

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE AND THE RESURRECTION

3.0 Introduction

Those Patristic writers who held a unitary anthropology considered the person to be both body and soul together, and that these could not function separately in any satisfactory way. Thus they did not expect the dead to receive their rewards and punishments until the resurrection; and until then they were considered to be waiting together in Hades for the resurrection and judgement, when they will receive the fate due to them. An exception came to be made for the martyrs, who were considered by many to enter their final reward immediately.

Because the soul and the body form the one person, just as they shared earthly life, so they must also share eschatological life.¹ For the early Patristic authors, the doctrine of redemption demanded belief in a **bodily** existence also in the eschaton, since for humankind to be saved, all which made one human had to be included: not just the soul but the body as well. “One of the common themes of the second century writers was the assertion that the flesh of man was a necessary component of his being. Without the flesh he would cease to be a man.”² This human flesh will share in redemption through the resurrection, and when it is endowed with immortality we shall be freed from sin completely. Thus the resurrection is an essential part of our redemption, for not only must the flesh be redeemed if we are to be whole persons in the eschaton, the work of redemption remains incomplete if our flesh is not delivered from sin.

3.1 Waiting for the resurrection in Hades

Since the saints will not enter into their eschatological reward until after the resurrection, they were considered to be waiting for this event in Hades. Thus Clement of Rome holds that while the saints have been granted a glorious reward, they will not receive this immediately after death, since it is laid up for them in heaven [Colossians 1:5] until the resurrection, when those who are in the grave will be “made manifest” in their glory.

All the generations from Adam even unto this day have passed away, but those who, through the grace of God, have been made perfect in love, now possess a place among the godly, and shall be made manifest at the revelation of the kingdom of Christ. For it is written, *Enter into thy secret chambers for a little time, until my wrath and fury pass away; and I will remember a propitious day, and will raise you up out of your graves.*³

¹ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 7. ANF 3, p. 551.

² L Boliek. *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, p. 25.

³ *First Clement* 50, citing Isaiah 26:20. ANF 1, p. 18. Compare *Second Clement* 19, which says that the one who suffers for Christ in this world “shall gather the imperishable fruit of the resurrection... rising up to life again with the fathers he shall rejoice for ever without a grief.”

Clement does not speculate as to the nature of their existence while waiting for their “flesh” to be raised.

Justin condemns those who say that the soul enters heaven immediately on death, thereby making the resurrection of little consequence, as well as condemning those who deny that the flesh is of any significance and who consider the resurrection irrelevant or undesirable.⁴ The future life is entered at the resurrection: then and only then.⁵

For Irenaeus the intermediate state is not the same as paradise, but it is the “invisible place” where the dead wait the resurrection. It is only after the resurrection that they come into the presence of God. It has been suggested that Irenaeus had to develop a doctrine of an intermediate state to accommodate those who had died during the period prior to the resurrection.

Since Irenaeus, following Scripture, found no room in his doctrine for an immediate entry into heaven for the Christian at the crisis of death, he was compelled to posit an intermediate state to occupy the interval. Christ Himself observed the law of the dead in that, after having expired on the Cross, He did not go straight to heaven. He descended into Hades, and only on the third day did He rise again. Then for the space of forty days He visited the apostles before finally ascending to the Father. In the same manner, the souls of those who trust in Him go at death to an invisible place determined by God and there sojourn whilst they await the resurrection [*Against Heresies* 5.31.2]. At the Parousia they are reunited with their bodies and go into the presence of God. The disciple is not greater than his Lord. The delay to which Christ consented is imposed on us.⁶

Wood says that the attempt of Vernet to identify this location of the dead between death and resurrection with purgatory is “hardly convincing,” since in *Against Heresies* 5.5.1 Irenaeus referred to it as paradise prepared for the righteous.⁷ But nor do we find a doctrine of an “intermediate state” taught in *Against Heresies* 5.5.1, since Irenaeus says that “the elders who were disciples of the apostles” tell us that Enoch and Elijah were taken to paradise when they were translated or taken up. Irenaeus speaks only of “those who **were** translated,” not those who **will be**

ANF 10, p. 256. Also Agathangelos. “For just as the Son of God died and rose and by his resurrection showed us the model of life, so we who die for his sake will come alive when the kingdom of the creator will be revealed to his creatures, when he will seek vengeance for impiety, demanding it with impartial and rigorous judgement from all alike.” *History of the Armenians* 60. R W Thomson, p. 71. See also *History of the Armenians* 93. R W Thomson, p. 107.

⁴ Justin Martyr. *Fragments of the lost work of Justin on the Resurrection*, 2. ANF 1, pp. 294-295.

⁵ Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 18. ANF 1, pp. 168-169. Justin may here be attacking the Platonic view of metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls.

⁶ A S Wood. “The eschatology of Irenaeus.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 41 (1969) 34-35.

⁷ [François Vernet. “Irénée (Saint), évêque de Lyon.” In: *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. Vol. 7, 2507.] A S Wood. “The eschatology of Irenaeus.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 41 (1969) 35, n. 32.

translated. It is apparent then that only the two Old Testament figures who did not pass through death are in paradise. There is no indication that anyone else will be placed in paradise before the eschaton. What Irenaeus says about the intermediate state in *Against Heresies* 5.31.2 is as follows:

For as the Lord *went away in the midst of the shadow of death*, where the souls of the dead were, yet afterwards arose in the body, and after the resurrection was taken up [into heaven], it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event; then receiving their bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall come thus into the presence of God.⁸

Irenaeus does not place great importance on the intermediate state, and he certainly does not indulge in speculation as to its nature.

The location where the dead were waiting is variously called Hades, Abraham's bosom, and Paradise.⁹ This location is not heaven, but an intermediate waiting point.¹⁰ Justin says that Hades is the place where the soul waits after death until the day of resurrection and judgement to find out its final fate. For instance he says that those who killed Christ imagined "that He, like some common mortal, would remain in Hades."¹¹

Tertullian rejects the idea that the souls of the faithful enter immediately into heaven upon death, rather than waiting in Abraham's bosom, in Hades, for the resurrection to take place. Those who deny that the faithful wait in Hades he describes as "proud" and *servants above their Lord, and disciples above their Master* [Matthew 10:24], since Christ descended into Hades where they are unwilling to go.¹² The martyrs are the only group whom Tertullian admits to heaven before the general resurrection. He explains his reasons in this way:

How, indeed, shall the soul mount up to heaven, where Christ is already sitting at the Father's right hand, when as yet the archangel's trumpet has not been heard by the command of God, when as yet those whom

⁸ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.31.2. ANF 1, p. 560.

⁹ Note the use of this imagery in liturgy, as in Sarapion. "God... who brings down to the gates of Hades and brings up...give rest to his soul, his spirit, in green places, in chambers of rest with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all your saints: and raise up his body in the day which you have ordained, according to your promises which cannot lie, that you may render to it also the heritage of which it is worthy in your holy pastures." *Commendation of the Dead* 18, Prayer for one who is dead and is to be carried forth. Bishop Sarapion's Prayer-Book, p. 79.

¹⁰ While most Patristic writers saw Hades as a place, Gregory of Nyssa is almost alone in seeing it as a spiritual intermediate state. L Prestige. "Hades in the Greek Fathers." *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1923) 478.

¹¹ Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho* 99. ANF 1, p. 248. See also *Dialogue with Trypho* 5. ANF 1, p. 197. Cf. L Prestige. "Hades in the Greek Fathers." *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1923) 476-485.

¹² Cf. also Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 2.34.1. ANF 1, p. 411.

the coming of the Lord is to find on the earth, have not been caught up into the air to meet Him at His coming, in company with the dead in Christ, who shall be the first to arise? To no one is heaven opened; the earth is still safe for him, I would not say it is shut against him. When the world, indeed, shall pass away, then the kingdom of heaven shall be opened. Shall we then have to sleep high up in the ether, with the boy-loving worthies of Plato; or in the air with Arius; or around the moon with the Endymions of the Stoics? No, but in Paradise, you tell me, whither already the patriarchs and prophets have removed from Hades in the retinue of the Lord's resurrection. How is it, then, that the region of Paradise, which as revealed to John in the Spirit lay under the altar, displayed no other souls as in it besides the souls of the martyrs?¹³

Tertullian says that the souls of the patriarchs await the resurrection in Hades,¹⁴ along with all the souls of the dead, anticipating their final bliss or punishment.¹⁵

3.2.1 The story of Lazarus: Luke 16:19-31

Discussion of the intermediate state in Patristic writings frequently referred to the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31).¹⁶ Since both men were considered to be conscious and had entered into either reward or punishment prior to the resurrection, this was considered proof that the soul survived death and was therefore immortal, and more to the point, conscious of both suffering and reward.

Irenaeus used the story of Lazarus to argue that it shows that souls keep the same form after death as the body to which they had been adapted (which is why Abraham, Lazarus and the rich man could recognise each other), and that each class of soul “receives a habitation such as it has deserved, even before the judgement.”¹⁷ However, while the wicked suffer, the righteous do not yet receive a reward, as this comes only after the resurrection, when they are rewarded on the earth.¹⁸ Elsewhere Irenaeus says

¹³ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 55. ANF 3, p. 231.

¹⁴ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 7. ANF 3, p. 187.

¹⁵ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 58. ANF 3, pp. 234-235.

¹⁶ I am using the term “story” in a neutral sense as the passage is not understood unanimously by the Patristic writers as either historical or merely a parable, although most seem to imply that it was an historical account. For instance, Tertullian suggests it is historical since individuals are named (Abraham and Lazarus) which is not the case in parables. *A treatise on the soul* 7. ANF 3, p. 187. This position was followed by Jerome. *Homily 86, On Luke 16:19-31. The rich man and Lazarus*. FC 57, p. 209. Jerome. *Letter 23.3*. NPNF 2/6, p. 42. Gregory the Great applies this story allegorically to the Jews (the rich man) and the Gentiles (Lazarus). He says that the “proud Jewish people... had already been in large part condemned.” *Homily 40. Forty Gospel Homilies of Gregory the Great*, p. 374.

¹⁷ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 2.34.1. ANF 1, p. 411. Similarly Gregory of Nyssa holds in reference to Luke 16:19-31 that there is “some bodily token” remaining in the soul by which the person is able to be recognised. *On the making of man* 27.2. NPNF 2/5, p. 418. However, Augustine rejects the idea that the souls can be recognised because of their outward appearance, and claims that it is because of an inner sense which enables recognition, since the rich man was able to recognise Abraham, whom he had never seen, but his soul was able to comprehend the semblance of his body. *On the soul and its origin* 30. NPNF 1/5, p. 367.

¹⁸ Irenaeus. *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 41. ACW 16, p. 74.

that in this passage the Lord represents Abraham as speaking of “all those who were still alive,” implying that the situation as described in the story was a real one.¹⁹

Tertullian asks why this story may not indicate that, even though the full rewards and punishments will not come until the eschaton, there should not be some temporary abode for the righteous in Abraham's bosom which although is “not in heaven, it is yet higher than hell, and is appointed to afford an interval of rest to the souls of the righteous” until the resurrection enables them to receive their full reward. It is a “temporary receptacle of faithful souls... wherein is even now delineated an image of the future, and where is given some foresight of the glory of both judgements.”²⁰ He asks what it is that is in Hades after separation from the body, which is detained there until the day of judgement, if not the soul?²¹

Cyril of Alexandria discusses the story not in connection with the intermediate state, but as to whether each had already been allocated requital or whether it was an image of the judgement to come. Cyril asserts the latter, since Scripture tells us that the resurrection must come before the judgement, and the resurrection has not yet occurred, therefore there has been no judgement. Hence the story of the rich man and Lazarus must be a parable, as there has been no judgement on which their respective rewards and punishments can be based.

Christ had not yet descended from heaven, the resurrection had not happened and no requital of action had followed anyone, but the parable picturesquely describes a rich man living in luxury without compassion and a poor man in weakness, with the aim that the owners of wealth on earth may learn that unless they intend to be good men, bountiful and sharing, and choose to help out the necessities of the poor, they will fall under a terrible and inexorable condemnation.²²

In another place Cyril states this view again, and insists that the judgement takes place only after the resurrection. The story of Lazarus and the rich man therefore anticipates that time.²³ Gregory of Nyssa also considers that the description of the torments of the rich man in the parable of Lazarus are portents of the future. This involves the resurrection, since we are composite beings of both body and soul, and both must therefore be judged and punished.

