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 Atzberger 1), 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 ressources 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 vorchristlichen Zeit, Freiburg 1896.
two features. One of these is absolutely sui generis, viz. the appearance and life of Jesus; 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 writings 3). Many of them proclaim the resurrection of the body, an expectation alien to the old Testament (except very few isolated texts 4) 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 blissful 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-seima” and who saw the body as a παραλόγον δεσμωτηρίον 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


4) E. g. Daniel 12: 1.
the Covenant; a pedigree from Abraham is no insurance against eternal fire 5). The esen group presents a problem in this respect. Relying on Flavius Josephus' description of esen 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).

Generally speaking those apocalyptists, who belief 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 Henoch 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


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 nightmare-like 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 apocalypticist 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 "αἰων ὀλίγος" 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 apocalypticist 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 Jerusalem.

7) II Enoch X, 2.
8) W. Bousset, i.e., passim.
9) Crucial texts are: 1) the so called synoptic apocalypse (Matt. 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 Werner 10) were not right; the "Naheverwartung" 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 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 Jerusalem on the topographical place of the first 12). This doctrine, most explicitly proclaimed by the Revelation of St. John and perhaps by St. Paul 13), 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

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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.
14) Justinus, *Lc. 80, 2.* πολλοὶς δ' αὐτῷ τῶν τῆς καθαρῆς καὶ εὐσεβῶς οἰνων ἔρεικαν γνωρίζειν εὐημερίαν ὅσια.
the chosen people he applies to the intermediary reign of Christ, not
to the final consummation. Spiritualizing tendencies concerning these
prophetic words he radically rejects. Now it is remarkable that in his
apologies this same man does not say a single word on chiliasm:
believe. 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 Mess-
siah-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, Athenagoras and Tatianus on this
topic, that they were no millenarians; 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 nature 15)
Justus Martyr emphasizes the identity of the actual and the risen
body 16). 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 heresies 17). 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
abused idea. In the fifth book of his "Adversus haereses" Irenaeus
evolves his eschatology. He too is a convinced millenarian like Justinus but he is less ironically minded (nomen non est omen).

15) Justinus, Apol. 10, 4; 30, 5.
16) Justinus, Ic. 80, 5.
17) Irenaeus, Libri quinque adversus haereses, ed. W. W. Harvey, Cambridge
thologie, Paris 1960 [with a very complete bibliography].
towards adversaries of chiliastic; 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 judg-
ment. 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 “olam 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 aeon 18). 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 millenarism, Irenaeus’ description of the „reign of a thousand years”,
depicting it as a kind of Cocaigne. The alleged legion of the Lord him-
self, quoted by Papias, grotesque as it may be, is accepted by our bishop
without a trace of criticism 19). (This conception he shares with some
Jewish writers, e.g. the author of the Apocalyps of Baruch. Here
Papias’ Cocaigne is outcoigned. 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’ nummbervalue, 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 Evanthus or Lateinos or Teitan. Those three yield the number 666 but the future will show which of them is correct 20). It strikes the reader that the Antichrist is not identified with the beast from the sea nor with the one from the land 21). 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 adventist 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 τῇ ἡμέρᾳ”, with haste. (Denying that this “ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ” was meant chronologically and interpreting it in an existentialist way is a grotesque error; the average christian A.D. 1666 may not be able to conceive the possibility that tomorrow he

20) L.c. V, 30, 2.
21) L.c. V, 30 sqq.
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 enthusiastic 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 montanist 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 church 24). In Rome opinions were apparently divided 25).

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 witicism on the “psychic” of this church that abounded 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 patrocinian Praxeas who chased the new prophecy from Rome: Adsc. Praxseis I: Haec divina prophetia dalibit Praxeas Rome procuravit, prophetam expulit et haeresin inudit, paracletum fugavit et patrem crucifixit.
mentions these things and his expressions are far from vague. The work of his especially referring to the last things is "De resurrectione carnis" and more or less elaborate descriptions of the "necessitas" are dispersed all through his writings. 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 says, is a subtle 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 "career", a goal. The wicked, on the other hand, are already feeling a commencement of damnation but that is only partial. The second coming of Christ and the first resurrection 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

27) E.g. De Carne Christi, Adversus Marcionem etc. A striking example in a surprising context: the last caput of "De Spectrilibis".
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. Vasiński, 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 treatises 30). 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 imitation 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 "δὲ κατέλειον", the force that restrains "the man of sin" for a while 31). The one empire under a single ruler will degenerate into ten democracies (the ten horns of the beast). The Antichrist will annihilaite 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 millenarianist Victorinus of Pettau in this way). Two arguments speak for this assumption: 1) Hippolytus' extensive use of


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 millenniarist.

