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A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF ANCIENT CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

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It is a striking fact that, apart from the antiquated and unreadable book of Atzberger¹⁾, a more comprehensive study on this subject: the eschatological ideas of the early christians, is still lacking. A reader desiring information about the opinions of primitive christianity on the "last things" is thrown upon the resources of 1) fragmentary digressions in works on more general subjects (e.g. Patristics and History of Christian Doctrines) 2) monographs on the theology of sundry Fathers, and, of course, 3) monographs on separate eschatological loci, such as Millennium, Antichrist etc.²⁾. But a more elaborate and, to a certain extent, exhaustive history of christian eschatology is lacking. Now this small article does not in the least pretend to fill up that gap; it might however show how highly desirable a broader treatment of the subject is. My point of departure will be the postapostolic age; New Testament eschatology would demand a discussion apart, although in the context it is now and then indispensable to say a few words about New Testament notions too. Moreover a general preliminary remark will be necessary. I mean this: christian eschatological thought is, in my opinion, characterized by

1) L. Atzberger, *Geschichte der christlichen Eschatologie innerhalb der vor-nicänischen Zeit*, Freiburg 1896.

2) On the Millennium the recentest work is: H. Bietenhard, *Das tausendjährige Reich*, Zürich 1955. Conf. J. Daniélou, *La typologie millénariste dans le christianisme primitif*, (*Vigilia Christiana* 2 (1948)) and H. Leclercq sub voce *Millénarisme* in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, XI, col. 1181-1195. On the Antichrist: W. Bousset, *Der Antichrist*, Göttingen 1895 and B. Rigaux, *L'Antichrist et l'opposition au Royaume messianique dans l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament*, Paris 1932. The articles sub voce in Herzog-Hauck, *Reallexicon für Theologie und* and other encyclopaedias give

two features. One of these is absolutely sui generis, viz. the appearance and life of Jezus; the other completely shaped by tradition, viz. Jewish apocalyptic literature, as it developed in the period, roughly taken, from 200 A.D. till some decades after the beginning of our era. A great deal of what was to become typical ancient-church-eschatology can already be discovered in these remarkable writings³). Many of them proclaim the resurrection of the body, an expectation alien to the old Testament (except very few isolated texts⁴) and most certainly alien to the Torah. It is hard to decide whether resurrection is a conception of purely Iranian origin. On its face value heavy odds are in favour of this theory, but to give satisfactory proof is by no means easy. Even a superficial perusal of the Gospels is enough to convince us that the hope of resurrection was anything but common in first century Judaism, being principally a theologoumenon of the Pharisee party. This idea is utterly un-Greek; more in hellenistic spirit is the conception of a blissfull immortality without resurrection. The latter had adherents amongst the Jews. Influences of that more Platonic vein are to be found in the book of Jubilees and IV Maccabees. This trend in hellenistic Judaism was strongest in Alexandria. The Alexandrine Philo, equally in debt to stoic and to Platonic thought, but still remaining a thoroughly Jewish "son of the Law", Philo who called this life a form of death, who quoted with satisfaction the pun "sooma-sêma" and who saw the body as a *πανμίαιρον δεσμοτηρίον* was its chief representant. Of course his system has no place for resurrection: man's flesh is too corrupted to be renewed. The pure soul goes to heaven, according to Philo, while eternal destruction awaits the wicked. This fate is also in store for those Jews who have been unfaithful to

3) On Jewish apocalyptic literature the classical work is still: R. H. Charles, *The Doctrine of a future Life in Israel in Judaism and in Christianity-A critical History*, London 1890. Reprinted as a paperback, New York 1963 with a valuable introduction by G. W. Buchanan. Conf. M. Friedländer, *Geschichte der jüdischen Apokalytik*, 1903; P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinden im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, Tübingen 1934; M. A. Beek, *Inleiding in de Joodse apokalyptiek van oud- en nieuw testament*, Haarlem 1950; H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, London (1944) 1947²; J. Bloch, *On the Apocalyptic in Judaism*, 1944; J. Klausner, *The messianic Ideas in Israel*, New York 1955; S. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, Oxford 1957. Rabbinic data are to be found in H. Strack and L. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München 1926, passim.

4) E. g. Daniel 12: 1.

the Covenant; a pedigree from Abraham is no insurance against eternal fire 5). The essene group presents a problem in this respect. Relying on Flavius Josephus' description of essene life one might be inclined to think that this sect held rather platonic views on the hereafter; primarily an immortality of the soul, not so much a resurrection of the body. Josephus however was an apologist, trying to make the religion of his fathers acceptable to non-jewish readers. So he may have transposed cruder forms of belief into a key more familiar to his public. The Dead Sea Scrolls give no evidence for one point of view or another; still they seem to support Josephus. At any rate resurrection is nowhere mentioned in the newly discovered documents 6).