¹⁹ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 4.2.3. ANF 1, p. 464.

²⁰ Tertullian. *Against Marcion* 4.34. ANF 3, p. 406.

²¹ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 7. ANF 3, p. 187.

²² Cyril of Alexandria. *Doctrinal Questions and Answers* 8. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 209. Cf. also Cyril of Alexandria. *In Lucam* 16.19. PG 72, 821.

²³ Cyril of Alexandria. *Against the Anthropomorphites* 16. PG 76, 1104-1105. Translation cited in: W A Jurgens. **The Faith of the Early Fathers**. Vol. 3, p. 236. Kelly maintains that in other places Cyril presupposes the immediate entry of the souls of the righteous into heaven and the immediate chastisement of the wicked. J N D Kelly. **Early Christian Doctrines**, p. 482. However, in his *Commentary on Psalm* 48.16 [PG 69, 1072-1073], one of the places cited by Kelly, Cyril stresses only that Christ and Stephen commended their spirits to God at death, while Christ promised the thief on the cross that he would that day be in Paradise [Luke 23:43-46, Acts 7:58]. This Cyril says is the meaning of the text he is commenting on [Psalm 48:16. 49:15 English].

They will take place when the transformation revives the dead and leads to trial everyone who has lived, a composite being as before consisting of both soul and body... 'Resurrection,' 'resuscitation,' 'transformation' and all such nouns direct the mind of the hearer towards the body which is subject to corruption; for the soul considered in itself will never rise again, since it does not die, but is imperishable and indestructible; but though it exists immortally it has a mortal associate in its actions, and consequently will again inhabit its partner before the just judge at the time of trial, so that with it it may receive shared punishments or rewards.²⁴

Augustine argues that those who are kept in confinement waiting to see the judge are treated according to merits: some in dungeons and others in humane quarters treated as citizens. The differences between the souls of the dead parallels the differences in what people experience when asleep: pleasant dreams or nightmares.²⁵ He comments in another place that there are two hells, "in one of which the souls of the just have gotten rest, in the other the souls of the ungodly are tormented."²⁶ He further distinguishes between the two punishments: that of eternal fire, and that experienced by the wicked after death, as for instance the rich man in Luke 16; and that of eternal fire, into which the wicked will be sent following the judgement on the Last Day. Augustine comments that "Those punishments shall be manifest at that time, when we shall have departed out of this life, or when at the end of the world men shall have come to the resurrection of the dead."²⁷ Augustine states in some of his writings that after death the soul goes to "a realm that is spiritual in accordance with its merits." He expands:

This region, in one case, is a place of punishment, whose nature is similar to that of bodies; such a place has often been shown to those who have been carried out of the senses of the body and, while lying as if in death, have seen the punishments of hell.²⁸

Others are taken not to a place of punishment "but of peace and joy."²⁹ He says that "the wise men among the pagans had no doubt at all about the reality of the lower world, where the souls of the dead are received after this life,"³⁰ although he admits

²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa. *Discourse on the Holy Pascha*. In: The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa, p. 20.

²⁵ Augustine. *Homily On the Gospel of St. John* 49.9. NPNF 1/7, p. 273. Cf. also *On the predestination of the saints* 24. NPNF 1/5, pp. 509-510.

²⁶ Augustine. *On the Psalms* 86.17. NPNF 1/8, p. 416.

²⁷ Augustine. *On the Psalms* 58.12. NPNF 1/8, p. 234. Cf. Jerome, who argues that while the judgement has not yet occurred, the rewards for Lazarus are real, while the punishments of the rich man are merely the anticipation of what he shall receive at the judgement and not yet his full deserts: "If the prelude to punishment is so painful, what will the punishment itself be like?" *Homily 86, On Luke 16:19-31. The rich man and Lazarus*. FC 57, p. 209.

²⁸ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 12.32.60. ACW 42, p. 223.

²⁹ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 12.32.60. ACW 42, p. 223.

³⁰ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 12.33.62. ACW 42, pp. 224-225.

that “I have not yet found the term 'lower world' [or 'hell'] applied to the place where the souls of the just are at rest.”³¹ This is of relevance to his discussion of Luke 16:19-31. He says that there is a great gulf between Abraham and Lazarus, on the one hand, and the rich man in torment, on the other, “but they [Abraham and Lazarus] are not said to be in hell” since the rich man is described as being punished in hell [Luke 16:23].³² This would mean that Augustine did not consider the souls of the just to be in Paradise or heaven, since it would be meaningless to discuss whether they were in “hell” otherwise.

Kelly asserts that John Chrysostom is the most consistent, since he “explicitly allows for two moments of divine retribution, one at death and the other at the resurrection.”³³ Chrysostom says:

How is it then that God, “the righteous judge, strong and patient [Psalm 7:11 LXX]” bears thus with men, and does not exact punishment? Here you have the cause, he is long-suffering, and thereby would lead you to repentance. But if you continue in sin, you “after your hardness and impenitent heart treasure up for yourself wrath” [Romans 2:5]. If then he is just, he repays according to desert, and does not overlook those who suffer wrongfully, but avenges them. For this is the part of one who is just. If he is powerful, he requites after death, and at the resurrection: for this belongs to him who is powerful.³⁴

This reference to judgement “after death” is in the context of discussing the judgements of God which can be seen in this life on the righteous and the wicked, as well as discussing why so many go unpunished or unrewarded, but stressing the fact that eventual judgement is certain.³⁵ Here Chrysostom seeks to demonstrate that those wicked who enjoy good things in this life will be punished forever, while those who suffer will receive good things forever.³⁶ He contrasts the purely temporary pleasures purported to be found in sin with the eternity of punishment which must surely follow.

3.2.2 Anticipation of the future state

³¹ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 12.33.63. ACW 42, p. 225.

³² Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 12.33.63. ACW 42, pp. 225-226.

³³ J N D Kelly. **Early Christian Doctrines**, p. 482.

³⁴ John Chrysostom. *Homily on 2 Timothy* 3.3. NPNF 1/13, p. 486.

³⁵ John Chrysostom. *Homily in 1 Corinthians* 42.5. NPNF 1/12, p. 258. *Homily on 2 Corinthians* 9.3. NPNF 1/12, p. 324. *Homily on 2 Corinthians* 13.4. NPNF 1/12, p. 346. The Epistle to the Hebrews 9:27 speaks of the judgement “after death” in a way which could possibly be understood to refer to an immediate judgement, although I believe this is not the best construal of the text. It should be taken to mean the judgement following the resurrection. Philip E Hughes. **A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews**, pp. 387-388. According to G C Berkouwer, this passage says nothing about the time of judgement. **The return of Christ**, p. 51, n. 46.

³⁶ Kelly cites *De Lazaro Concio* 1.11, 2.2f., 5.3, 6.6, 7.4, to demonstrate that Chrysostom believes that recompense is made to both good and wicked immediately after death. J N D Kelly. **Early Christian Doctrines**, p. 482.

The idea that the dead while awaiting the judgement have a foretaste of their impending fates is found in Justin Martyr, who stresses that the resurrection must happen before the judgement and subsequent punishments and rewards are allocated. But while they are waiting, “the souls of the wicked, being endowed with sensation even after death, are punished” while “those of the good being delivered from punishment spend a blessed existence...”³⁷ Justin does not elaborate on the “intermediate state” anywhere or teach it as an explicit doctrine, and he stresses that the future life consists of the reuniting of the soul with the resurrected body. Given his comments that the souls of the righteous do not enter heaven before the resurrection, and that eternal punishment is kept in store for the wicked, it would seem that the dead are in some kind of conscious state, but have not yet received their reward either good or bad.

For reflect upon the end of each of the preceding kings, how they died the death common to all, which, if it issued in insensibility, would be a godsend to all the wicked. But since sensation remains to all who have ever lived, and eternal punishment is laid up (i.e., for the wicked), see that you do not neglect to be convinced, and to hold as your belief, that these things are true... even after death souls are in a state of sensation... we expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth, for we maintain that with God nothing is impossible.³⁸

The souls of the dead remember their deeds in life and “retain the memory of things in this world.”³⁹ Irenaeus said this not to prove the consciousness of the dead; it was to establish that when the dead are resurrected, they will be able to remember their former lives for the purpose of judgement.⁴⁰ Irenaeus is possibly attacking the Platonic doctrine of the “waters of Lethe”⁴¹ which causes the dead to forget their previous life before they enter a new body. In Plato's epistemology, education is a process of reminding the soul of the knowledge it once possessed in a former existence.⁴² It is therefore possible that it is this view of Plato's which is more to the fore than the desire to posit any doctrine of the consciousness of the dead. This doctrine of metempsychosis was abhorred by Irenaeus, who expected the dead to return to their present bodies in the resurrection.⁴³

³⁷ Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 20. ANF 1, p. 170.

³⁸ Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 18. ANF 1, p. 168-169.

³⁹ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 2.34.1. ANF 1, p. 411.

⁴⁰ This idea is also found in Tertullian. *The soul's testimony* 4. ANF 3, p. 177. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 1. ANF 3, p. 545. Arnobius. *The case against the pagans* 2.28. ACW 7, pp. 140-141.

⁴¹ Plato. *The Republic* [10.621C]. *The Republic and other works*, p. 316.

⁴² Cf. Arnobius' comment on this doctrine. “And if in this regard the soul possessed the knowledge which a race that is divine and immortal ought by all rights fittingly to have, all men would have known all things from the beginning...” *The case against the Pagans* 2.18. ACW 7, pp. 131-132.

⁴³ Cassiodorus also had to reject the Neoplatonic idea of recollection, which was inseparable from the doctrine of the soul's pre-existence, even though he was on the whole sympathetic to

In his later works, such as *On the resurrection of the flesh*, Tertullian says that the soul will suffer alone the penalties of the sins it committed alone, because it is able to suffer apart from the body, but it will suffer with the body the sins committed with the body. In the intermediate state prior to the resurrection, the souls waiting in Hades for the resurrection receive either rewards or punishments appropriate for the soul alone, for instance punishment for lustful thoughts, and for the responsibility for conceiving of sinful deeds, together with fear of the judgement to come, or else rewards for pious and kindly thoughts which were not shared with the flesh. At the resurrection everyone will receive the deserts of their deeds committed by body and soul together, for instance, lustful acts, and therefore the body will not be deprived of its deserts. Thus Tertullian concludes that the souls waiting in Hades for the resurrection enjoy either some reward for their faithfulness, or suffering and fear of the judgement to come because of their wickedness, and thereby the significance of the resurrection to judgement is not diminished.⁴⁴

Here Tertullian attempts to maintain the unity of the person but the dichotomy of body and soul means that he can hold that the body and soul do not suffer together because they always acted together, but because **in some deeds** they acted together, and therefore must share the punishment for those deeds. Augustine also took this approach, and held that in the intermediate state, the body and soul receive separate fates.

So that the first death is a death of the whole man, since the soul without God and without the body suffers punishment for a time; but the second is when the soul, without God but with the body, suffers punishment everlasting.⁴⁵

Theodoret attacks this view, and asks how it is that souls can be considered to be punished, while the body is exempt, or the soul rewarded, while the body is deprived of its reward. He maintains that the person that acted was the body and soul together, and thus they cannot be treated separately in the judgement. Theodoret also says that the body was an accomplice with the soul in its deeds of vice, and should therefore be punished for its complicity; indeed, it even enticed the soul to fulfill its desires, and therefore is even more culpable.⁴⁶

Novatian also denies that souls are judged after death, nor do they experience any rewards or punishments, but instead anticipate what they shall receive. "For there is a place whither the souls of the just and the unjust are taken, conscious of the anticipated dooms of future judgement..."⁴⁷ This view is shared by Lactantius.

the Neoplatonic doctrine of the soul, since this point was in conflict with the Christian faith. E L Fortin. "The viri novi of Arnobius and the conflict between faith and reason in the early Christian centuries." In: **The Heritage of the Early Church**, p. 207.

