents represent them as seven, some four etc. The occupation is in ascending order, with the topmost echelon apportioned to the purest spirit – God. The term space could also apply by extension to mountain tops, phenomenally tall and huge trees, great waters- oceans and seas, desolate ruins and cemeteries, certain animals, lonely roads etc. These later apply too to the African understanding in which almost every portion of the environment that falls into disuse is considered the abode of the spirits. Cf. J.S. Mbiti, „Afrikanisches Verständnis der Geister im Lichte des Neuen Testamentes“, in: G. Rosenkranz, et al. (Hg.), 1967, 130–147.

- 11 Cf. D.W. Bousset, 1903, 331–332; G. Lanzckowski, „Geister“, in: TRE 12 (1983), 254–259(254); see also H. Wagner, in: LThK³ 4 (1995), 379–380; M. Hailer, 2008, 64–65. In a related development, J.F. Thiel observes that the beginnings of the belief in such supernatural beings are to be sought in relation to the “*Deus otiosus*” phenomenon. Man, feeling that the God is not part of his daily affairs, difficulties or solutions, he readily ascribes them to some other sources. These become the subordinate supernatural beings. Cf. idem, „Religionsethnologie“, in: TRE 28 (1997) 560–565 (563).
- 12 We shall treat the provisions of such inter-testamental, apocryphal writings like the Books of Enoch, Jubilees etc. in the section one of this work.

trend, they become demonised. They are given names and forms as subordinate “powers, demons and satanic opposing principles”.

Ancient as this world-view evidently is, it remains a highly influential factor in many a world-view even in the current dispensation. Jewish monotheism is an example of such emergent new religion. It took-up, dominated, and worked-out its own form(s) from the polytheism and the religious paraphernalia of the surrounding peoples. The OT biblical writings busy themselves with themes showing evidences of contacts with this world-view. Sometimes some of such presentations tend to suggest the taking-up of more or less slightly modified myths from the religious surroundings (1Kgs 18:19; Deut 6:4,5; Ex 3:4,19,20 etc.). A section of our work will be devoted to investigating the background and various stages in the reception of this world-view into Judaism.¹³

Christianity, born within this context, and in its missionary orientation, is confronted with, and sought to address these issues in its own way. The NT writings present us the results of such efforts. Influenced by these backgrounds especially as inherited from the OT and Hellenistic views, the authors of the New Testament writings give it a new interpretation, a re-construction as it were, in the light of the event of Christ whose coming has given the cosmos a new meaning. Since Christ came into the world to save it (Jn 6:51), adequate knowledge of the world and how it was conceptualized at the time would play a great role in communicating the message of salvation to it. It is in this setting that we encounter Paul, this champion, and as it were, the founder of Christian theology, who, being at home with the popular religious-philosophical orientations of the time, “... raised the theological motifs that were at work in the proclamation of the Hellenistic Church to the clarity of theological thinking; he called attention to the problems latent in the Hellenistic proclamation and brought them to a decision;...”¹⁴ The problem of the understanding of the world, especially in the light of God-human relationship, being a central issue in the New Testament endeavour, sees it constitute Paul’s point of entry into the scene.

The term, *cosmos*, with which the ancient Greeks conveyed their all-embracing conception of the universe as the arena in which the totality of existence (including the gods and humans) plays out as a unified, rationally ordered structure, was understood by Paul in another way. Following the theological cosmology of Judaism that saw God as different from the universe – heaven(s) and earth – he

13 This development, summed-up in the expression “Jewish counterpart of, or answer to pagan polytheism” (cf. I. Gruenwald, *Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. ANRW II/19.1. (89–118), in: M. Mach, 1992, 3), will be subsequently investigated.

14 Cf. R. Bultmann, 2007, 1.187. See also E.E. Johnson & D.M. Hays, (eds.) 1997, vii.

created, the term *cosmos* took up a restricted sense. It referred to creation apart from its creator. In keeping with the anthropocentric understanding of creation (Gen 1:26–29), it (*cosmos*) referred to human life and earthly conditions of life.