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 ψυχή πίστεως and the possessors of "gnosis", meaning deeper insight

32) E.g. Tertullianus, Apologetica, 32: Est et alia motus necessitas nobis orandi pro imperatoriibus et ita pro statu rebusque Romanis, qui vim maximum universo orbis imminuere tempestae clausum exeunt acerbitates horrendas comminuere Romani imperii committat seinus retinaculi. Itaque omnimum experiri, et dum precamur dierum, Romanae disunitate luxemus. The same idea Apologetica 31, 2.

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 “platonic idea”, not the “shape”; for, according to fairly reliable evidence, 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 “will” but became 

\[ \phi \gamma \xi \zeta \]. The etymology of \( \phi \gamma \xi \zeta \) is derived from \( \phi \gamma \xi \zeta \), “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-

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34) In the canones adversus Origenem written by the emperor Justinianus in 543. H. Prat ([Origène, Paris 1909]) maintains that the proposition condemned there are not Origen’s but those of his radical followers. The complete Liber adversus Origenem by Justinianus: Migne Gr 886.
dance wit 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 "vūs" 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 pantoon". 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 chiliasm. It seems that he reckoned with the possibility that the process of fall, turning away from God and turning back again, is repeated 35. This does not mean a reception of the widespread ancient conception of cyclical repetition of world-periods. It is connected with the essence of free will (πρόφασις) and not with the necessity of mechanical "Wiederkehr des Gleichen". In his polemics against Celsus he expressly denies such a mechanical repetition 36. One thing should not be forgotten when the eschatological ideas of Origen are discussed, viz. that many of his theories are merely advanced "γενέσις", as an exercise in thinking. The regulus fidei contained all the fundamental truths of the Catholic 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 regulus, a considerable amount of freedom of speculation existed 37.

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 Principis III, 5, 3 Conf. H. Mayer, Die Lehre von der ewigen Wieder¬
kunft aller Dinge, Tübingen 1928, p. 290 sq.; E. H. Kettler, Der ursprüngliche Sinn der Dogmatik des Origenes, Berlin 1936 passim.
36) Contra Celsum, IV, 62.
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.

Namen XIV, 1
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 millenaristic views was Apollinaris of Laodicea, (c. 310-399), like Methodius a man of culture and erudition (39). 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 bargain (40). 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, Dionysius of Alexandria and Dionysius of Rome. The originist 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 precluding on Arians. He was rebuked by his Roman namesake, who was shocked by the christological errors he discovered, not by the rejection of the Millen-

nium 41). 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 pantos” 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 space 42). Tradition forces him to admit a resurrection of the flesh, a feature that hardly fits his strongly platonian pattern of thought. Platonism is still stronger in the Nyssene’s funeral orations 43). 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 relatize 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

42) Dialogus de anima et de resurrectione qui inscribitur Macrina, Migne, ser. Gr. 36, 11-160.
43) In Migne, ser. Gr. 46.
[250 — 250] is frankly chiliastic (44). 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 age. He will not, however, be identical with the historical Nero and neither will he rise from Hades (45). 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 millenarianism 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 millenarian conceptions of a pretty crass and extreme kind (46). 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 this poet's extravagant notions, by philologists on account of his amazingly awkward handling of what is supposed to be a hexameter (47). The "Commodian question" is so intricate 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 millenarian (48). Then a strong anti-Jewish bias is felt throughout

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44) Lactantius, Divinæ Institutiones VII, 14, 9; Epitomæ 67, 3.
45) I.e.
47) Commodianus Carmina, ed. J. Martin (Corpus Christianorum, ser. latina CXXVIII, Turnhout 1960). This edition has an instructive "praefatio". Further bibliography in Krestan's article sub voce [Recension f. Antike und Christentum III, 218-252.]
48) The instructions are very outspoken in this respect, e.g.: XI, 11 (Martin p. 37). More vague the Carmina de duobus papalis. This may be due to an alteration of the text, intentional or not.
catholicism). 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 held incredibly realistic views as to the identity of the present and the risen body.

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.

56) E. g. Augustinus De Jde et symbole, 10 and Enchiridion, 89. Jerome in his comments passim and in Ad Panimachum. According to this crude conception the resurrected will have teeth though they do not need food; for there is written: there will be grazing 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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55) Conf. Article "Faith" in Dict. de Théol. catholique.
56) E.g. Augustine De fide et symbolo, 10 and Enchiridion, 88, Jerome in his commentaries passim and in Ad Panamathian. According to this crude conception the resurrected will have teeth though they do not need food; for there is written: there will be grinding 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.