⁴⁴ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 17. ANF 3, pp. 556-557.

⁴⁵ Augustine. *The City of God* 13.12. NPNF 1/2, pp. 250-251.

⁴⁶ Theodoret. *On Divine Providence* 9.25. ACW 49, p. 127.

⁴⁷ Novatian. *Treatise concerning the Trinity* 1. ANF 7, p. 612. Cf. Hippolytus. *Against Plato, on the cause of the universe* 1. ANF 5, p. 222.

Nor, however, let any one imagine that souls are immediately judged after death. For all are detained in one and a common place of confinement, until the arrival of the time in which the great Judge shall make an investigation of their deserts.⁴⁸

A similar view can be found in the thought of Gregory of Nazianzus in his *Oration* on the death of his brother Caesarius. He says that the soul of the dead saint “enjoys a sense and perception of the blessings awaiting it.”⁴⁹ Augustine also says that the state of the soul after death and before the judgement on the Last Day the soul experiences a foretaste of what it is to receive at the judgement according to its merits.

During the time, moreover, which intervenes between a man's death and the final resurrection, the soul dwells in a hidden retreat, where it enjoys rest or suffers affliction just in proportion to the merit it has earned by the life which it led on earth.⁵⁰

Kelly comments regarding Augustine: “His language indicates that he regards this as the consequence of the divine judgement, while reserving the term 'day of judgement' in the strict sense to the great assize at the end of the world.”⁵¹ Ambrose also held that the souls of the dead await the fates to be pronounced on them at the judgement, and experience a foretaste of their respective fates in the meantime.⁵²

3.2.3 The unconscious soul in Hades

In contrast to most Greek and Latin Patristic writers,⁵³ the Syrian Patristic tradition held that the soul was “asleep” between death and resurrection.⁵⁴ This is perhaps due to the influence of Tatian, one of the first Patristic writers to explicitly assert that the soul did not survive the death of the body.⁵⁵ The Syrian tradition continued to place a greater emphasis on the resurrection while elsewhere there was an increasing emphasis on the blessedness of the soul. The Syrians thus did not have a doctrine of immediate individual judgement. This can be seen in the eschatological thought of Aphrahat [also spelled Aphraates].

⁴⁸ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.21. ANF 7, p. 217.

⁴⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus. *Oration* 7.21. *Panegyric on his brother Caesarius*. NPNF 2/7, p. 236.

⁵⁰ Augustine. *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 109. NPNF 1/3, p. 272.

⁵¹ [Augustine. *Sermon* 109.4. PL 38, 638. *The City of God* 20.1-2. NPNF 1/2, pp. 421-422.] J N D Kelly. *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 483.

⁵² Ambrose. *Death as a good* 10.45-47. FC 65, pp. 102-104.

⁵³ The image of death as a sleep appears in Ignatius. *Letter to the Romans* 4. ANF 1, p. 75. Tertullian. *On the soul* 51. ANF 3, p. 228. *On Monogamy* 10. ANF 4, p. 67.

⁵⁴ A C Rush argues that the Christian image of death as a “sleep” while waiting for the resurrection is in stark contrast to the pessimistic pagan view of death as an eternal sleep from which there is no waking. **Death and burial in Christian antiquity**, pp. 8-9, 12-13.

⁵⁵ This view of Tatian's was to become an intrinsic part of Syrian theology. See F Gavin. “The sleep of the soul in the early Syriac Church.” *Journal of the Americal Oriental Society* 40 (1920) 103-120.

But receive this explanation from me, that a sinner, while he is living is dead unto God; and a righteous man, though dead, is alive unto God. For such death is a sleep, as David said, *I lay down and slept, and awoke*. Again Isaiah said, *They that sleep in the dust shall awake*. And our Lord said concerning the daughter of the chief of the synagogue, *The damsel is not dead, but sleeping a slumber*. And concerning Lazarus, He said to His disciples, *Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go to awaken him*. And the Apostle said: *We shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed*. And again he said: *Concerning those that sleep, be ye not grieved*.⁵⁶

The state of the soul while asleep parallels that of the soul after death: they dream and wait to be woken from that state.⁵⁷ The “dreams” vary according to the conscience of the dead: “...the good rest with a good conscience and sleep well, waking alert and refreshed at the Resurrection, while those who have done evil in their lives are restive and unquiet, for they are uneasy with the sense of foreboding and doom impending.”⁵⁸ This use of the image of “sleep” with reference to death is considered to be the result of a misunderstanding of the Scriptures.

[Aphrahat] simply seized on the Biblical euphemism of sleep or falling asleep to denote death, and allowed it to dominate his thought of the intermediate life to the exclusion of all other scriptural hints regarding the disembodied soul's experiences.⁵⁹

Darragh's reference to the experiences of the “disembodied soul” arise from his evolutionistic views in which he postulates continued progress after death, and thus he minimises the significance of bodily resurrection, something Aphrahat would find incomprehensible. He suggests that Aphrahat is simply avoiding the issue of the “intermediate state,” a view which comes out even more clearly in his comment on the debate between Christ and the Sadducees.

Our Lord's rebuke of the Saduccees that the so-called dead are really the living should have given Aphraates pause, and should be pondered by those who follow him in little else except his defective notion of the soul's condition in the waiting time. Progress, not stagnation, is characteristic of Life. The progress of souls that have departed in much

⁵⁶ Aphrahat. *Demonstrations* 8.18. NPNF 2/13, p. 380-381.

⁵⁷ J T Darragh. **The Resurrection of the Flesh**, p. 120.

⁵⁸ F Gavin. “The sleep of the soul in the early Syriac church.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 40 (1920) 104.

⁵⁹ J T Darragh. **The Resurrection of the Flesh**, p. 131. In contrast to Darragh, A C Rush insists that the image of “sleep” used of death is “no mere metaphor, but it was the expression of a teaching of Christian faith in the resurrection... Death to the pagans was a sleep, but an eternal, never-ending sleep; death to the Christians was a sleep, but only a temporary sleep that would be broken by the resurrection.” **Death and burial in Christian antiquity**, p. 15. Leo the Great says with reference to Christ that “so speedy was the quickening of His uncorrupted flesh that it bore a closer resemblance to slumber than to death...” *Sermon* 71.2. NPNF 2/12, p. 182. Darragh's view of eschatological life biases him against this metaphor.

imperfection implies some cleansing process. Aphraates escaped from all such problems by sending the soul as well as the body to sleep.⁶⁰

Aphrahat is not simply avoiding problems by taking an easy option; rather, it made sense to him to take this image from Scripture literally, as it comported well with his anthropology. Brock gives a much more sympathetic interpretation of the use of this image in the Syrian church.

Since this Resurrection was regarded as occurring not just outside time, but also at the end of time, it was necessary to provide some accompanying concept to explain what happened to the departed between physical death and the final Resurrection. Here, once again, St. Ephrem and other early Syriac writers took over another idea of Jewish origin, that of “the sleep of the dead in Sheol,” a period of unconscious existence which bridges the gap between death and the Resurrection, between historical and sacred time. According to this view, judgement is usually understood as taking place only at the final Resurrection, when the “sheep” and the “goats” are separated off, to the right and to the left (Matthew 25:33); it is only then that the just may enter Paradise, while the wicked undergo “second death” as they are relegated to Gehenna.⁶¹

The same idea is found in Isaac of Syria, who when speaking of the dead kings and rulers, wise men and generals, whose fame and glory is now forgotten, says:

Lo, they have slept in Sheol for long years as though it were one night!
Nor is it known how long a time yet remains for them to sleep this
lengthy sleep, or when the daybreak of the resurrection will dawn for
them and awake them from their slumber.⁶²

Ephrem of Syria also held to the sleep of the soul between death and resurrection. Because the intermediate state was thus one of unconsciousness, the judgement took place not after death, but after the resurrection of all the dead. Speaking of the events surrounding the crucifixion of Christ, Ephraim asks: “And by whose command did the dead that slept in their graves come forth?”⁶³

The prevalence of this image in Eastern Patristic eschatology encouraged the use of the idea that the dead will be woken from sleep by a trumpet blast [*For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.* 1 Corinthians 15:52b. Cf. Matthew 24:31, 1 Thessalonians 4:16.] Ephrem makes use of this image: “And there was no sound of trumpet, such as that future trumpet will make, to awaken all who from the beginning have slept.”⁶⁴ A treatise ascribed to Hippolytus, but considered dubious, expresses a similar view.

⁶⁰ J T Darragh. **The Resurrection of the Flesh**, p. 132.

⁶¹ S P Brock. Introduction. **St. Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns on Paradise**, p. 56.

⁶² Isaac the Syrian. *Homily 37. The ascetical homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian*, pp. 165-166.

⁶³ Ephrem. *On the Transfiguration of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 2, p. p. 50.

⁶⁴ Ephrem. *On Patience, the Second Coming and the Last Judgement. The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*. Vol. 1, p. 12. Cf. also Peter Chrysologus. “And, at the last trumpet [1

For at that time the trumpet shall sound, and awake those that sleep from the lowest parts of the earth, righteous and sinners alike. And every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and tribe shall be raised in the twinkling of an eye; and they shall stand upon the face of the earth, waiting for the coming of the righteous and terrible Judge, in fear and trembling unutterable.⁶⁵

The view that the dead are asleep is also found in the Ethiopian church,⁶⁶ while the Armenian church, which drew its doctrine largely from Syrian sources, also held to the sleep of the soul in death. For Gregory the Illuminator, those who sleep in the graves will awake at the resurrection to be clothed with new bodies.

At the second coming of Christ will also occur the general resurrection. Then men's minds and bodies, which had been lying in tombs, will spring up; each one's spirit, which after his death had been separated from his body, will return to him and he will receive his original likeness, bones, flesh, sinews, and all other parts of his body being clothed with skin and hair.⁶⁷

Athenagoras does not seem to argue for the active life of the soul in the intermediate state, as he implies that it is in a state of sleep. He is concerned to demonstrate its continued existence until rejoined to the body at the resurrection to refute those who argue the soul is annihilated at death, not to argue about its disembodied condition. For Athenagoras this is mainly a pastoral concern: we should not despair of death, even though the soul is separated for a time from the body, because we will in time be released from death to live again.⁶⁸

Corinthians 15:52]. The trumpet that at the beginning called the world from nothing, the same on the last day shall recall the world from death; and that which in the beginning raised man from the slime, the same at the end shall recall him from the dust." *Sermon 103. On the raising of the widow's son and the resurrection of the dead.* Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers 4, pp. 120-121. Cf. also Methodius. *The Symposium* 6.4. ACW 27, pp. 94-95. Aphrahat. *Demonstrations* 8.10. NPNF 2/13, p. 378. Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 658. R W Thomson, p. 163.

⁶⁵ Hippolytus (dubious). *A discourse on the end of the world, and on Antichrist, and on the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* 37. ANF 5, p. 251.

⁶⁶ "Abbâ Peter said: when I was living in the Jordan monastery one of the brothers died and there was an elder who didn't know about it. And when the horn was sounded for them to gather and they had come from the caves, the elder saw in the church the one who had died and it grieved him that he had not visited him before he went forth from the world; and he went up to him and said to him, 'Arise, O my brother, so that we might give each other the kiss of peace.' And the dead one got up and embraced the elder. And the elder said to him, 'Peace to thee, O my son; and now do thou sleep in peace until Christ our Lord comes and bids thee rise.'" *Wisdom of the Elders of Ethiopia* 239. Cited in: W A Jurgens. **The Faith of the Early Fathers.** Vol. 3, p. 260.

⁶⁷ R W Thomson. **The Teaching of Saint Gregory: An Early Armenian Catechism,** p. 29.

⁶⁸ Athenagoras. *Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead* 16.4-6. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 127, 129.