This informed Paul's understanding of the term *cosmos*. It became for him not just a time-space concept, but an eschatological concept denoting,

...the world of men and the sphere of human activity as being, on the one hand, a temporary thing hastening towards its end (I Cor. 7:31), and on the other, the sphere of anti-godly power... It is the sphere of the 'rulers of this age' (I Cor. 2:6,8) and 'of the god of this age' (II Cor. 4:4)... The "*kosmos*", although on the one hand, it is God's creation, is, on the other hand, the domain of demonic powers: the 'angels', 'principalities' and 'powers' (Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 15:24;...) ¹⁵.

Relatedly, *E. Hirsch* observes, "A seldom discourse goes through the Pauline letters. They talk about the lords of the world, about the imperious angels, principalities and authorities bearing in themselves the basic powers of the world."¹⁶ These terms constitute what has come to be termed "the spirit-world" of Paul. Their meaning and their place in the theology of Paul constitute interesting objects of studies in NT scholarship.

These studies move between the extreme tendencies of apparent exclusion from Pauline theology, on the one hand, to some esoteric tendencies, at the other extreme. A middle course in the development features its being merely tolerated as theme of secondary/minor importance. *Ferdinand C. Baur* (1792–1860) is seen as the pioneer of this development in the modern Pauline scholarship. In his posthumous book – *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi...* – the issues of the spirit world feature in his treatment of what he terms "some minor doctrinal questions". By such considerations he gives the impression that such issues as the issues angels and demons do not constitute major issues in the thoughts of Paul, and therefore may safely be ignored. According to him,

In the Letters, the Apostle speaks about the angels... only very scantily. He does not speak dogmatically, rather figuratively and proverbially... He associates the angels with undetermined imaginations about higher, super-human beings staying between God and human beings... It would not worth the effort to give a special consideration to the angelology of the apostle if no place would be found in his letters, in which it would

15 Cf. R. Bultmann, 2007, 256, 257. The author's insistent use of such terms as they appeared in some of the so-called authentic letters of Paul, is to be observed. These terms are also evidence in the other disputed letters. Here lies the immense importance of the Christ event, the one in and through whom God renews and reclaims his creation.

16 E. Hirsch, *Ethos und Evangelium*; cited by I. Bendik, 2010, 17. Translation is mine.

seem he had placed great emphasis on this teaching as one should accept as done in some other expressions.¹⁷

In his discuss of the concern of the apostle that women wear veils on their heads in the liturgical assembly – 1 Cor 11:10 – *Baur* sees an incoherence in the chain of thought that is unbefitting of the apostle, and suspects some interpolation. He advocates that care be taken not to impute such imaginations and meanings on the apostle, than he may have had.¹⁸ His basing his views on Paul's spirit world on this interpretation of 1 Cor.11:10 must have been so unsatisfactory to *Otto Everling*, that proving him (*Baur*) wrong became one of the leading motivations in his engaging in the study of Pauline Angelology and Demonology.¹⁹

Otto Everling in his book *Die Paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie* (1888), provided the study with an epoch-making dimension. Applying the radical historical approach of the History of Religion School, he admitted the spirit world as component part of Pauline cosmology, and a rather rich and diverse topic on its own interest. With his unprecedented assemblage of immense historical data, he is acknowledged as the first to attempt establishing a connection between Pauline Angelology and Demonology with analogous parallels in earlier Jewish theology. Such parallels include 1 Enoch, Book of Jubilees, Wisdom of Solomon etc. It becomes surprising, however, that despite *Everling's* affirmation that the belief in spirits is constitutive of Paul's world view, that he regards engaging in a study of this belief as merely seeking to satisfy some theological-historical curiosity. For him, it is not of ultimate theological significance for Paul, and is not really worth the trouble.²⁰