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Generally speaking those apocalyptists, who believe in a "great getting-up-morning" are very realistic about it. The Apocalypse of Baruch e.g. states that the dead will rise in the same condition they were in when they died. Merely the righteous will undergo a change for the better. What people rise? Sometimes the righteous only, sometimes all mankind. In II Henoah even the animals take part in the resurrection, but this is only to bear witness against those who mistreated them and is apparently not permanent: a pity for our pets! A new conception of sheol is held by some other apocalyptic writers. At first the notion of sheol in Israel was dreary enough and not unlike the Babylonian conception, so thrillingly expressed in the Gilgamesh epic. The "reformed" sheol of some apocalyptic authors is provided with separate dwellings for the good and the bad. Our canonical New Testament offers an excellent example: the parable of Dives and Lazarus. The Millennium too has its forerunners in Jewish thought, although it is often not a Millennium in the strictest

5) On Philo: E. Goodenough, *By light light*, New Haven 1935; W. Völker, *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Ph. v. Al.* [Texte und Untersuchungen 49, I] Berlin 1938; H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, Cambridge (Mass.) (1947) 1948²; E. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie*, Paris 1908; J. Daniélou, *Ph. d'A.*, Paris 1958; *Opera omnia* ed. L. Cohn, P. Wendland, S. Reiter, Berlin 1896-1930, 6 vol.. The last volume, by H. Leisegang, very useful for references.

6) The literature on Qumran texts is immense, I have to express here my gratitude to my respected colleague A. S. van der Woude, author of *Die messianischen Vorstellungen der Gemeinde von Qumran*, Assen 1957 for supplying me with the information mentioned here.

sense, a Kingdom lasting a thousand years; it may be a longer or shorter period. The description of "gehinnom" in II Enoch is marked by the somewhat sadistic and nightmarelike characteristics we all know from christian records of hell, beginning with the Apocalypse of Peter up till modern revivalist preachers. Fire, brimstone and ice are not missing nor are horrible tortures by hideous-looking avenging angels. 7)

On the whole these Jewish materials are the same stuff a christian apocalyptist uses. The idea of an Antichrist seems to me not traceable in Jewish expectation, in spite of Bousset's assertions of the contrary view. 8) The general pattern of christian expectation, as it has its roots in the New Testament 9), is the following: When the "αἰὼν οὗτος" draws near its end, humanity, except the small number of saints, reaches a frenzy of moral depravity, brought to a terrific climax by the arrival of the Antichrist. Then comes the first resurrection, not for all mankind, sometimes not even for all believers but for an elite of those to be saved. The saints take possession of the Kingdom, that lasts for a thousand years and is followed by the last convulsions of the demonic realm. The powers of evil are then finally destroyed and the cosmic drama is crowned by the general resurrection and the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth. Sometimes the Millennium is cancelled.

It is evident that, with [perhaps] the exception of the Antichrist, the only difference with some trends of Jewish apocalyptic thought is the part of Jesus Christ. The Jewish apocalyptist believes that the Messiah has not yet come; the christian of the first generation expects the return of a Redeemer, who has made himself manifest before, in humility but whose second coming will be in glory, according to the words of the prophets. This gave an almost incredible intensity to that expectation. In the postapostolic period eschatological hope is still strong enough, but the fact that the church was not in for a spurt towards an exceedingly near goal but for a pilgrimage through the ages, the pilgrims not knowing when they will see the New Jeruzalem

7) II Enoch X, 2.

8) W. Bousset, *l.c.*, passim.

9) Crucial texts are: 1) the so called synoptic apocalypse (Math. 24:1-51 and parallel places); I Kor. 15; I Thess. 4:13; II Thess. 2:1-17 and the Apocalypse of St. John.

in the distance, is more or less accepted. The first disappointment did not destroy christianity. This is sufficient proof that Schweitzer and Werner¹⁰⁾ were not right: the "Naheerwartung" cannot have been so all-important. The other extreme, viz. "realized" eschatology is equally wrong and the via media between Werner and Dodd seems the only safe road. Postapostolic ethics too do not show any longer the eschatological strain, which is so characteristic for St. Paul: "buy out time, for the end is near". The rules concerning christian behaviour are tending to get a kind of independence, though remaining essentially religious. There is no need however to speak with some disdain of the "moralism" of the postapostolic age; the sense of redemption will have been stronger than the scarce writings make clear.

Typical for this epoch is Justinus Martyr, the apologist. To him the belief in resurrection is a *conditio sine qua non* for christian faith. People, who don't hold the view that the body will rise are no christians in his opinion, though they may assume some kind of spiritual survival of the soul or the pneuma (this was just what gnosticism did).¹¹⁾ But among those who deserve the name of christians he discerns two categories. There is a class of believers that expects, before the final consumation, Christ to reign in an earthly Kingdom, its centre being the rebuilt Jeruzalem on the topographical place of the first¹²⁾. This doctrine, most explicitly proclaimed by the Revelation of St. John and perhaps by St. Paul¹³⁾, Justin sees as the unadulterated orthodoxy in these matters. Nevertheless our apologist knows brethren, who for the rest share his opinions, but still do not believe in the Millennium. He does consider this a flaw in their faith but does not go to such lengths as to refuse them the name of christians for this reason.¹⁴⁾ All Old Testament prophecies about the future glory of

10) A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung*, Tübingen 1913; M. Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas*, Bern-Leipzig, 1941.