Tertullian argues that sleep indicates to us the condition of humanity after death, after the withdrawal of the soul: the body is motionless while the soul seems to be active elsewhere in its dreams, since it cannot be idle at any time. During sleep the soul prepares for death, “learning to bear future absence by a dissembling of its presence for the moment.” Dreams thus show the immortality of the soul, for while the body is motionless, whether in sleep or in death, the soul is active and in constant motion. And when the body shakes off its slumber and awakes from sleep, it is showing exactly what will happen in the resurrection of the dead, who will likewise resume their former activity.⁶⁹ Thus through his understanding of the nature of sleep, Tertullian is able to maintain the parallel between sleep and death, without compromising his belief in the immortality of the soul and its consciousness after death. Whether a different theory of sleep would have prevented him from being able to explain the Biblical image of death as sleep is an interesting question.⁷⁰ A similar theory of sleep is found in Augustine.

For what else is sleep but a daily death which does not completely remove man hence or detain him too long? And what else is death but a very long and very deep sleep from which God arouses man? Therefore, where there is no death, there is likewise no sleep, the image of death.⁷¹

John Chrysostom spoke of death as a sleep on a number of occasions. He understands this image to mean that death is no longer, in the light of Christ's redemption, the dreadful thing it once was. It can be considered no more than sleep. “After Christ came and died for the life of the world, death is no longer called death but a sleep and repose.”⁷² He repeats this idea elsewhere:

⁶⁹ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 43. ANF 3, pp. 222-223. Cf. also *A treatise on the soul* 44, where Tertullian attacks the view that the soul leaves the body during sleep, which he says cannot happen until death, and *A treatise on the soul* 45, where he reiterates the relationship between the perpetual movement of the soul and immortality. ANF 3, p. 223.

⁷⁰ The influence of contemporary medicine on the views of the Patristic writers concerning sleep would be worth examining. See for instance the views of Clement of Alexandria described by D'Irsay. “The tired body needs sleep; the soul, however, does not. Why, then, let the more important part of ourselves be condemned to inactivity when life is so very short?” Stephen D'Irsay. “Patristic medicine.” *Annals of Medical History* 9 (1927) 365. See Clement of Alexandria. *The Instructor* 2.9. ANF 2, pp. 258-259.

⁷¹ Augustine. *Sermon* 221.3. FC 38, p. 177.

⁷² John Chrysostom. *De coemeterio et de cruce homilia*. PG 49, 394B. Translation cited in: P E Harkins. **St. John Chrysostom. Baptismal Instructions**. ACW 31, p. 237, n. 37. Here Harkins also comments that ““Christ's death on the cross corresponds to Adam's sleep, and from this Chrysostom draws an unexpected conclusion: henceforth death is no more than a sleep. This is a common-place with Chrysostom.” Passages cited by Harkins include: *Homily on Ephesians* 23. NPNF 1/13, p. 166. “Death is no longer death but sleep,” and *Homily in Matthew* 54.7. NPNF 1/10, p. 336. “...neither is death, death, but a sleep...” The same idea that death is now no more than sleep for the Christian appears in Theodore of Mopsuestia. *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* 4. *Woodbrooke Studies* 6 (1933) 51-52. *Ibid.*, 5. *Woodbrooke Studies* 6 (1933) 95. Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 4.5.2. ANF 1, p. 467. Theodoret. *Letter 136, to Cyrus Magistrrianus*. NPNF 2/3, p. 306.

Whenever grace comes and drives the darkness from our mind, we learn the exact nature of things; what frightened us before, now becomes contemptible in our eyes. We no longer are afraid of death after we have learned carefully from this holy initiation that death is not death but a sleep and repose which lasts but for a time. Nor are we afraid of poverty or disease or any such misfortune, because we know that we are on our way to a better life, which is impervious to death and destruction and is free from all such inequality.⁷³

In his interpretation of this image, Chrysostom is able to maintain its significance without either allegorising it as did writers such as Eusebius and Augustine, or interpreting it literally, as did the Syrians. He suggests that the use of the image of sleep when speaking of death means that death has been transformed for the Christian.

Just as at that time God took the rib of Adam and formed a woman, so Christ gave us blood and water from His side and formed the Church. Just as then He took the rib from Adam when he was in a deep sleep, so now He gave us blood and water after His death, first the water and then the blood. But what was then a deep slumber is now a death, so that you may know that this death is henceforth sleep.⁷⁴

Ambrose also interprets the image of death as sleep to mean that since sleep only lasts for a time, so too death will not be forever, having its end at the resurrection.⁷⁵ Ambrose says that we are not to fear death since “it frees us from the miseries of this life,” and that “in the likeness of sleep we are at rest from the toils of this world.”⁷⁶

Walker suggests that in the early centuries the expectation of an imminent Parousia meant that the fate of the dead was of no great moment, and they could easily be seen as sleeping or waiting in consciousness for the resurrection. However, when the expectation of the Parousia receded into the distant future, there was a desire not to postpone indefinitely the rewards or punishments due to each; hence the immediate judgement of each soul at death was postulated. The Last Judgement remained for only those still alive at the Parousia.⁷⁷ Similarly, Le Goff suggests that Augustine had a “lack of interest in the fate of the soul between death and the last judgement.” This is related in his view to the period in which he lived.

⁷³ John Chrysostom. *Baptismal Instructions* 12.12. ACW 31, p. 176.

⁷⁴ John Chrysostom. *Baptismal Instructions* 3.18. ACW 31, p. 62. The death of Christ is also called a sleep by Ephrem of Syria, who suggests that the cock that crowed at the denial of Peter was proclaiming the resurrection of Christ “whose death was but sleep.” P Yousif. “St Ephrem on Symbols in Nature: Faith, the Trinity and the Cross (Hymns on Faith, No. 18.15).” *Eastern Churches Review* 10 (1978) 1-2, p. 54. Cf. also Irenaeus. *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 73. ACW 16, p. 95.

⁷⁵ Ambrose. *On belief in the resurrection* 2.66. NPNF 2/10, p. 184. A C Rush discusses the exegetical basis for this view, pointing to the words of Christ: “Lazarus has fallen asleep... Lazarus is dead” [John 11:11-14], and the raising of the daughter of Jairus [Matthew 9:18-26]. **Death and burial in Christian antiquity**, p. 13.

⁷⁶ Ambrose. *On the belief in the resurrection* 2.3. NPNF 2/10, p. 174.

⁷⁷ D P Walker. **The decline of Hell**, p. 35.

Roman society was in the throes of a profound crisis. There were enormous problems connected not only with the barbarian challenge but also with the establishment of a new dominant ideology, which, in regard to the afterlife, revolved around belief in resurrection and the choice to be made between damnation and eternal salvation. Thoroughly imbued with millenarian thought and believing, more or less confusedly, that the last judgement was imminent, late Roman society was little inclined to refine its thinking about the interval between death and eternity.⁷⁸

That this is unlikely can be seen from alternative reasons given in this thesis, as well as the general difficulty of discerning any real (as opposed to postulated) influence of the delay of the Parousia on Patristic eschatology.⁷⁹

The idea that the delay of the Lord's return leads to a lengthy wait for the dead before their recompense at the judgement was refuted by Ambrose,⁸⁰ but it seems not to have had a determinative effect on Patristic eschatology. While the early Patristic writers often expected the *parousia* in the near future, while later Patristic writers often expected the *parousia* to be more distant, does not seem to influence the details of their eschatology. Thus the early writers did not ignore the intermediate state because it would be relatively short, nor was the immediate entrance of the soul to heaven later adopted because otherwise this delay would deprive the just of their reward for a long time. This can be seen in Gregory the Great, who was, according to Dudden,⁸¹ the first to assert dogmatically that the righteous entered heaven immediately, but also expected the *parousia* imminently. Daley comments appositely in this connection:

⁷⁸ J Le Goff. **The Birth of Purgatory**, p. 62.

⁷⁹ The delay of the *parousia* appears to have made little impression on the Patristic writers. One of the few who addressed this issue was Hippolytus. See D G Dunbar. "The delay of the parousia in Hippolytus." *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983) 4:313-327. Tertullian even prays for "the delay of the final consummation." *Apology* 39. ANF 3, p. 46, and he considered the *parousia* to be not far off. V C De Clercq. "The expectation of the second coming of Christ in Tertullian." *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972) 146-151.

⁸⁰ Ambrose. *Death as a good* 10.46. "Meeting the complaint of men that the just who have gone before seem to be cheated of their due reward for a very long time, even to the day of judgement, it admirably says that the day of judgement is like the day when the crown is awarded, when "just as there is no slowness on the part of those who are last, there is no swiftness on the part of those who are first [2 Esdras 5.42]." For all await the day when the crown is given, so that during that day the defeated may manifest their shame and the victors obtain the palm of victory." FC 65, p. 103.

⁸¹ [Gregory the Great. *Dialogues* 4.26. *Morals on Job* 4.56; 13.48; 24.11.34. LF 23, p. 76. *Homily in the Gospel* 19.4.] F H Dudden. **Gregory the Great**, vol. 2, p. 427, n. 2. Francis Clark demonstrates that while the *Dialogues* traditionally attributed to Gregory the Great are in fact pseudepigraphal, there are numerous interpolated genuine Gregorian passages, with the highest number in Book 4 of the *Dialogues*, where many of the non-genuine passages consist merely of the questions posed by Peter his interlocuter. Only those passages considered genuine by Clark have been used. This passage is considered genuine by Clark, **The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues**, vol. 2, pp. 547-548.

To see the development of Christian doctrine in the first several centuries, as Martin Werner tried to do several decades ago, as essentially the by-product of a failed eschatological hope - a way of coping intellectually with the non-fulfillment of first-century apocalyptic fantasies - is surely to reverse the order of religious priorities suggested in early Christian literature, and confirmed in our own reflective faith.⁸²

Even while those who took a unitary approach insisted that the dead saints were waiting for the resurrection before entering into their eternal rewards, very early in the Patristic period, the martyrs were considered to be an exception to this rule.

3.3 The post-mortem status of the martyrs

It was widely held that the martyrs, those who had been faithful even to the point of death in their testimony to Jesus Christ, would immediately after death be given a reward for their struggle.⁸³ Pollard argues that the belief that the martyrs do not have to wait for the resurrection but are given immediate admission to the presence of Christ is not explicitly stated in the New Testament, although he claims it is implicit in several passages (e.g. Philippians 1:23, Luke 23:43). He cites the studies of several scholars who suggest that the theology of martyrdom has its roots in the Maccabean period when the corporate eschatology of the nation of Israel was modified to the eschatology of the individual, particularly among the Pharisees. This development is traced through the Apocryphal literature where the idea of the immediate reward of the martyr is explicitly expressed.⁸⁴

However, it is impossible to form any firm conclusions as to the view of the after-life in Patristic writings in the first few centuries on the basis of what is said about the

⁸² Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 3. For criticisms of Werner's thesis Daley cites O Cullmann, **Christ and Time**. D Flusser. "Salvation past and present." *Numen* 16 (1969) 139-155. D E Aune. "The significance of the delay of the parousia for early Christianity." In: G F Hawthorne. **Current issues in Biblical and Patristic interpretation**, pp. 87-109.

⁸³ Miles reports an unpublished paper by Peter Brown in which he speaks of "the 'apparently sudden crystallization of an ideology of the martyrs' in the late second and early third centuries, the change from a passive 'lamb to the slaughter' image to an active imagery of triumph over the devil through martyrdom. The amphitheater is seen as the location for a victorious struggle with the powers of evil." Margaret R Miles. *Augustine on the body*, p. 43. Elsewhere, Peter Brown speaks of the temptation of the martyr to "helpless passivity" in the humiliation of a martyr's death, in which a triumphant attitude was more fitting. *The Body and Society*, p. 158.

⁸⁴ T E Pollard. "Martyrdom and resurrection in the New Testament." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 55 (1972) 242. See also E Stauffer. *New Testament Theology*, pp. 185-188. 2 Maccabees 7 is one of the most important sources for the Patristic doctrine of martyrdom. Daley says that the idea that Polycarp has already received a martyr's reward shows "The apocalyptic imagery of the Jewish and Christian apocrypha is here being applied directly to the faith and sufferings of the individual martyr." Brian E Daley. *The hope of the early Church*, p. 14. Cf. Origen. *Exhortation to martyrdom* 23-27. ACW 19, pp. 163-167. Strengthening the idea that the martyrs entered heaven immediately were the visions reported by others, including those about to be martyred, for instance, the vision of Perpetua reported by Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 55. ANF 3, p. 231.

martyrs, as they are an exception and not the norm; there is no speculation about an “intermediate state” with regard to other believers.⁸⁵ For instance, while Clement of Rome speaks of the martyrs as having entered into glory after their death,⁸⁶ it is difficult to tell whether he thinks this is also true for **other** Christians.