For him, Paul merely shared, in his unique ways, the sensitivities and consciousness in his environment. Without wishing to undermine the *dogmatic* issues over angels and devil, *O. Everling* submits that such sensitivities and consciousness that reigned in Paul's context, uniquely intriguing as they are, make no meaning for the contemporary world.²¹ By this submission *Everling* could be said not to have substantially differed from the views of *Baur* for whom the concerns

17 Cf. F.C. Baur, 1867, 2.276–277. Translation is mine.

18 Cf. *ibid.*, 2.279.

19 Cf. *O. Everling*, 1888, 4.

20 Cf. *ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, 125–126. This much generalised conclusion of *Everling* remains, however, a wish as far as some world views e.g. Igbo (African) traditional as well as Christian world views are concerned. It is the motivation of this work to contribute to loosening the hold such ancient world views still have on the contemporary Igbo Christian societies.

about the spirit world was no issue in Pauline theology. Subsequent members of this school that engaged in further investigation of Paul's spirit world, for instance *Hermann Gunkel* in *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes* (1888)²², and *Wilhelm Bousset* in his very influential monograph *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (1903)²³ shared similar views that angelology and demonology are constitutive of Paul's world of thoughts, with special attention to the context of Judaism.

A very major milestone in this field of research is the epochal work of *Martin Dibelius* - *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (1909). As the name of the work already suggests, *Dibelius* has no doubts the issues about the spirit world had major roles to play in Pauline theology. Rightly paying tributes to *Everling's* pioneer efforts, he notes *Everling's* much dependence on apocryphal and pseudoepigraphical Jewish sources, and criticizes his inability to treat the topic in the wider context of Paul's teachings, especially his Christology and eschatology. Noting that Paul's rabbinic formation constitutes a decisive factor in his life, he turns attention to the provisions of the Jewish Talmud and Midrash as the point of access to the rabbinic evidences. Evidences from Hellenistic perspectives²⁴ were not left out, the result being an erudite and detailed monograph. Seeking to relate the spirit world issues to major themes of the Pauline epistles, he chose a thematic structure approach addressing and offering explanations on such topics as Paul's statements about angels, Satan and the demons, 'the spirit in the community', 'the rulers of this age'.

In the final section of the book - '*Herkunft und Bedeutung der Geistervorstellungen des Paulus*' - *Dibelius* endeavours to provide us with the origin and meaning of these ideas of Paul with regard to the spirit world issues, assessing its significance. According to *Dibelius*, Paul was not oblivious of the plethora of beliefs about the angels. But his interests lay in some other area. Unlike the Jewish apocalyptic trends that apparently delighted in the description of imagined heavenly details, sometimes reaching ridiculous extremes, Paul's concerns were earmarked by the question – how is, and what would/should be the relation

22 Even though H. Gunkel was directly concerned with the Holy Spirit, he argued that for a proper understanding of Paul's teaching on the Pneuma one has also to think alongside the place of angels and demons in the faith of Paul, a tacit acknowledgement of these phenomena in Pauline theology. Cf. H. Gunkel, 1979, 127 (German original, 1888).

23 Bousset in his analysis of angelology and demonology in the context of Judaism, especially with regard to the national angels and the elements, related them to Pauline themes. Cf. D.W. Bousset, 1903, 313–325.

24 Cf. M. Dibelius, 1909, 2–5.

of the Christian/Christian communities to these sensitivities about the spirit world? His answer is readily found in the assurance that through his closeness to God as his child, adopted through Jesus Christ the Son of God and basking in the spirit of God, the Christian need not live in fear of any power wherever.²⁵

The major hinge of Pauline concerns about the spirit world - angels concerns is captured in the term 'spiritual rulers of this world', traceable to the Jewish belief in the *Völkerengel* (angels of the nations), which in turn constitutes the bed rock and point of departure of Pauline theology. "Whereas the rabbinic teachings on the angels apparently lay at the periphery of Pauline religion, and do not have much connection with the original and central Christian thought, the belief about the ruler of this world leads us deep into the trend of thoughts in Pauline theology."²⁶ This would be, as it were, the summary of Pauline soteriology – the freedom of the world from the enslavement to the law and to the angelic powers through the death of Christ. These powers constitute the evil which Christ conquered on the cross. A. Schweitzer, towing here *Dibelius'* line of thought, puts it clearly thus "the end of the domination of the angels was brought about by the death of Jesus."²⁷