11) In Valentinian Gnosticism the soul has to disappear when the elect enter the pleroma; in gnostic thought it is always the nucleus of personality only, whether called soul or pneuma, that is apt to be saved.

12) Justinus, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 80, 1.

13) Conf. W. Bauer on I. Cor. 15: 23-25: wohl die Vorstellung eines Zwischenreiches in dem von der Parusie bis zur Vernichtung des Todes und der dadurch ermöglichten allgemeinen Auferstehung Christus mit den Seinen vereint ist [Art. *Chiliasmus in Realenc. f. Ant. u. Chr.*].

14) Justinus, *l.c.* 80, 2. πολλοὺς δ' αὖ καὶ τῶν τῆς καθαρᾶς καὶ εὐσεβῆς ὄντων Χριστιανῶν γνωμῆς τοῦτο μὴ γνωρίζειν ἔσημανά σοι.

the chosen people he applies to the intermediary reign of Christ, not to the final consummation. Spiritualizing tendencies concerning those prophetic words he radically rejects. Now it is remarkable that in his apologies this same man does not say a single word on chilastic hope. The reason for that fact, strange as it is at first sight, may have been a certain caution. As for a blessed life after death for the adherents of a cult: no state authority could possibly have any objection to such a faith; but a kingdom on earth, under a theocratic Messiah-king, remains a precarious thing, politically spoken, even then when the faithful stress the point that no violence is intended to realize it. For the same reason it is very premature to gather from the silence of other authors like Theophilus/Athenagorus and Tatianus on this topic, that they were no milleniarists; There are quite a lot of things they must needs have considered important and nevertheless don't mention in any way.

The Platonic influence, that is noticeable in the theology of the apologists, did not lead them to accept Plato's idea of immortality of the soul. On the contrary: they deny expressis verbis a natural and inborn surviving power of the human soul as such. If a man is endowed with life everlasting, as in fact the believer is, such a thing is to be seen as a miracle of God, not as a possibility inherent in nature¹⁵⁾ Justinus Martyr emphasizes the identity of the actual and the risen body¹⁶⁾. Against Plato's view that sinful souls pass through a period of purification, lasting a thousand years, he maintains that punishment in hell will go on for ever.

Some twenty years after Justinus Irenaeus of Lyons wrote his treatise against heresies¹⁷⁾. He was undoubtedly the greatest theologian of the young church after the apostolic generation. His enemies are the gnostics who, starting with the inferiority of matter, draw from that conviction the conclusion that a resurrection of the body is an absurd idea. In the fifth book of his "Adversus haereses" Irenaeus evolves his eschatology. He too is a convinced milleniarist like Justinus but he is less irenically minded (*nomen non est omen*)

15) Justinus, *Apol.* 10, 3; 39, 5.

16) Justinus, *L.c.* 80, 5.

17) Irenaeus, *Libri quinque adversus haereses*, ed. W. W. Harvey, Cambridge 1857. On Irenaeus' theology: A. Benoit, *Saint Irénée, Introduction à l'étude de sa théologie*, Paris 1960 [with a very complete bibliography].

towards adversaries of chiliasm; he seems to include this belief in the totality of *articuli stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. Like the apologists he does not teach a natural and demonstrable immortality. Man can *become* immortal by the operation of God. This potentiality was actualized in Christ and through the medium of the Redeemer mankind may reach that degree of deification that is within the compass of created being. Deification is the real goal of human existence. The perfect beatifying vision and the complete actualizing of potential godlike manhood can only be obtained in heaven after the final judgment. It goes by degrees however. *Natura nihil facit per saltum* and neither does grace, in Irenaeus' opinion. In order to train man in the vision of God, so to say, the millennial reign of peace is inserted between man's condition here and now and supreme eternal bliss. This is not the only reason Irenaeus has for stressing chiliastic conceptions so strongly. There is yet another thing. The Millennium is needed to make clear the triumph of Christ in the realm of history. The first creation is not and never has been the final purpose of God. A change for the better would have taken place even if man had not sinned. Sin has only made necessary the special work of redemption, that would have been superfluous if man of his own free will had chosen the path to godlikeness. Now the victory of Christ would be incomplete if it were only a victory in the "olaam hazeh", the world to come, which is also "world without end". This selfsame world must necessarily realize its full possibilities in respect to the divine sphere before it gives way to another aeon¹⁸). The Saviour has to celebrate the outcome of his glorious struggle in Time before he does so in Eternity.