The account of the martyrdom of Polycarp asserts that the martyr enters heaven and receives his reward immediately. “For, having through patience overcome the unjust governor, and thus acquired the crown of immortality, he now, with the apostles and all the righteous [in heaven], rejoicingly glorifies God...”⁸⁷ Ignatius of Antioch stresses the hope of the resurrection for the martyr who dies in faith, and seems to hold to a communion with Christ after death and before the resurrection, especially (or perhaps only) for the martyrs (including the Old Testament prophets who also suffered as the servants of God).⁸⁸ However, the future life cannot be enjoyed **without** the resurrection, since human life involves both body and soul.⁸⁹ Daley notes that Polycarp says that

Ignatius and his fellow martyrs are already “in their deserved place with the Lord” (9.2), but Polycarp offers no further speculations about the state of their bodies, the character of their reward or the fate of apostates. The hope of Christians for the future, its images and its supposed conditions are not yet the object of reflection and explanation; it is simply part of the Easter kerygma at the heart of the community's life and worship.⁹⁰

The difficulties in determining what the Patristic writers thought concerning the intermediate state from their comments on the martyrs can be seen in the writings of

⁸⁵ Cf. K Hanhart. **The intermediate state in the New Testament**, pp. 181-182.

⁸⁶ *First Clement* 5-6. ANF 1, p. 6. Cf. Polycarp. *Letter to the Philippians* 9. ANF 1, p. 35.

⁸⁷ *Letter of the Church at Smyrna, concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp* 19. ANF 1, p. 43. This reward for the martyr is contrasted with the certain punishment which will come upon his persecutors, both in this life and in the eschaton. *Letter of the Church at Smyrna, concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp* 2. ANF 1, p. 39. The brief pain of the martyr is also contrasted with the eternal torment for those who do not believe or who deny Christ. *Letter of the Church at Smyrna, concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp* 11. ANF 1, p. 41. Cf. also Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 45. ANF 1, p. 178. Origen. *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 25. ACW 19, p. 166. Cyprian. *Letter* 58.10.1. *To the people of Thibarais*. ACW 46, p. 67. *Three books of Testimonies against the Jews* 3.17. ANF 5, p. 539. Caesarius of Arles. *Sermon* 219.1. FC 66, p. 129. The fate of the persecutors is dealt with at length by Lactantius. *Of the manner in which the persecutors died*. ANF 7, pp. 301-322. Cf. also Eusebius. *Life of Constantine* 2.27. NPNF 2/1, p. 507. Sulpitius Severus. *Letter to Bassula*. NPNF 2/11, p. 23.

⁸⁸ Compare the view of Hippolytus, speaking of the martyrdom of the prophets: “These words I address you as if alive, and with propriety. For you hold already the crown of life and immortality which is laid up for you in heaven.” *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 31. ANF 5, p. 210. Hill claims on the basis of various passages that Hippolytus says all the saints enter heaven immediately after death, and that the *De Universo*, which limits this to the martyrs, is not authentic. C E Hill. “Hippolytus and Hades: the authorship of the fragment *De universo*.” *Studia Patristica* 21 (1989) 256. Idem., “Hades of Hippolytus or Tartarus of Tertullian? The authorship of the fragment *De universo*.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989) 105-126.

⁸⁹ C C Richardson. **The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch**, p. 28.

⁹⁰ Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 14.

Justin Martyr. He maintained on the one hand that those who believe that the soul goes to God immediately after death are heretics,⁹¹ and thereby defeat the purpose of the resurrection,⁹² while on the other hand he also says the martyrs go to their Father on death.⁹³ While the persecutors imagine they are depriving the Christians of life (believing that death is extinction),⁹⁴ they are in fact doing them no harm since death cannot hurt them, and that is the limit of their powers (alluding to Matthew 10:28, which is the *locus classicus* for this view),⁹⁵ but the persecutors will surely be punished for their misdeeds.⁹⁶ The Christians, however, do not fear death, because they anticipate the glorious resurrection of the righteous,⁹⁷ and death is nothing unusual since everyone must die; so what then is the point of persecuting Christians?⁹⁸ Cyprian says clearly that the martyrs receive their reward when they die. While the reward of others comes only in the resurrection, it is the same reward as that promised to all; the difference being that the martyr receives his immediately after death.⁹⁹ Cyprian says that the martyrs “depart in glory from this life and enter into immortality.”¹⁰⁰ For the martyr death is not feared but desired, “for death is

⁹¹ According to T Stylianopoulos, the Gnostics are at the forefront of this polemic. **Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law**, p. 21.

⁹² Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho* 80. ANF 1, p. 239.

⁹³ E F Osborn. **Justin Martyr**, pp. 197-198.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ambrose. “Never did they confer on us a greater benefit than when they ordered Christians to be beaten and proscribed and slain. Religion made a reward of that which unbelief thought to be a punishment.” *Letter* 18.11a. NPNF 2/10, p. 418.

⁹⁵ Cf. Augustine's application of this text to the powers of the devil. “For the limit of men's rage is the destruction of the body; but the soul, after this visible death, they cannot keep in their power: whereas whatever souls the devil shall have taken by his persecutions, he will keep.” *On the Psalms* 7.4. NPNF 1/8, p. 21.

⁹⁶ Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 45. ANF 1, p. 178. Cf. for contrast the words of Thecla, who says to the Governor who released her from her trials and returned her clothes to her, “He that clothed me naked among the wild beasts [Christ], will in the day of judgement clothe you with salvation.” *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. ANF 8, p. 491.

⁹⁷ Cf. the views of Eusebius, who holds that the martyrs did not fear death because they were persuaded that their souls were immortal, citing also the examples of the pagans Anaxarchus and Epictetus. *On the Theophania* 1.64. Samuel Lee, p. 49. See also *On the Theophania* 3.60. Samuel Lee, p. 196; *Preparation for the Gospel* 1.4. E H Gifford. Vol. 1, p. 15. Novatian. *On the Trinity* 25. ANF 5, p. 636. Lactantius also cites the example of pagan warriors who voluntarily died for the safety of others, since they believed in immortality, although he stresses they did not understand its true nature. *The Divine Institutes* 3.12. ANF 7, p. 80. Athanasius on the other hand stresses that the martyrs “...really know that when they die they do not perish but live and become incorruptible through the resurrection.” *On the Incarnation* 27. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 201.

⁹⁸ Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 57. ANF 1, p. 182. John Cassian commented that death is a rest and freedom from evils for the saint, and if put to death suffers “that which would have happened to him in the course of nature” which is inevitable anyway, but nevertheless he receives the reward of eternal life thereby. *Conferences* 6.6. NPNF 2/11, p. 354. We also find the idea that evading death through martyrdom is of no use to the Christian because we must all die sometime anyway. Those who do evade martyrdom through denial of Jesus and nevertheless die are risking eternal punishment. *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.6. ANF 7, p. 439. *The Martyrdom of Habib the Deacon*. ANF 8, p. 691. *The Martyrdom of the Holy Confessors Shamuna, Guria and Habib*. ANF 8, p. 697.

⁹⁹ Cyprian. *Letter* 58.4.2. *To the people of Thibaris*. ACW 46, p. 63.

¹⁰⁰ Cyprian. *Letter* 12.2.1. *To the presbyters and deacons*. ACW 43, p. 82.

vanquished by the reward of deathlessness, so that the victor is honoured with an eternity of life.”¹⁰¹ Cyprian thus held, following Tertullian,¹⁰² that the martyrs enter heaven and receive their reward immediately following death, while the rest of the believers must wait for the sentence of the Lord on the Day of Judgement.¹⁰³

A somewhat different view is found in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a document from the third century, purporting to be compiled by the Apostles at Jerusalem after the council described in Acts 15.¹⁰⁴ The *Didascalia* indicates that Daniel 12:2 refers to the glory which the martyrs shall receive in the resurrection. It goes on to say that “not to the martyrs alone has He promised the resurrection, but to all men”¹⁰⁵ and then it quotes Ezekiel 37:1-14.¹⁰⁶ This could indicate that the reward of the martyrs does not come prior to the resurrection, but rather is seen in the greater glory of their resurrection bodies.¹⁰⁷ Those who suffer martyrdom are assured they will receive everlasting life, together with the other believers.¹⁰⁸ Those who died in faith were considered especially blessed because their salvation was guaranteed, while those still labouring in the world could perhaps fall by the wayside and lose their faith.¹⁰⁹ Cyprian said: “For none can be other than always glad and grateful, who, having been once subject to death, has been made secure in the possession of immortality.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Cyprian. *Letter 37.3.2. To Moyses and Maximus, and the rest of the Confessors*. ACW 44, p. 51. Cf. also *Letter 80.1.3. To Successus*. ACW 47, p. 105; *Letter 10. To the Martyrs and Confessors*. ACW 43, pp. 71-75.

¹⁰² Tertullian. “For no one, on becoming absent from the body, is at once a dweller in the presence of the Lord, except by the prerogative of martyrdom, he gains a lodging in Paradise, not in the lower regions.” *On the resurrection of the flesh* 43. ANF 3, p. 576. Cf. also *On the Soul* 55. ANF 3, p. 231.

¹⁰³ Cyprian. *Letter 58.10.3. To the people of Thibaris*. ACW 46, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴ R H Connolly. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, p. xxvi.

¹⁰⁵ This is in contrast to some contemporary views which restrict the resurrection to the Maccabean martyrs. See the discussion in Alexander A Di Lella. *The Book of Daniel*, pp. 306-309. John E Goldingay. *Daniel*, pp. 306-308. See also Jerome's comments on this view as proposed by Porphyry. *Commentary on Daniel* 12.2. G L Archer, pp. 145-146.

¹⁰⁶ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 20. R H Connolly, pp. 167-168. Cf. also pp. 172, 174.

¹⁰⁷ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 20. “If then He raises up all men - as He said by Isaiah: *All flesh shall see the salvation of God* - much more will He quicken and raise up the faithful; and yet more again will He quicken and raise up the faithful of the faithful, who are the martyrs, and establish them in great glory and make them His counsellors. For to mere disciples, those who believe in Him, He has promised a glory as of the stars; but to the martyrs He has promised to give an everlasting glory, as of the luminaries which fail not, with more abundant light, that they may be shining for all time.” R H Connolly, p. 174. This idea of a “greater reward” for the martyrs is possibly drawing on Hebrews 11:35b. “Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.” A different interpretation of this text is that it stresses the superiority of the eschatological resurrection over being raised from the dead in this present life. Philip E Hughes. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 512. F F Bruce. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 337-338. William Lane. *Hebrews 9-13*, pp. 388-389.

¹⁰⁸ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 19. R H Connolly, p. 162. In this same passage the other believers are encouraged to visit the martyrs in prison, since by doing so they will share in their martyrdom and thus also inherit eternal life.

¹⁰⁹ See K Hanhart. *The intermediate state in the New Testament*, pp. 228-229.