On Satan, *Dibelius* recognizes that it is an issue in the experience and missionary activity of Paul. He is, however, of the view that Paul did not give this issue elaborate mention in his letters, nor did it constitute a central issue in his faith.²⁸ To what extent this position of *Dibelius* may have influenced G. Williams' view that "Satan is an imaginative rather than a cognitive or dogmatic feature in Paul's religion",²⁹ remains, however, questionable. *Dibelius'* book ends with the typical Pauline "now and not yet" eschatological schema. Paul does not deny the spirits' existence. He insists rather that the Christian, sharing in the victory of Christ

25 Cf. Ibid., 182ff. *Dibelius* calls this „*das geistige Band*“ (183) that binds the individual parts of Pauline thoughts together. He emphasizes the danger in not observing the immensity of the influence of the Christ event in the life of Paul, an issue that makes many a scholar unable to draw *the lines of difference* between Paul the Jew and Paul the Christian, overwhelmingly overtaken by the Christ event. According to him, the central difference between the "two" lies in the messiah-salvation beliefs. Whereas in Judaism the messiah is still being expected to bring salvation in the future, for the Christian Paul, Christ has already wrought salvation.

26 Cf. Ibid., 189. Translation is mine.

27 Cf. A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, 1931, 72; cited by G. Williams, 2009, 38. Williams understands the position of A. Schweitzer in the above cited work as a further confirmation of the immense influence of *Dibelius* as far as the research spirit world issues in Paul is concerned.

28 Cf. *ibid.*, 190–192.

29 Cf. G. Williams, 2009, 36.

and the salvation he wrought, does not need to fear them. He is finished with them³⁰ - an interplay of the realized and still futuristic eschatology.

Despite criticisms,³¹ *Dibelius'* work assumed the position of a standard work as far as the study of the Pauline spirit world is concerned not just because of its judged erudite quality but more so because of the new paradigms drawn from it by subsequent scholars. His emphasis upon the "rulers of this age" became the spring board for a new impetus especially in the post-World War II biblical theology. Politics and power was the centre of experience and thought then. Many theologians of the time saw and interpreted some connections between the political events of the time and an understanding of the behind-the-scene motivations, the unseen powers thought to be responsible for them. "Since World War 2, there has been a growing tendency among scholars in the West to interpret Paul's reference to principalities and powers almost exclusively as the structures of our existence..., political and economic structures (as, for example, imperialism, nationalism, dictatorship, socialism and capitalism), ... and intellectual structures (*ologies* and *isms*)."³² That heralded the surfacing and subsequent blossoming of what came to be termed power theology, the pioneer of which was *Oscar Cullman* (1902–1999).

His most important work in this regard is *Christus und die Zeit* (1946).³³ Discussing the conception of time and history by the early Christians, he points out that for them Christ and his redemptive work constitute the centre of history. In an understanding of the world as one in which the invisible and the visible are intertwined, all world events are part of the history of redemption and become interpreted from that standpoint. Little wonder *Cullman's* understanding of "the rulers of this age" as referring to "...both the invisible 'princes of this world', who are

30 Cf. M. Dibelius, 1909, 206–207.

31 One of such criticism would apply to Dibelius' apparent conviction that Paul was the author of the epistle to the Colossians. He seemed so convinced of the authenticity of Pauline authorship of the Letter, a position that a majority of contemporary biblical scholarship have plausible reasons to doubt, that he refers to it as the heart of Paul's views about the spirit world. Cf. *ibid.*, 181. On the discussions over the deuteropauline character of the epistle to the Colossians, see Nicole Frank, *Der Kolosserbrief im Kontext des paulinischen Erbes*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 2009.