The more surprising is, in view of the purely theological motivation of milleniarism, Irenaeus' description of the „reign of a thousand years“, depicting it as a kind of *Cocaigne*. The alleged logion of the Lord himself, quoted by Papias, grotesque as it may be, is accepted by our bishop without a trace of criticism¹⁹). (This conception he shares with some Jewish writers, e.g. the author of the *Apocalyps of Baruch*. Here Papias' *Cocaigne* is *outcocaigned*. In their messianic era general fertility is increased to such a degree that women have a baby every day: nightmare of a birth-controller.) Irenaeus writes on the Antichrist at

18) *L.c.* V, 30, 41; V, 32, 1; V, 35.

19) *L.c.* V, 33, 3.

some length and in this context supplies us with a most original explanation of the celebrated mystery number 666, that puzzled readers of St. John's Revelation during nineteen centuries. That "isopsephia", the calculation of the letters' numbertvalue, is the only method to solve the riddle he does not doubt. But he is somewhat at a loss when it comes to the real explanation of the name. It might be Evanthas or Lateinos or Teitan. Those three yield the number 666 but the future will show which of them is correct²⁰). It strikes the reader that the Antichrist is not identified with the beast from the sea nor with the one from the land²¹). This distinction is certainly not in the spirit of the author of Revelations. Neither is another feature of Irenaeus' eschatology: he no longer identifies the beasts with the Roman empire (as St. John undoubtedly did). On the whole his attitude towards the Imperium is rather moderate and he does not consider the power of the Roman State as fundamentally antichristian: Romans 13, not Revelations 13 contains his political theory.

The eschatological notions of Irenaeus and the rest of his theology form an organic whole. They should not be regarded as an erratic block, an archaic survival, as some scholars tend to do. It cannot be denied that in our bishop's christian experience the intensity of eschatological hope had considerably slackened: a general tendency in the second century. The white-hot expectation of the end could, for obvious reasons, not last more than a few decades. The almost complete disappearance of a real "Naheerwartung" in the catholic church, however, did not pass without a crisis. This crisis was the montanistic movement, not unaptly called by one of its best judges, De Labriolle, "la crise montaniste"²²). It was the first of a long series of adventistic sects that continues up till now. Montanism constituted a fervently passionate revival of the old and genuine christian persuasion that the Lord will come "ἐν ταχέι", with haste. (Denying that this "ἐν ταχέι" was meant chronologically and interpreting it in an existentialist way is a grotesque error; the average christian A.D. 1966 may not be able to conceive the possibility that tomorrow he

20) *L.c.* V, 30, 2.

21) *L.c.* V, 30 sqq.

22) P. de Labriolle, *La crise montaniste*, Paris 1913. A very comprehensive list of books on montanism in K. Aland, *Kirchengeschichtliche Entwürfe*, Gütersloh 1960, p. 105-149.

might see the Lord in his glory, coming on the clouds, a christian A.D. 66 certainly could!). The essence of montanism was not the reawakening of the gift of prophecy as it is sometimes erroneously taken, often with allusions to the Phrygian origin of the sect, Phrygia being a region where an ecstatic and enthusiast religious feeling, whether pagan or not, was always apt to drive people to frenzy of excitement. It is true that the montanists themselves called their movement "the new Prophecy" but prophetic gifts were by no means common in montanist communities. Apart from some later groups, in the mainstream of montanism prophecy was, strictly speaking, the privilege of very few: the founder himself and his two female followers Priscilla and Maximilla. One of the oracles handed down to us reads: After me there will not be another prophet but the end.²³⁾ So the "Naheerwartung" was renewed in the Phrygian sect. It was also dogmatized: whereas the first generation left a certain space for uncertainty about the proximity in time of the second coming, the montanists, like many modern sects, did not reckon with the possibility of any further delay. Now the sect not only expected the coming of Christ at very short notice but the Millennium too, a particularity that is often not taken into account in descriptions of the group. The attitude of the catholic church towards these over-excited men (and women!) was not always the same. Now and then the "nea prophetia" was recognized by official ecclesiastical persons and authorities. At first people wanted to see which way the cat jumped. Later on a violent resistance arose in the ranks of the official church²⁴⁾. In Rome opinions were apparently divided²⁵⁾.

Tertullian was converted to montanism. So imposing was this man's genius that (an unique fact in ancient church history!) even the works written in his heretical period still remain and were much read by catholics, notwithstanding the sour witticisms on the "psychici" of this church that abound in his later treatises. About the opinions of Tertullian concerning eschatology but little remains obscure; he often

23) Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXI, 2, 4.

24) See note 23.