Caesarius says that the saint is at war with the devil, and “in this war man is always in danger until he dies.”¹¹¹ The certainty of salvation for the martyrs was applied to the “spiritual martyrs,” the ascetics, by Athanasius.¹¹²

Likewise in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (dated after 400 AD)¹¹³ we find an emphasis on the resurrection to incorruption in connection with martyrdom. This incorruption is spoken of in terms of physical perfection and not as a merely spiritual glorification. This aspect of incorruption is what those facing martyrdom would find comforting, since the bodies which are torn and broken, burnt in fires or consumed by wild animals, will be restored again whole and without blemish.¹¹⁴ This view can be found in the works of Tatian, who said:

If fire consumes my bit of flesh, the vaporised matter is still contained in the world. If I am annihilated in rivers and seas, or torn to pieces by wild beasts, I am still stored in a rich lord's treasuries. The poor,

¹¹⁰ Cyprian. *An Address to Demetrianus* 25. ANF 5, p. 465. Similarly John Chrysostom says that the martyrs have “escaped from the storms of temporal things and sailed into a calm harbour... they have escaped henceforth the uncertainty of the future.” *Discourse against Judaizing Christians* 6.1.6. FC 68, p. 149. Elsewhere he says: “The martyr no longer fears the devil, he no longer dreads the demons, he no longer fears that ease with which sin overcomes us; he is not eaten up by envy, nor devoured by desire, nor assailed by passionate love. He is subject to none of the changes which weigh heavy on us. He looks incorporeal powers in the face. The splendour which comes from his virtue matches the splendour of Gabriel. He stands before the throne of the King, casting forth rays brighter than the rays of the sun, waiting only for the immutable blessings which are free from every change... They are seated in peace like a ship in port and they enjoy a happiness which no discourse, no thought can express. If such is their glory at this moment, think what it will be when they will receive their own portion and will enjoy that happiness.” From an unedited Homily on the martyrs. Translation cited in Paul W Harkins. **St. John Chrysostom. Baptismal Instructions.** ACW 31, p. 271, n. 10. Theodoret says that we should not mourn over a dead believer, but look on him as having gone on a long journey from which he shall return, and although sorrowing over the parting, be glad that he is “now free from a world of uncertainties, and fears no further change of soul or body or of corporeal condition. The strife now ended, he waits for his reward.” *Letter 14, to Alexandra.* NPNF 2/3, p. 254. Also *Letter 7, to Theonilla.* NPNF 2/3, p. 252. *Letter 69, to Eugraphia.* NPNF 2/3, p. 270. This idea was also used by Tertullian. *Of patience* 9. ANF 3, p. 713.

¹¹¹ Caesarius of Arles. *Sermon* 177.3. FC 47, p. 444.

¹¹² Athanasius, concerning the Abbot Theodorus. “But if *he is blessed that fears the Lord*, we may now confidently call him blessed, having the firm assurance that he has reached as it were a haven, and has a life without care.” *Letter 58, Second Letter to Orsisius.* NPNF 2/4, p. 569.

¹¹³ W A Jurgens. **The Faith of the Early Fathers.** Vol. 2, p. 128.

¹¹⁴ Bottomley notes that Athenagoras “proves” the resurrection from his axiom about human dignity and the purpose of God in creating humankind [*Concerning the Resurrection of the dead* 12.5. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 117], in an age of persecution and torture when the dignity and value of the human body was not prized. Thus “belief in a glorious resurrection was obviously a great consolation.” F Bottomley. **Attitudes to the Body in Western Christendom**, p. 52. Athenagoras was convinced that the destruction of the body by fire or wild beasts will not prevent its resurrection, since God knows the whereabouts of each particle that belongs to the body and thus can reform it again. H A Lucks. **The philosophy of Athenagoras: Its sources and value**, p. 46. This idea is repeated by Rufinus. *Commentary on the Apostles Creed* 42-43. ACW 20, pp. 80-81. Augustine. *The City of God* 22.20. NPNF 1/2, p. 498.

impious man does not know what is stored up, but God the ruler, when He wishes, will restore to its original state the substance that is visible only to Him.¹¹⁵

The *Apostolic Constitutions* repeats this idea, stressing the restoration of the body without blemish, no matter what has become of it; an idea which the martyrs would find of comfort.

For the Almighty God Himself will raise us up through our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His infallible promise, and grant us a resurrection with all those that have slept from the beginning of the world; and we shall then be such as we now are in our present form, without any defect or corruption. For we shall rise incorruptible: whether we die at sea, or are scattered on the earth, or are torn to pieces by wild beasts and birds, He will raise us up by His own power; for the whole world is held together by the hand of God.¹¹⁶

Others who held that the martyr enters heaven immediately include Dionysius of Alexandria,¹¹⁷ Gregory the Illuminator,¹¹⁸ Augustine,¹¹⁹ and Leo the Great.¹²⁰ Ambrose,

¹¹⁵ Tatian. *Oration against the Greeks* 6.2-7.1. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 13. R M Grant suggests that the statement about being “stored in a rich lord’s treasuries” reflects the Stoic notion of the conservation of matter, as was held by Marcus Aurelius, to whom Tatian addressed his Apology. “Five Apologists and Marcus Aurelius.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988) 11. Dewart insists that it is Tatian’s insistence that the physical body will be reconstituted and raised distinguishes his view of the resurrection from the Gnostics, thus refuting the suggestion that Tatian was influenced by Gnosticism. **Death and Resurrection**, p. 85. The same idea appears in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. “And we ought not to doubt; for so He has promised us, that if we should be burned with coals of fire, while we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in God His Father, the Lord God Almighty, and in His Holy Spirit, - to whom be glory and honour for evermore, Amen - God Almighty will raise us up through God our Saviour, as He has promised. And He will raise us up from the dead even as we are - in this form in which we now are, but in the great glory of everlasting life, with nothing wanting to us. For though we be cast into the depths of the sea, or be scattered by the winds like chaff, we are still within the world; and the whole world itself is inclosed beneath the hand of God. For within His hand therefore will He raise us up...” *Didascalia Apostolorum* 19-20. R H Connolly, p. 167. See also Augustine. *On care to be had for the dead* 10. NPNF 1/3, p. 544.

¹¹⁶ *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.7. ANF 7, pp. 439-440. Similarly Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 57. ANF 3, pp. 589-590. Cf. the concept of Augustine, that in the resurrection all will have glorified bodies except the martyrs, whose scars will remain as evidence of their love for Christ, and will not be a deformity but a mark of honour and beauty. He argues that there will be no blemishes in the resurrected body, but these scars are not to be considered blemishes. *The City of God* 22.19. NPNF 1/2, p. 498. McDannell and Lang comment that “Such a desire was hitherto unknown among the martyrs who wanted their bodies restored to full health and perfection... For Augustine, the wounds of the martyrs had become as mythical as martyrdom itself.” **Heaven: A history**, p. 62. M A Tilley comments that after the end of persecutions in the Roman Empire, hagiography became more fantastic and romanticized. “The ascetic body and the (un)making of the world of the martyr.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991) 467, n. 1. However, it is also possible that the death of the martyr is being assimilated to that of Christ, who also retains his scars as signs of his redemptive suffering. Thus in this way the martyrs are identified with Christ in a way ordinary believers are not. See Augustine. *Letter* 102.7. NPNF 1/1, p. 416.

¹¹⁷ Dionysius of Alexandria. *To the brethren in Alexandria*. Translations of Christian Literature, p. 71.

although using an instrumentalist anthropological model, also held that along with the martyrs, patriarchs, prophets and pious emperors are already in heaven.¹²¹ John Chrysostom, who says that while the martyrs are in “Paul’s choral band,” they “still await their crowns.”¹²²

John Chrysostom considers that those who reject magic amulets and incantations when sick, choosing instead to suffer fever and perhaps die, will stand with the martyrs on the day of Judgement, since they chose death rather than accept the cure offered by sorcerers.¹²³ He says: “A martyr is made not only when someone is ordered to offer a sacrifice but chooses to die rather than offer the sacrifice. If a man shuns any practice, and to shun it can only bring on death, he is certainly a martyr.”¹²⁴ He says that even “If this fever does not carry you off, another one surely will; if we do not die now, we are sure to die later. It is our lot to have a body doomed to die.”¹²⁵

However, while some writers in the Syrian tradition share the view of many others,¹²⁶ this is not universally the case. Ephrem sees the martyrs as receiving their reward at the resurrection, not immediately. He says that God “will give to His wrestlers their crowns, when they are risen again.”¹²⁷ Similarly, while Severus of Antioch speaks of the martyrs entering immediately into heavenly blessings, he “seems to assume that the dead must normally wait for the resurrection and judgement before receiving their final punishment or reward.”¹²⁸ In a similar vein, Victorinus of Pettau stressed that the souls of the saints who had been martyred, who are waiting for vengeance for their blood (Revelation 6:9-11), will receive their reward in the eschaton, as it is a perpetual reward. They wait under the bronze altar, which is Hades, a place of repose for the saints under the earth, while the golden altar is heaven.¹²⁹

Thus while the opinions on the fate of the martyrs are rather mixed, the idea that they would receive their reward immediately after death, while the other believers must

¹¹⁸ Gregory the Illuminator. *The teaching of Gregory* 562-563. R W Thomson, pp. 134-135.

¹¹⁹ Augustine. *The City of God* 8.27. NPNF 1/2, p. 164.

¹²⁰ Leo the Great. *Sermon* 85.4. NPNF 2/12, p. 198.

¹²¹ Ambrose. *Letter* 22.7. NPNF 2/10, p. 437. *Of the Christian faith* 3.12.99. NPNF 2/10, p. 256; idem, 5.12.151. NPNF 2/10, p. 303.

¹²² John Chrysostom. *Discourse against Judaizing Christians* 6.1.6. FC 68, p. 149. Cf. *Baptismal Instructions* 7.1. ACW 31, p. 104.

¹²³ John Chrysostom. *Discourse against Judaizing Christians* 8.7.3. FC 68, pp. 230-231.

¹²⁴ John Chrysostom. *Discourse against Judaizing Christians* 8.7.13. FC 68, p. 234.

¹²⁵ John Chrysostom. *Discourse against Judaizing Christians* 8.7.4. FC 68, p. 231.

¹²⁶ For instance, Shamuna says that after martyrdom God will give “rest in a place of safety, where is the abode of all those who rejoice.” *The Martyrdom of the Holy Confessors Shamuna, Guria and Habib*. ANF 8, p. 697. Shamuna also says that “That death, on the contrary, with which you are threatening us will convey us to imperishable habitations and give us a participation in the happiness which is yonder.” Ibid., p. 699.

¹²⁷ Ephrem. *A Rhythm concerning the Faith* 1.3. Select works of S. Ephrem the Syrian, p. 365.

¹²⁸ Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 185.

¹²⁹ Victorinus of Pettau. *On the Apocalypse* 6.9. ANF 7, p. 351.

wait for the resurrection, continued throughout the Patristic period. This is one possible source for the idea that there are different treatments for different groups of people. The acceptance of a distinction between the martyrs and the rest of the believers in terms of when the reward is received, could have inspired the distinction between the righteous, who receive their reward without being judged, that is, prior to the resurrection, and the rest of the believers whose lives are not so pure, whose rewards (and punishments) need to be determined at the judgement and thus not until after the resurrection.

The reason why the martyrs are considered to enter heaven immediately after death, while the other believers must wait until the resurrection, is possibly found in the idea that the martyr participates in the suffering and death of Christ. Just as Christ triumphed over his persecutors and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, so too his “witnesses” who suffer death for his sake, also ascend into heaven. The application of sacrificial imagery to the sufferings of the martyrs strengthened the identification with Christ.¹³⁰

3.4 Creation as basis for belief in the resurrection

The earliest Patristic writers recognised that the dualistic anthropology of Gnosticism, which posits a conflict between body and soul, originates in a defective understanding of God and of his creative acts. As a result, it was suggested that God was either unwilling or unable to raise the dead, and so the possibility and reality of the bodily resurrection was denied by heretical groups, such as the Gnostics,¹³¹ and by those who held to a pagan Greek ontology, which posited the eternity of matter. This idea was attacked by the Patristic writers.¹³² Tatian asserted that

...matter is not without beginning like God, nor because of having beginning is it also of equal power with God; it was originated and brought into being by none other, projected by the sole creator of all that is. For this same reason we are convinced that there will be a bodily resurrection after the universe has come to an end.¹³³

¹³⁰ For example the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14 speaks of him as a “burnt offering” and an “acceptable sacrifice.” ANF 1, p. 42. Cf. John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Hebrews* 11.6. NPNF 1/14, p. 420.