32 Cf. C.E. Arnold, 1992, 194.

33 Some other works that may be termed contemporaries to the work Cullmann, related to our study but considered outside the present focus include: K.L. Schmidt, '*Die Natur- und Geistkräfte bei Paulus*'. An article in *Erjb* (1946); B. Noack, *Satanas und Soteria: Untersuchungen zur neutestamentlichen Dämonologie* (1948); Heinrich Schlier, *Mächte und Gewalten im Neuen Testament* (1958); O. Böcher, *Das Neue Testament und die dämonischen Mächte* (1972); etc.

often mentioned as such, and their empirical (human) instruments,...”³⁴. In this setting of the early Christians’ view of the state, the “angels of the nations” takes up a political interpretation. The spiritual is given political manifestation. This became the “Powers’ theology”, the popular pedestal upon which English NT scholarship came into the study of the spirit world in Pauline theology.

Along these lines of thought, principally concerned with establishing contemporary theologic-political interpretations and consequences of a perceived teaching on angelic powers, we meet such figures as *J.S. Stewart, G.H.C. Macgregor, G.B. Caird, Clinton Morrison, Walter Wink, Ched Meyers, Neil Elliott* etc.³⁵ Pointedly in this regard, *Caird* writes,

Whether the Jews in general, and Paul in particular, believed literally in the existence of these angelic beings is hard to say. What is clear is that the powers stood for something real in human experience, as real today as it was then, viz. those structures of power, political, economic, social, and religious which interpenetrate the whole corporate life of man and decisively affect the fortunes of the individual.³⁶

Would this then be the rational content of thought that Paul expressed in mythological language, as *Caird* in his earlier work argued?³⁷ Contributive to the pursuit of the understanding of the spirit world in Pauline theology as these works in their own merits may be, their manifest political orientations are, however, outside the focus of this work. Aiming at locating Paul’s understanding in his original cultural and historical context as means to some psychological hermeneutics of the spirit world of Igbo (African) Christian setting, we would not get deep into analyzing the contributions of these authors.

The findings of scholars in the early History of Religion School and the convictions of the protagonists of the power theology notwithstanding, modern NT scholarship on the issues of the spirit world may be said to have remained greatly influenced by *F.C. Baur*’s position that it is minor and inconsequential. This position is definitely traceable to the phenomenal event of the Enlightenment and

34 Cf. O. Cullmann, 1946, 169. Translation and bracket mine.

35 J.S. Stewart, “On Neglected Emphasis in New Testament Theology”, in: *SJT* 4.3 (1951), 292–301; G.H.C. Macgregor, “Principalities and Powers: the Cosmic Background of St. Paul’s Thought”, in: *NTS* 2 (1955), 17–28; G.B. Caird, 1956, 1976; C. Morrison, 1960; W. Wink, 1984, 1986, 1998; C. Meyers, 1988; N. Elliott, 1995. Even they are all involved in a politically oriented theology, they exhibit levels of differences with regard to their eschatological orientations.

36 Cf. G.B. Caird, 1976, 40.

37 Cf. *idem*, 1956, x.

its legacies, this historical structural element in the rationalisation process that accesses every culture, times and thought.³⁸ It found renewed access in modern NT studies in the re-kindled conflict regarding the place of myths - mythology in the NT, the discussion of which is greatly influenced by *Bultmann's* programme of demythologisation.³⁹ *Bultmann*, convinced that the NT cosmology is basically mythical and its language mythological, noted that in this world view life and events are "set in motion and controlled by supernatural powers."⁴⁰ In this world view, the existence and operations of angels and demons are presupposed. That is the world of Jewish and Christian antiquity in which both Jesus and Paul found themselves. They would naturally be part of it in thought and orientation. *Bultmann* set out in his programme of demythologisation, controversial and criticized as it is, not to eliminate but to re-interpret the mythological given of this world view with, and through which the message of the NT became conveyed.