25) According to Tertullianus it was the patripassian Praxeas who chased the new prophecy from Rome: *Adv. Praxean* I: Ita duo negotia diaboli Praxeas Romae procuravit, prophetiam expulit et haeresim intulit, paraclatum fugavit et patrem crucifixit.

entions these things and his expressions are far from vague²⁶). His work of his especially referring to the last things is "De resurrectione carnis" and more or less elaborate descriptions of the "novissima" are dispersed all through his writings²⁷). It goes without saying that Tertullian is a chiliast. On the Antichrist his views in the main overlap those of Irenaeus. Very clear and explicit he is in his opinions on the intermediate state of the soul between death and resurrection, a subject somewhat left in the dark by his predecessors. The soul, so he says²⁸), is a subtile ethereal kind of body and not incorporeal. Immortal it actually is. Tertullian, strongly biased against philosophy, yet influenced by the Stoic in a very high degree, is the first in the west to profess this "philosophical" (though not so much stoic) doctrine of natural immortality. After death all souls go to Hades, except those of the martyrs. This realm of dead, Hades, is a kind of waiting-room for the good and the bad alike. The good are rather comfortable there, but not in a state of beatitude properly speaking: for a departed Christian soul too, Hades is a "carcer", a gaol. The wicked, on the other hand, are already feeling a commencement of damnation but that is also only partial. The second coming of Christ and the first resurrection²⁹) of some saints, not all, begins the eschatological series of events. As a result of this first resurrection the faithful will rise but, again, not all at once. Those who collected less merit in their earthly life than their brethren will rise later from the dead than the believers of great merit. In this way, Tertullian, the lawyer, vindicates the absolute justice of God, at the cost of divine generosity. It is the same psychological need that made later generations develop a theology of purgatory.

A fairly comprehensive treatment of eschatology is presented by the learned presbyter (afterwards schismatic bishop) of Rome, Hippolytus. He was writing in a situation that kindled latent eschatological tensions, viz. a period of persecutions. Moreover somebody had calculated with

26) An exhaustive study on Tertullian's eschatology: H. Finé, *Die Terminologie der Jenseitsvorstellungen bei Tertullian*, Paris 1953.

27) E.g. *De Carne Christi, Adversus Marcionem* etc.. A striking example in a surprising context: the last caput of "*De Spectaculis*".

28) Tertullian's doctrine on the soul is explained at some length in his treatise *De Anima*. The excellent edition with commentary of this work by J. H. Vasziuk, Amsterdam 1947, traces many philosophical influences.

29) Conf. Finé, *L.c.*

the help of the book of Daniel that the year 204 would bring this world to an end. This was what made Hippolytus take up the pen. His opinions were laid down in two treatises³⁰). The one called "De Antichristo" gives many particulars, some of them apparently drawn from oral tradition rather than from biblical sources. The part played by the Antichrist is far more stressed than in the digressions of his predecessors. A negative parallelism prevails: all things Christ does will also be performed by his demonic counterpart, in a perverse satanic mutilation of course. Nevertheless the miracles of the Antichrist are real miracles. A strange polarity, different from Irenaeus' more homogeneous ideas, is manifest in Hippolytus' attitude towards the Empire. He sees in the apocalyptic "Beast from the sea" a personification of the Roman state, but this does not keep him from holding that this same political power is also "ὁ κατέχων", the force that restrains "the man of sin" for a while³¹). The one empire under a single ruler will degenerate into ten democracies (the ten horns of the beast). The Antichrist will annihilate some of these, subdue the rest and thus be monarch in a kingdom of evil. One of his crimes will be the bringing back of the unfaithful Jews to Palestine; the Antichrist is a Zionist in Hippolytus' opinion. His solution of the enigmatic number 666 is obviously taken from Irenaeus. He sums up the same names: Euanthas, Teitan, Lateinos, but shows a preference for the last. A peculiar thing is that this writer who supplies us with so many details, gives no hint as to his notion of Millennium. The nearer the end the more confused his expositions; so is hard to decide whether he distinguished two resurrections or not. Was he a chiliast? A decisive answer to that question cannot be given. To me it seems plausible that he was indeed, in spite of his silence on this matter; a silence, though, that might be caused by a later expurgation in a non-chiliastic spirit (We know that such things happened: St. Jerome expurgated the commentary on the Apocalypse by the milleniarist Victorinus of Pettau in this way). Two arguments speak for this assumption: 1) Hippolytus' extensive use of

30) *De antichristo*, (ed. H. Achelis, Griechisch-christlichen Schriftstellern, Berlin 1897) and *In Danielem* (ed. G. N. Bonwetsch, Gr. chr. Schr., Berlin, 1897). For a bibliography on Hippolytus I may refer to J. Quasten, *Patrology*, II, Utrecht-Antwerpen 1953.

31) Conf. K. J. Neumann, *Hippolytus von Rom in seiner Stellung zu Staat und Welt*, Leipzig 1902, p. 11-61.

the typology of the week. He distinguishes six periods in history, corresponding with the days of creation. This fact points to a sabbath of a thousand years after the six thousand years of labour and trouble.

2) As an author Hippolytus was greatly in debt to Irenaeus and nobody will deny that this bishop of Lyons was a milleniarist.