¹³¹ The Gnostics did not deny the resurrection as such, but interpreted it in terms of their own beliefs, and saw the resurrection as a rising from ignorance to knowledge, rather than as a bodily renewal. See for instance Bentley Layton. **The Gnostic Treatise on the Resurrection from Nag Hammadi.**

¹³² Cf. the thought of Augustine as described by R M Grant. “In Augustine's doctrine of resurrection we see summed up the whole early Christian world-view, with its stress on creation, miracle and resurrection. These three notes are bound together in a common theme, the omnipotence of God.” **Miracle and natural law in Graeco-Roman and early Christian thought**, p. 263.

¹³³ Tatian. *Oration against the Greeks* 5.3-6.1 Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 11. Many Patristic writers insisted, against the Greeks, that God had created substance: it was not self-existent and eternal. See: J C M van Winden. “In the beginning: Some observations on the Patristic interpretations of Genesis 1:1.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 17 (1963) 105-121; idem, “The early Christian exegesis of 'Heaven and Earth' in Genesis 1:1.” In: **Romanitas et Christianitas**, pp. 371-382. A H Armstrong argues the Cappadocians borrowed the theory of

In a society imbued with the ideas of Platonism, the idea of a bodily resurrection was considered absurd or impossible.¹³⁴ Since the resurrection is pivotal for the whole Christian faith [1 Corinthians 15:13-19], it was essential for the Patristic writers to defend this doctrine against both heretics and pagans.

However, the way in which the general resurrection was treated in the Apostolic Fathers indicates that before the advent of the major heresies, and before the development of systematic treatments of Christian doctrine, it was not perceived to be problematic among the Christian community. According to Dewart,

Resurrection is not in itself often a focus of discussion and, where it does occur, it is subordinated to other concerns: exhortations to the Christian life, rejection of a docetic Christology or expectation of the millennial reign of Christ... the characteristically pauline causal link between [Christ's] resurrection and that hoped for by his followers receives relatively little attention.¹³⁵

Because the resurrection was denied on the basis of a competing cosmogony and ontology, only by asserting an alternative ontology, rooted in the Christian doctrine of creation, could belief in the resurrection be defended. In addition, consideration of anthropological issues was necessary, as the origin and nature of both soul and body were under dispute. The Christian doctrine of creation was foundational for Patristic theology, which emphasised the integrity of the creation as coming from the hand of the one Creator God, the Father of Jesus Christ, who thus also redeems that which he has created.

Many Patristic writers argued that if it was possible for God to bring into being that which had once not existed, then it is possible (and easier) for God to restore to being that which once had existed.¹³⁶ For instance, Minucius Felix argues that the best

the non-existence of matter from Plotinus, in order to stress the creative act of God. "The theory of the non-existence of matter in Plotinus and the Cappadocians." *Studia Patristica* 5 (1966) 427-429. Origen and Augustine accepted the existence of prime matter, although they argued that this was also created by God. Cf. P M O'Cleirigh. "Prime matter in Origen's world-picture." *Studia Patristica* 16 (1985) 260-263.

¹³⁴ L W Barnard. **Athenagoras**, p. 31. Anders Nygren says that the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh "plays a far greater part in the Apologists than in primitive Christianity, and the reason is undoubtedly their reaction against the Hellenistic doctrine of salvation." **Agape and Eros**, p. 283. This latter, as found in Porphyry, opposes the immortality of the soul to the resurrection of the body. Margaret R Miles. **Augustine on the body**, p. 103.

¹³⁵ J E McWilliam Dewart. **Death and Resurrection**, p. 36.

¹³⁶ The idea that God can do anything can be found in the Stoics [Cicero. *De Divinatione* 2.41.86. "Nihil est, inquit, quod deus efficere non possit." Arthur S Pease, p. 495] while opponents of the Stoics, for instance Pliny, claimed that there were many things that God cannot do, including "recalling the dead." Pliny. *Natural History* 2.27. Loeb, Vol. 1, p. 187. R J Sider points out that 1 Corinthians 15:35 could be translated: *Is it possible that the dead are raised?* Paul replies by pointing to the sowing of seeds: a new plant never appears unless the seed dies, and if it dies, it comes to life in a new way. "The Pauline conception of the Resurrection body in 1 Corinthians xv.35-54." *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975) 429. The Patristic discussion of God's power in connection with the resurrection concluded that of course it is possible! Cf. Matthew 19:26b. "...with God, all things are possible."

evidence for the resurrection is found not in the ideas of the philosophers, but in the belief that God created the world. And if God was able to create the world in the beginning, he is certainly able to recreate human bodies again. His protagonist Octavius does not simply state that re-creation is as simple as original creation: he also sees a parallel between non-existence before birth and non-existence after death. Just as the original creation came from nothing, so too we are re-created from the nothingness into which we entered on death. This exactly answers the comments of his opponent Caecilius that before we are born we do not exist, and when we die we perish.¹³⁷ Octavius, while agreeing with these statements, turns them to support his own doctrine, arguing that therefore any future life must involve a resurrection, and that God is both willing and able to raise us from the dead.¹³⁸

What God had originally created from nothing, he could easily re-create again from the dust.¹³⁹ Since God had created humankind as bodily beings, it was only logical that it would be as bodily beings that we would be re-created. This then entailed a bodily resurrection of the dead. The creation of Adam from the dust is a frequently used analogy, since Adam and all his descendants return to dust again as a result of sin.¹⁴⁰ The creative power of God guarantees the resurrection of the dead, just as

¹³⁷ This view expressed by a pagan has a counterpart in the Christian Tatian. "Before I was born I did not exist; I did not know who I was and was only latent in the substance of physical matter; it was through my birth that I, previously non-existent, came to believe that I did exist. In the same way, when I who was born, cease to exist through death and am no more seen, I shall once more be as in my previous state of non-existence followed by birth." *Oration against the Greeks* 6.2. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 13.

¹³⁸ Minucius Felix. *Octavius* 34. ANF 4, p. 194. Quispel suggests that the eschatology of Minucius Felix is more primitive than that of Tertullian, since he defends the resurrection of the body and does not mention the immortality of the soul. This does not necessarily mean chronological priority, as Quispel argues that Minucius holds to an "archaic" view, in which the flesh must be raised for the judgement, as the incorporeal soul cannot suffer, and no rewards or punishments were handed out prior to the resurrection. G Quispel. "African Christianity before Tertullian." In: **Romanitas et Christianitas**, pp. 275-276. Quispel seems to reject this "archaic" view, as he also refers to it as "naive."

¹³⁹ One of his arguments is that just as no one could deduce the possibility of the development of a human being from a drop of semen, so neither should we discount the possibility of the resurrection, simply because the bodies which must be raised have been reduced to dust. Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 19. ANF 1, p. 169. This image of the semen as demonstration of the resurrection is also found in Theophilus. *To Autolycus* 1.8. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 13. *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.7. ANF 7, p. 441. Theodoret. *On Divine Providence* 9.43. ACW 49, p. 133. Theodore of Mopsuestia develops this image in a somewhat different way, saying that we are first born "in the form of semen through baptism, before we are born of the resurrection." *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* 4. Woodbrooke Studies 6 (1933) 69.

¹⁴⁰ Claudius Marius Victor expands and develops this Patristic theme and uses it to speak of the ease with which the earth can give up what was placed in it, in comparison with the original creation when it produced something which it did not have in it. "For because the earth, through the shaping work of the supreme God, thus produced from the dust what it did not have, being without a power of its own, it is easy for it, when commanded under that same judge, to give back what it did have." *Aletheia* 1, 216-219. Translation cited from: D J Nodes. "The seventh day of creation in *Aletheia* of Claudius Marius Victor. *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988) 61.

Adam was created from the dust in the beginning.¹⁴¹ The *Apostolic Constitutions* express this analogy very concisely to illustrate the resurrection.

For He that made the body of Adam out of the earth will raise up the bodies of the rest, and that of the first man, after their dissolution, to pay what is owing to the rational nature of man; we mean the continuance in being through all ages. He, therefore, who brings on the dissolution, will Himself procure the resurrection. And He that said, *The Lord took dust from the ground, and formed man, and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul*, added after the disobedience, *you are earth, and unto earth you shall return*, the same promised us a resurrection afterwards.¹⁴²

The argument that the possibility and certainty of the resurrection is ensured by God's creative power was used in various forms by writers throughout the Patristic period.¹⁴³

In defending their belief in the bodily resurrection on the basis of the creation, the Patristic writers often used analogies taken from everyday experience, or images found in the stories in Scripture (although Scripture does not often itself connect these images with the resurrection¹⁴⁴), rather than by exegeting the text of Scripture itself.¹⁴⁵ Such analogies were used by the Apologists in order to demonstrate the resurrection to pagans on a basis they would understand,¹⁴⁶ and these analogies became

¹⁴¹ This analogy can be found in such diverse Patristic writers as Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.3.2. ANF 1, p. 527. Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.13. NPNF 2/7, p. 137. Aphrahat. *Demonstrations* 8.6. NPNF 2/13, p. 376. Prudentius. *Apotheosis* 763-770. Loeb I, p. 177. Gregory the Great. *Homily in Ezekiel* 2.8.7. PL 76, 1032.

¹⁴² *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.7. ANF 7, p. 440. Cf. the use of this idea by Peter Chrysologus. "O man, you did not see it when your Creator made you from dust. For, if you had seen yourself made, you would never have bewailed the fact that you were going to die... Wherefore, by means of nature God reduced you to your pristine state. From nothing He has permitted you to be recalled again to dust. Thus He wants you to see what you once were; and to give thanks because you will rise again - you who once lived in such ingratitude despite the fact that you had been produced and made." *Sermon 101. On Luke 12:4-6*. FC 17, pp. 165-166.

¹⁴³ For instance: Theophilus of Antioch. *To Autolytus* 1.8. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 13. Tatian. *Oration against the Greeks* 5.3-6.2. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 11, 13; Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.6, 9. NPNF 2/7, pp. 135, 136. Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 11. ANF 3, p. 553. Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 290. R W Thomson, p. 53. Macarius Magnes. *Apocriticus* 4.30. Translations of Christian Literature, p. 155. Ephrem of Syria. *Nisibene Hymns* 37.10. NPNF 2/13, p. 199. Aphrahat. *Demonstrations* 8.6. NPNF 2/13, p. 376. *Didascalia Apostolorum* 20. R H Connolly, p. 174. Theodore of Mopsuestia. *Commentary on the Nicene Creed* 1. *Woodbrooke Studies* 5 (1932) 24.

¹⁴⁴ In the preceding quote, only the "wheat" and the "tree cut down" are used in connection with the resurrection in Scripture [1 Corinthians 15:37-38 and Job 14:7-10], the latter only implicitly.

¹⁴⁵ Dewart comments that the resurrection can be shown from these analogies because they show the divine faithfulness. J E McWilliam Dewart. **Death and Resurrection**, p. 40. See *First Clement* 20 for an exposition of the faithfulness of God in ordering the creation. ANF 1, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ J E McWilliam Dewart. **Death and Resurrection**, p. 70. Cyril of Jerusalem used such analogies in discussing the objections of the Greeks to the resurrection, but in dealing with the objections of the Samaritans, he uses arguments from Scripture. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.11-

commonplaces in Patristic texts.¹⁴⁷ In the *Apostolic Constitutions*, many of these analogies are gathered together in one passage.

And He that raised Himself from the dead, will also raise again all that are laid down. He who raises wheat out of the ground with many stalks from one grain, He who makes the tree that is cut down send forth fresh branches, He that made Aaron's dry rod put forth buds, will raise us up in glory; He that raised Him up that had the palsy whole, and healed him that had the withered hand, He that supplied a defective part to him that was born blind with clay and spittle, will raise us up; He that satisfied five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, and caused a remainder of twelve baskets, and out of water made wine, and sent a piece of money out of the fish's mouth by me Peter to those that demanded tribute, will raise the dead.¹⁴⁸

Another analogy frequently used is the the story of the phoenix, a bird which is supposedly raised from the dead.¹⁴⁹ If a mere bird is raised, surely human beings will be raised!¹⁵⁰ The first time we meet the example of the Phoenix is in Clement of Rome, who says:

Do we then deem it any great and wonderful thing for the Maker of all things to raise up again those that have piously served Him in the

13. NPNF 2/7, pp. 136-137. Gregory the Great used analogies on the grounds that the the resurrection cannot be comprehended by reason but can be believed by examples. *Homilies in Ezekiel* 2.8.10. PL 76, 1034. John Chrysostom argued that it is impossible for reasoning to describe the resurrection, and faith alone is all that is needed to believe in it. *On the incomprehensible nature of God* 2.45. FC 72, p. 89.