Demythologisation is for him a hermeneutical process. This is to enable the so-called modern man, whose world view is taken to be formed and developed by science, and to whom the ancient world view is no longer credible, to get over the mythological givens to the "ever relevant" core of the NT message. This is for him the task of theology in general, and modern NT scholarship in particular. With regard to the spirit world, therefore, *Bultmann* seems not to reject it as having a place in the thought of Paul. The task is rather to re-interpret it for the sake of the relevance of its message to modern man who, as *Bultmann* claims, "no longer believe(s) in *spirits, whether good or evil*."⁴¹ However, the extent to which this programme of demythologisation was carried on by some scholars as

38 Cf. A. Beutel, A., „Aufklärung. I. Geistesgeschichtlich. II. Theologisch-kirchlich." in: RGG⁴ 1 (1998), 930–947. See also H. Hübner, 1997, 267.

39 The discussion of Mythology or Demythologization is intended here. But suffice it to make some reference to some study of this program. Cf. R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", in: H.W. Bartsch, (ed.); 1961, 1–44; R. Bultmann, *Jesus Christus und die Mythologie* (1964); T. Holtz, *Mythos IV. Neutestamentlich*, in: TRE 23 (2000), 644–650.

40 Cf. R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", 1; see also, R. Bultmann, 1964, 11–12.

41 *Ibid.*, 4. The italicised emphasis of the later part of the citation, made by the author himself, is of particular interest. Apparent lack of such note may account for some misunderstanding and almost total criticism or even of Bultmann's position. To the extent that he referred to this world view's consideration of the stars and other atmospheric physical bodies as spirits, and to the extent this world view attributes the responsibilities over human experiences to these celestial bodies, to that extent would one see how right Bultmann was in regarding such world view as overtaken, as "finished".

far as the spirit world issue is concerned becomes baffling. This is especially on such occasions when they seem to present the position that assumes Paul himself “demythologized” the spirit world, purportedly separating himself from the prevailing understanding of angels and demons of his cultural setting.

These are the positions represented by the likes of Jörg Baumgarten and Wesley Carr,⁴² a subtle return to the F.C. Baur position! In his attempt to found his denial of Paul’s concern with the spirit world, and counter the positions over the angelic powers, W. Carr makes a rather surprising claim despite his concerns about the influences of Paul’s Jewish background. According to him, “It is worth recalling that he (Paul) lived and worked in the main in Asia Minor, where even the Jews had to a large extent forgotten their past.”⁴³ The non-tenability of Carr’s attempts culminates in his excising Eph 6:12, where “spirits of evil” are clearly mentioned, as an interpolation after having argued for Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians,⁴⁴ and in his insistence that Paul had no “recourse to an obscure mythology at a central point of his social thinking.”⁴⁵

The foundations of these positions are thought to be the attempts by some scholars to mould a Paul “after their own hearts”, the rationally enlightened apostle that stood above his context and circumstance, one whose thoughts are ever relevant to the modern man. On this, P.J. Cahill observes that the problems scholars have with Pauline thought are not only on account of

... the random nature of the letters, lack of evidence for positions Paul opposes, the obscure cultural situation of the writer and the recipients, and the more pervasive problem of the hermeneutic horizon of the modern interpreter. Pauline perspectives too have not always been mediated directly through his writings but rather by the needs and sometimes vested interest of institutional interpreters.⁴⁶

42 Cf. J. Baumgarten, 1975; W. Carr, 1981.

43 Cf. W. Carr, 1981, 2. It would have been interesting to know which aspect of their past he was referring to. Obviously it would neither be their religion nor the consequent cosmology despite the fact of influences from and in the lands they were sojourning that may not be fore-closed. Constant reminder of their identity and destiny to his Jewish audience, and the challenge to get beyond the bounds they impose remain re-occurring motives that play out in a number of Paul’s addresses. Cf. Rom 1:16; 2:17–3:1–4; 9:1ff etc.