Hippolytus deviates from Irenaeus in fixing a positive date. The end of this world will come in three hundred years time; that means about A.D. 500. The way he proceeds to demonstrate this is curious enough: he derives his date from the proportions of the Holy Ark. Hippolytus' attitude is typical for the great shifting of christian hope. In his days convinced christians too would prefer the Lord to stay in heaven for some time longer; they are overjoyed to hear that the second coming is not to be expected in the near future and that nobody of their generation needs to fear his witnessing the end of this wicked world. Before he turned montanist even the fervent Tertullian mentions the fact that christians are praying "pro mora finis" 32).

The eschatological notions examined so far were utterly realistic. A reaction against this crassness was inevitable, especially in more intellectual christian circles. Alexandria took a leading role in this reaction. Concerning the founder of the typical alexandrine theological school, Pantaenus, hardly any data are available and the ideas on eschatology held by Clemens Alexandrinus are not so clear that a special paragraph on them would seem indispensable in this very brief survey. So we focus our attention on the greatest of the alexandrine school, Origen. In spiritualizing biblical thought he goes to a great length. He can do so by means of his exegetical method, viz. allegorical interpretation of Scripture 33). There are structural resemblances between the, likewise extremely allegorizing, gnostics and the catholic anti-gnostic Origen. Like the gnostics [and like Clemens before him] he distinguishes two classes of christians: the people who have nothing but $\psi\lambda\eta\ \pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ and the possessors of "gnosis", meaning deeper insight

32) E.g. Tertullianus, *Apologeticus*, 32: Est et alia maior necessitas nobis orandi pro imperatoribus et ita pro statu rebusque Romanis, qui vim maximam universo orbis inminentem ipsamque clausulam saeculi acerbitates horrendas comminantem Romani imperii comiteatu scimus retardari. Itaque nolumus experiri, et dum precamur differri, Romanae diurnitate favemus. The same idea *Apologeticus* 34, 2.

33) On allegorical methods in general J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie*, Paris 1958. Conf. W. den Boer, *De Allegorese in het werk van Clemens Alexandrinus*, Leiden 1950. On Origen's exegesis H. De Lubac, *Lumière et Esprit*, Paris 1950.

into the revealed truths. Gnosis i.e. orthodox gnosis, is not absolutely necessary for salvation but he who shares it, belongs, as a matter of fact, to a higher grade. This distinction did not please the simpler souls, who were not seldom at loggerheads with Origen. On the other hand his assertion that gnosis is not "conditio sine qua non" draws a line between him and the adherents of the heretical gnosis. There is another thing he has in common, up to a point, with the gnostic movement outside or at the borderland of the *Catholica*. That is: his aversion against matter and the material world. This world is indeed a creation of the good and superior God, that point he defends against gnostic sectarians. Deviating from the common view, however, he declares at the same time that the cosmos came into existence as an emergency measure to save spiritual beings in jeopardy. He believes in resurrection (heretical gnostics did not) and shares, as St. Paul did, on the other hand the notion of these sects that the FLESH will not rise again. A certain "eidos" of the body remains, though the fleshly substance is radically abolished and replaced by a totally different substratum. Even the translation of the word "eidos" is problematic in this connexion. It might mean the "platonian idea", not the "shape"; for, according to fairly reliable evidence,³⁴ Origen imagined the risen body as spheric, this form being by general agreement of all classical philosophers the most perfect of all.

The process of fall and salvation, as Origen sees it, evolves along the following lines: The entities, that have become souls, entities co-eternal with God, though eternally created [in the sense of causal nexus] those entities, using their power of free will, have turned away from God. They were "νόες" but became ψόχα. The etymology of ψόχα is derived from ψυχίζομαι, "to cool", Origen thinks. Because of the cooling down of their warm love of their Creator, God wished to restore them to their primitive, uncooled state. So this world was created as a kind of purgatory. The spiritual entities, who had sinned, were included in bodies, the substance of these varying in grossness, according to the degree of the soul's degeneration. By living in accor-

³⁴) In the *canones adversus Origenem* written by the emperor Justinianus in 543. [H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*³¹, Freiburg 1957: 207 [p. 96]. H. Prat [Origène, Paris 1909] maintains that the propositions condemned there are not Origen's but those of his radical followers. The complete *Liber adversus Origenem* by Justinianus: Migne Gr 86^t.

dance with the God-Logos, Christ, who became a true man, consisting of the divine Logos, a sinless human soul and a body, the way back to the original state and to the former community with the Divinity is opened. That means the ultimate abolition of matter; a thing that happens by degrees. Even after death a certain materiality remains, but that will finally vanish. The resurrected body itself will increase in subtlety till it has completely disappeared and men are pure "νόεσς" again. Judgment and the ordeal of fire must be taken in a purely spiritual sense; judgment day does not appear on the calendar. Fuel for the fire are the sins; they are burned away in this manner. A strikingly new feature in the very complex system of the alexandrine teacher, that included metempsychosis, was the "apokatastasis pantoön". Finally all spiritual beings will be saved, if not in this world then in another, yet to come. Hell is not hell; it is nothing but purgatory.