44 Cf. *ibid.*, 108–110. C.E. Arnold’s criticism of W. Carr’s thesis that Eph 6:12 is an interpolation is presented in: *Idem*, “The ‘Exorcism’ of Ephesians 6.12 in recent research: A critique of Wesley Carr’s view of the role of Evil Powers in First Century AD Belief”, in: *JSNT* 30 (1987) 71–87.

45 Cf. *ibid.*, 176.

46 Cf. P.J. Cahill, Book Reviews in: *Religious Studies Bulletin* 1 (1983), 42.

It is indeed the issue of perspectives that has kept the debate in NT scholarship over the reality or not of the spirit world in Pauline thought alive despite the dismissal the Enlightenment and its thought consequences was thought to have dealt it. Locating Paul in the apocalyptic contexts of his writings,⁴⁷ apocalyptic perspectives for instance emerge. Within such perspectives in which the dualistic conflict between good and evil is the central theme, angels, demons are assigned dominant roles.

For Ernst Käsemann,⁴⁸ for whom apocalypse is the “mother of (early) Christian theology”, Pauline demonology, as attested in his letters, is to be understood in the light of the metaphysical dualism. The cosmic conflict plays out in the self-conflict the individual human being finds himself in, as well as in the understanding of being a Christian as a constant battle with the forces of evil. As such the spirit world becomes a meaningful route to the theological issues of human freedom, which is, however, outside the major focus of this study. Very closely related to the apocalyptic perspectives are the Christological aspects⁴⁹ that present the view that Jewish belief about angels influenced Paul’s and the early Christians’ understanding of Christ, and the development of Christology. In all these developments there is no doubt the findings of the History of Religions School have left lasting imprints, a trend that finds renewed interest and representation in our times in the works of Clinton E. Arnold.⁵⁰

It is undoubtedly a special credit to Arnold that he turned the whims of research away from the seemingly over-flogged debates about Gnostic and Hellenistic-Jewish influences in Eph that had characterized German scholarship, to really give attention to some existential issues of the time that were almost being forgotten – cultic and magical practices. Despite the interesting depth of his sources and force of argument, the “evangelical” orientation which seem to influence the direction of his thoughts often manifest some fundamentalism that could be adjudged almost incongruous with his premises. This leads to what G. Williams referred to as “maximalist” view

47 Devoting a portion of his work *Frühjüdische und urchristliche Apokalyptik: Eine Einführung* (1998) to examining the apocalyptic elements in Pauline thought, F. Hahn states there is no doubt Paul was well versed in the Jewish apocalyptic traditions, traditions in which Christianity was born and nurtured. Paul employed these motifs and elements while weaving his thoughts on the Christian message. See F. Hahn, 1998, 99–107.

48 Cf. E. Käsemann, 1972.

49 Cf. G. Williams, 2009, 53.

50 Cf. C.E. Arnold, 1989; 1992;

of the spirit world.⁵¹ The consequence of such trend of thought is his insistence on the fear-inducing demonization of the world, and subsequent pre-occupation with exorcism, real or imagined. This trend has become the thriving field for the so-called New Religious Movements that "...have continued to affirm the *real existence* of evil spirits... unanimously believe(-ing) in the reality and power of the evil spirits forces and *minister(-ing) to people on the basis of such assumptions*."⁵²

A most recent and interesting monograph is the study of the spirit world by G. Williams.⁵³ Moving from a general approach that considered the spirit world as embracing a range of ideas, and following the findings of the History of Religion School in a show of critical scholarship, he argues that the making of spirit world issues a secondary or marginal feature in Pauline thought is alien to the letters. The spirit world being a pervasive part of the culture within which Paul lived, there is no doubt he participated in his own way in this antique spirituality. The spirit world would not only be expected to be, but is actually an inherent feature of Paul's writings, and is worth scholarly attention. "Much of what Paul has to say seems fit with the *ideas and assumptions* of his contemporaries, who generally presupposed the existence and influence of the angelic and demonic beings in the world."⁵⁴ The emphasis seems to lie on the note that its feature is on the level of axioms or assumptions – *Vorstellungen*. It is this axiomatic and cultural perspective that underlines,

51 Cf. G. Williams, 2009, 54. How much applicable the term "spirit world" is in the works of Arnold is questionable. He seems to be pre-occupied more with the "powers of darkness" than with this all-inclusive appellation "spirit world" addressing this realm. An insight into Arnold's "evangelical" orientation that is rather worrisome is given by his seemingly fundamentalistic attitude towards biblical texts. He sees, for instance, as unacceptable, the fact that, "The new materialistic and rationalistic world view now called into question the reality of the miraculous and supernatural, *even that which was recorded in Scripture*." (Cf. C.E. Arnold, 1992, 170, emphasis mine.) Would that not be saying that the *mere fact of being recorded* in the Scripture vouchsafes, without doubt, the objective truth quality of the recorded!

52 Cf. C.E. Arnold, 1992, 181 (the letters in bracket and the emphasis are mine). Attention is called to the examination of the issues of *real (personal) existence* and the *ministration on the basis of such assumption*. M. Hailer, 2008, 9–12 presents an interesting many-questions-raising critical observation of such phenomenon. Not only are the practices of these Movements but also the often very similar unclarified positions of charlatan-like practices of exorcism in the Roman Catholic circles are called to question. More on this in chap 8 of our work.

53 G. Williams, *The Spirit World in the Letters of Paul the Apostle. A Critical Examination of the Role of Spiritual Beings in the Authentic Pauline Epistles*. 2009.

54 Cf. *ibid.*, 309 (emphasis mine). Consider too pages 310–311.

and makes the difference in Pauline approach to the spirit world phenomenon. With his stint of eclectic mastery, Paul worked with these ideas and assumptions of his setting, connecting them with the different concerns of his, namely, cosmology, ethics, and community relations. Through them he worked out the thought pattern that has come to be understood as his theology. It is actually in establishing the relationship of the spirit world assumptions to, and how they may have influenced Pauline thought that is most interesting in *Williams'* work.

When in the current dispensation the spirit world issues have become more or less the concern of world views, one notices the tendency among NT scholars of different interests. Either it is seen as overtaken and as a non-issue in certain world views, or it is seen as an issue of veritable concern for certain peoples and their world views. Africa is considered to be, and truly so, one of the parts of the world where spirit world issues play immense roles as a feature of life. More often than not, however, such scholarly interests end up merely appreciating these issues.⁵⁵ It is not enough to merely appreciate them. It is our conviction that more intensive attention needs to be given not only to how these constitute hindrances to the work of evangelization in the lives and settings of the concerned, but also to address these hindrances through some critical biblical scholarship. The hope is to get beyond mere general recommendations, one that challenges the often readily available 'charlatan-like' pastoral praxis. It is on this note that the warnings of *A.K Petersen* become expedient. "When theology gets combined with the irrationalism, with the spirit of the way of life, it runs, according to its nature, the danger of becoming demonology."⁵⁶ Would "Paul" really not have something to say to these settings? We are convinced that he would have something to say, having declared that the manifold wisdom of God be made known to the principalities and authorities the manifold wisdom of God through the church. (Eph 3:10) This is the task we intend to pursue here.

0.2 The Letter to the Ephesians as focus

Our quest for the understanding of the "Pauline" spirit world, which is seen as summarily articulated in the expression "principalities and authorities" will be focused on the Letter to the Ephesians. This choice is based on the unique nature

55 Cf. E.S.P. Thompson, „Die Dämonen in der biblischen Theologie“, in G. Rosenkranz, (Hg.); 1967, 149–163; P.T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church", in: D.A. Carson, (ed.); 1984, 110–150.

56 Cf. A.K. Petersen, "The Notions of Demon: Open Questions to a Diffuse Concept", in: A. Lange, et al. (eds.), 2003, 35. Translation is mine.