Repeatedly and with utmost vehemence Origen fights the chiliasts. It seems that he reckoned with the possibility that the process of fall, turning away from God and turning back again, is repeated³⁵). This does not mean a reception of the widespread antique conception of cyclical repetition of world-periods. It is connected with the essence of free will (προήρησις) and not with the necessity of mechanical "Wiederkehr des Gleichen". In his polemics against Celsus he expressly denies such a mechanical repetition³⁶). One thing should not be forgotten when the eschatological ideas of Origen are discussed, viz. that many of his theories are merely advanced "γυμνάσιως", as an exercise in thinking. The regula fidei contained all the fundamental truths of the Catholica and neither Origen nor any other theologian, who wished to be a catholic, was liable to shake this foundation. But about things, not expressis verbis stated in that regula, a considerable amount of freedom of speculation existed³⁷).

This rather extremely spiritualizing view met with some resistance, primarily from the simple-minded, the "simplices et idiotae" as Origen called them. There were however, also theologians of broad erudition

35) *De Principiis* III, 5, 3. Conf. H. Mayer, *Die Lehre von der ewigen Wiederkunft aller Dinge*, Tübingen 1922, p. 259-380; F. H. Kettler, *Der ursprüngliche Sinn der Dogmatik des Origenes*, Berlin 1966 passim.

36) *Contra Celsum*, IV, 67.

37) No instance is known to me of a writer of the ancient Church condemned for purely cosmological or metaphysical assertions. Origen's theses had indeed a theological impact too.

who defended the cause of simple tradition with less simple weapons. Origen's comprehensive system was fiercely attacked by Methodius, bishop of the (Asiatic) Olympus [† 311]. The ideas [defended by this prelate in a remarkably pure Attic Greek] were of a somewhat old-fashioned kind. He was a chiliast without accepting the revolting grossness of much popular imagery of the "thousand years". Besides his well known symposium on virginity he wrote a treatise "De Resurrectione"³⁸). The grossness he avoids in his interpretation of the Millennium, he does not shun in his ideas on the mode of resurrection. The risen body, so he thinks, will be absolutely identical with the buried mortal remains both in form and substance. The only difference is that its defects are mended, at least those of the elect. His opinions about the state of the soul between death and resurrection are nowhere sufficiently clearly expressed. Chiliasm was losing ground in the East; neither primitive laical theology nor learned digressions of stylistic virtuosos could stop that. The last eastern theologian who held milleniaristic views was Apollinaris of Laodicea, (+ 310- ± 390), like Methodius a man of culture and erudition³⁹). In his time such views had become so rare that Epiphanius, who, as a professional heretic-hunter, refutes Apollinaris' christological aberrations, simply cannot believe that his scapegoat was a chiliast into the bargain⁴⁰). What finally prevailed in the East was a moderate spiritualistic outlook, not quite in the spirit of Origen but still less à la Methodius, that obviously had no place for a Millennium. (An instructive example for the noiseless but efficient way chiliasm was eliminated is shown by the controversy of the two namesakes, Dionysios of Alexandria and Dionysius of Rome. The origenist bishop of Alexandria took measures against the followers of a certain bishop Nepos of Arsinoe, whose exegesis of the Apocalypse was in tune with the apocalypticist's mind and who expected a Millennium. In doing this Dionysius used inconsiderate expressions about the God-Logos, expressions preluding on Arius. He was rebuked by his Roman namesake, who was shocked by the christological errors he discovered, not by the rejection of the Millen-

38) Ed. G. N. Bonwetsch, Gr. chr. Schr. 27 p. 217-424, Leipzig 1917.

39) Conf. H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule*, Tübingen 1904.

40) Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 77, 37-38. Conf. Basilius, *Epist.* 265, 2 [Migne 32, 988 AB.]

nium⁴¹). So we see that concerning the Millennium an enormous change has taken place in eastern christianity. What was fairly common about A.D. 150, not too uncommon about A.D. 300 (the time Methodius wrote) is in the eyes of a belligerent bishop A.D. 370 a monstrosity, so abnormal that even he thinks it hardly suitable to charge a notorious heretic with it. The origenist notion of "apokatastasis pantoon" was abandoned by most theologians. Officially condemned by the whole church it was not, until the times of Justinian. For the condemnation of origenism in the controversy at the beginning of the fifth century can hardly be called an official ecclesiastical verdict. Gregorius of Nyssa, openly defends apokatastasis (which he does not always show in his homiletic works).

The same author wrote an important dialogue "In resurrectione". The soul, he demonstrates, is absolutely immaterial and by no means subject to categories of space⁴²). Tradition forces him to admit a resurrection of the flesh, a feature that hardly fits his strongly platonic pattern of thought. Platonism is still stronger in the Nyssene's funeral orations⁴³). Here he does not shrink from exclaiming that it is a calamity for the souls to be linked to the body.

To sum up the results of a long evolution: early Byzantine orthodoxy takes it for granted that after their resurrection the departed, invested with a new corporality, will dwell in heaven. On their place between death and judgment no binding opinion prevails. The only doctrine common to all is that the fullness of bliss is reserved for the aeon following resurrection and that the condition between can be no more than a state of *relative* blessedness. The possibility of penitence after death is generally accepted but eastern theology holds aloof from rationalizing this notion into an elaborate doctrine of purgatory as pope Gregory the great and afterwards western catholicism did.

Quite different was the development in the West; chiliasm, though not accepted by all, remained a very strong power there up to St Augustine and later; it never completely disappeared. Thus Lactantius

41) On this controversy H. Lietzmann, *Geschichte der alten Kirche* III, Berlin 1938, p. 18 sqq.

42) *Dialogus de anima et de resurrectione qui inscribitur Macrina*, Migne ser. Gr. 36, 11-160.

43) In Migne, ser. Gr. 46.

[± 250 -- ± 320] is frankly chiliastic⁴⁴). From his work we may learn that the expectations of a Nero redivivus were still known in his time. For the rest he himself condemns this strange belief. There are Christians, he says, who expect a return of the ghostly emperor out of Hades, but they are talking mere moonshine. The Antichrist will indeed come at the end of this aeon. He will not, however, be identical with the historical Nero and neither will he rise from Hades⁴⁵). Lactantius' chiliasm is the more significant for western trends as he is anything but a simple and modest believer, but a most refined "homme de lettres", the "Christian Cicero" (Still more evidence that it means oversimplifying matters to assert, as is often done, that milleniarism was a "trésor des humbles" and that the borderline between chiliasts and antichiliasts approximately coincides with that between simple and more sophisticated Christians).

Not much of a literary man was Victorinus of Pettau, the author of the first commentary on Revelations. This work holds millenarist conceptions of a pretty crass and extreme kind⁴⁶). The booklet has come to us in two different versions: i.e. the original one, with great stress on the Reign of a thousand years, and an adaptation by St. Jerome, who expurgated the chiliastic fragments but left the rest fairly intact. Then there is the riddle of Commodianus. Much has been written on this subject: by theologians on account of his poets' extravagant notions, by philologists on account of his amazingly awkward handling of what is supposed to be a hexameter⁴⁷). The "Commodianic question" is so intricated that a "non liquet" might seem the wisest thing to say. Even the roughest outline of his extremely complicated eschatology would take too much room to sketch, so we confine ourselves to a few remarks. First: Commodianus is a millenarist⁴⁸). Then a strong anti-Jewish bias is felt throughout

44) Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* VII, 14, 9; *Epitomar* 67, 3.

45) *L.c.*

46) *Victorini Episcopi Petavionensis Opera*, ed J. Hausleiter (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum XXXIX, Vienna-Leipzig 1916).

47) *Commodiani Carmina*, ed J. Martin (Corpus Christianorum, series Latina CXXVIII, Turnhout 1960. This edition has an instructive "praefatio". Further bibliography in Krestan's article sub voce [*Reallexicon f. Antike und Christentum* III, 248-252.]

48) The *Instructiones* are very outspoken in this respect, e.g.: XLIII (Martin p. 37). More vague the *Carmen de duobus populis*. This may be due to an alteration of the text, intentional or not.

catholicism⁵⁵). St Augustine is familiar with the idea of a purging after death but it was the concern of his later followers, especially St. Gregory the Great, to extend these rather succinct notices into a consistent theology of purgatory. Both St. Augustine and St. Jerome hold incredibly realistic views as to the identity of the present and the risen body⁵⁶).

To summarize the preceding notices: ancient christian eschatology compassed an extremely wide field of conceptions. Completely lacking is an actualistic eschatology aiming at salvation only here and now, that has nothing in store for the Beyond, as it is defended by many modern theologians. All christians, orthodox and heretics, of the first centuries agree that the faithful possess eternal life already in this aeon because "knowing God IS eternal life" but this is never developed so unilaterally that expectations for the future of the individual entirely disappear. For the rest, in the spectrum all intermediary colours and shades between the deep ultra-violet of an extremely spiritualizing conception and the infra-red of popular belief are present. The resurrection is sometimes, and the day of judgement often, not taken too literally. About A.D. 400 chiliasm was nonexistent in the East but it was never completely eliminated in the West. A certain notion of purification after death is seldom lacking, but only the West developed this theme in a more rationalistic and sharply defined way. The intensity of eschatological hope slackened very soon both in East and West, the more dynamic approach of western christianity, however, was more favorable to revivals of those expectations than the comparatively static and mystic spirituality of the East.

55) Conf. Article "Enfer" in *Dict. de Theol. catholique*.

56) E. g. Augustinus *De fide et symbolo*, 10 and *Enchiridion*, 88, Jerome in his commentaries *passim* and in *Ad Pammachium*. According to this crude conception the resurrected will have teeth though they do not need food; for there is written: there will be gnashing of teeth. The hair will be restored to its former state for there is written: the hairs of your head are all counted. The genitalia will not disappear although they have no function whatever in a world that needs neither procreation nor excretion.

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