¹⁴⁷ Others who used such analogies include Theophilus. *To Autolykus* 1.13. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 17. Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 12. ANF 3, p. 553. Gregory of Nyssa. *On the making of man* 27.7. NPNF 2/5, p. 419. Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 528-529. R W Thomson, pp. 123-124. Peter Chrysologus. *Sermon 103*. [PL 52, 487] **The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers**, Vol. 4, pp. 120-122. Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 15.20. NPNF 2/7, p. 110. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.6-7. NPNF 2/7, p. 135. According to his biographer, Gregory the Illuminator used “many similes and examples from the transitory world, especially concerning the hope of the resurrection for the future life...” Agathangelos. *History of the Armenians* 886. R W Thomson, p. 417. cf. *History of the Armenians* 92. R W Thomson, p. 103.

¹⁴⁸ *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.7. ANF 7, p. 442.

¹⁴⁹ This story of the phoenix is supposedly mentioned in Psalm 92:12 [LXX 91:13], *The righteous shall flourish like the 'phoenix,'* which was understood to mean that the saints will return from death like the phoenix. It was an image (and exegetical connection) with wide currency. However, the word “phoenix” in the Greek Old Testament actually means “palm tree,” although Clement had not connected the phoenix with the Greek text of that Psalm. T P O'Malley. **Tertullian and the Bible**, p. 84.

¹⁵⁰ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 13. ANF 3, p. 554. *Didascalia Apostolorum* 20. R H Connolly, pp. 172, 174. Ambrose. *On belief in the resurrection* 2.59. NPNF 2/10, p. 183. However compare the comments of Eusebius, for whom the image of the phoenix was inadequate when speaking of the emperor Constantine. Rather, Eusebius compares him to Christ himself. *Life of Constantine* 4.72. NPNF 2/1, pp. 558-559.

assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird [the Phoenix] He shows us the mightiness of His power to fulfill His promise?¹⁵¹

The Patristic writers claim that because this story from pagan sources speaks of the resurrection,¹⁵² therefore such a belief is not absurd, since the pagans have themselves accepted the possibility in their own tradition.¹⁵³ For instance, Cyril of Jerusalem uses the example of the Phoenix as a proof that the Greeks believe in the resurrection of a bird, which is no more incredible than the resurrection of human beings.¹⁵⁴

There are several variations of the myth of the phoenix. In one, the old bird flies to Egypt where it burns itself on a funeral pyre, from which the new bird arises.¹⁵⁵ In another, the bird dies elsewhere, and out of the decaying carcass the new bird develops, which then flies to Egypt with the carcass and burns it on a funeral pyre. Cyril adopted this latter version possibly for apologetic reasons, since it placed emphasis on the identity of the old bird and the new phoenix.¹⁵⁶

3.5 The identity of the resurrection body

¹⁵¹ *First Clement* 25-26. ANF 1, p. 12. Clement probably derives the story from Roman historians. R M Grant. **Miracle and natural law in Graeco-Roman and early Christian thought**, p. 239. See the study of this subject by R van den Broek. **The myth of the Phoenix according to Classical and early Christian traditions**. J M Ford suggests that the legend of the phoenix, used as an illustration of the resurrection, comes “from sources which wish to illustrate the resurrection of the body rather than the immortality of the soul, that is, Jewish philosophy.” “Was Montanism a Jewish-Christian heresy?” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 17 (1966) 157. It also appears in Ambrose. *On Hexameron* 8.23.79. FC 42, pp. 219-220.

¹⁵² The earliest reference to this bird is apparently in Hesiod. It appears in Herodotus II.72, who had, according to Porphyry, taken it from Hecataeus. It is also found in Pliny and Tacitus. Clement is the first to mention the rebirth of the bird from the ashes. E Evans. **Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection**. London: S.P.C.K., 1960, pp. 227-228.

¹⁵³ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 20. R H Connolly, pp. 172, 174. Note the views of Arnobius, who argues that it is not irrational to believe in the resurrection, since even Plato said in the *Statesman* that one day the dead will rise again, and move in reverse from old age towards youth. [*The Statesman*. Jowett, vol. 4, pp. 467-469] This according to Arnobius is no more absurd to believe than the resurrection of the body. *The case against the Pagans* 2.13. ACW 7, pp. 126-127. The editor of the ANF translation suggests that Arnobius puts too much weight on this myth, since it is addressed to Socrates when he was a boy, and it was told merely to amuse him. ANF 6, p. 439, n. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem uses this approach, pointing out that since there is a “resurrection” for lesser creatures, the superiority of humans to the rest of the creation demands their resurrection. For example: “Further, does a tree after it has been cut down blossom again, and shall man after being cut down blossom no more?” *Catechetical Lectures* 18.6-7. NPNF 2/7, p. 135.

¹⁵⁵ This version is found in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* 20. R H Connolly, p. 172. Cf. Ambrose, who makes similar comments regarding the eagle. “Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle, because the eagle after death is born again from its ashes, as we being dead in sin are through the sacrament of Baptism born again to God, and created anew.” *On repentance* 2.2.8. NPNF 2/10, p. 346.

¹⁵⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.8. NPNF 2/7, pp. 135-136.

The most important issue for the Patristic writers with respect to the resurrection body was its identity with the body in this life, as the soul will return to its own body at the resurrection, and not to some other body.

Let our own people, moreover, bear this in mind, that souls are to receive back at the resurrection the self-same bodies in which they died. Therefore our bodies must be expected to resume the same conditions and the same ages, for it is these particulars which impart to bodies their especial modes.¹⁵⁷

This view was frequently expressed by Patristic writers in their polemic against the transmigration of souls (metempsychosis or reincarnation).¹⁵⁸ They argued that it is no more possible or logical for a soul to enter another body than to have its own body restored to it. While the whole idea of transmigration is contrary to Christian belief, the adoption of an anthropological dichotomy permits such a possibility to be considered. An anthropological model in which human nature was conceived as a whole, without any dichotomy, precludes the very possibility of a transmigration of the soul.¹⁵⁹

According to Tertullian, false religion is correlated with the denial that at the resurrection each soul is clothed again “with the body it laid aside at death,”¹⁶⁰ that is, the resurrection body must be a body of flesh for identity to be maintained, which refutes Gnostic and other heresies which deny that there is any possibility of salvation for the flesh.¹⁶¹

In the credal formulation concerning the resurrection, the alternatives of “the resurrection of the dead” or “the resurrection of the body” could equally well have been used. Gregory the Illuminator speaks of “the resurrection of the flesh from the dead,”¹⁶² while Cyril of Jerusalem says that “my present remarks concerning the

¹⁵⁷ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 56. ANF 3, p. 232. Referring to the pagan belief that souls return to bodies, Tertullian asserts “how much more worthy of acceptance is our belief which maintains that they will return to the same bodies!” *Ad nationes* 1.19. ANF 3, p. 127. Cf. also Hippolytus. “...He will accomplish a resurrection of all, not by transferring souls into other bodies, but by raising the bodies themselves... And to every body its own proper soul will be given again...” *Against Plato, On the Cause of the Universe* 2. ANF 5, p. 222. Cf. Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 2.33.5. ANF 1, pp. 410-411. *Fragments of lost writings* 12. ANF 1, p. 570. Ambrose. *On belief in the resurrection* 2.65. NPNF 2/10, p. 184.

¹⁵⁸ For instance Hippolytus criticises Pythagoras for saying “that the soul is immortal, and that it subsists in successive bodies.” He also attacks Empedocles, who held that souls transmigrate into animal bodies. *Refutation of all Heresies* 1.2-3. ANF 5, pp. 12-13. See the discussion of the influence of this doctrine on Origen. Ugo Bianchi. “Origen’s treatment of the soul and the debate over metempsychosis.” In: **Origeniana Quarta**, pp. 270-281.

¹⁵⁹ The same argument holds today with reference to the views of New Age thinkers who assert reincarnation while denying resurrection. See Vishal Mangalwadi. “The reincarnation of the soul.” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 15 (1991) 2:135-147.

¹⁶⁰ Tertullian. *Apology* 23. ANF 3, p. 38.

¹⁶¹ As Lynn Boliek comments, “...the article *the resurrection of the flesh* was a confession of the church to a ‘whole’ resurrection. It was a rejection of a pessimistic view of the world which would eliminate some aspect of man from salvation.” **The resurrection of the flesh**, p. 24.

¹⁶² Agathangelos. *History of the Armenians*. Appendix, 20. R W Thomson, p. 433.

resurrection of the dead have been made with reference to the Article 'In the resurrection of the flesh.'¹⁶³ However, there is apparently dogmatic significance in what appears to have been a preference for the phrase "the resurrection of the flesh" [*carnis resurrectionem*]. Holland argues that the phrase *mortuorum resurrectionem* would have been more appropriate, as with the use of *anastasis nekron* in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. But this peculiar phrase is obviously polemical, as Marcion and the Gnostics would be unable to confess the resurrection of the "flesh" because of their dualistic theologies, and so this phrase reflects the struggle against the Gnostics.¹⁶⁴ But as Waszink argues, one of the problems of this formulation was that it does not reflect the terminology used in Scripture, and so writers such as Tertullian resorted to allegorical interpretations which he maintained refer to the resurrection. Waszink cites a passage from Tertullian's *On the resurrection of the flesh* where he deals with this issue.

So if allegorical passages and significant actions and simple language throw light on the resurrection of the flesh (even though the topic itself is not mentioned), how much more determinative... are those which actually mention it?¹⁶⁵

Waszink states that Tertullian thought that the image of garments in Scripture [e.g. Matthew 22:11 and Revelation 3:5] may be interpreted allegorically as indications of the resurrection.¹⁶⁶ While Tertullian was not opposed to allegory as such, he objected to any hermeneutical approach which diminished the reality of the resurrection body, and rejected any attempt to interpret the resurrection of the flesh allegorically.¹⁶⁷

3.5.1 Reconstitution of the body in the resurrection

Since the resurrection body would retain its identity with the body in this life, the reconstitution of the body which had disintegrated in death was a problem. Would the very same particles of matter be used to form that new body? If not, wherein lay the identity? In this connection, we find in a number of Patristic writers consideration of

¹⁶³ Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.22. NPNF 2/7, p. 139.

¹⁶⁴ D L Holland. "The Third Article of the Creed. A Study in Second and Third Century Theology." *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975) 196-197. Holland cites Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian in connection with the polemics against heresy.

¹⁶⁵ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 29. Translation cited by: J H Waszink. "Tertullian's principles and methods of exegesis." In: **Early Christian literature and the classical intellectual tradition**, p. 29.

¹⁶⁶ J H Waszink. "Tertullian's principles and methods of exegesis." In: **Early Christian literature and the classical intellectual tradition**, p. 29. Passages in which Tertullian gives such a interpretation of the body as a garment in the resurrection include: *On the resurrection of the flesh* 41-42. ANF 3, pp. 575-576; *ibid.*, 52. ANF 3, p. 585. He speaks also here if immortality as a garment placed over the body at the resurrection. T P O'Malley comments that "the resurrection is one of the main contexts in which clothing imagery is employed by Tertullian." **Tertullian and the Bible**, p. 89.

¹⁶⁷ G M Newlands. **Hilary of Poitiers: A Study in Theological Method**, p. 37, n. 31.

the problem of “chain consumption.”¹⁶⁸ Athenagoras is the first to discuss it in detail and provide a theoretical solution.¹⁶⁹

One stimulus to discussing this problem is the charge that Christians engaged in cannibalism. However, Athenagoras argues from an ethical viewpoint, that someone who believed in the resurrection of the body would never stoop to eating another human body.

What man who believes in a resurrection would offer himself as a tomb for bodies destined to rise? For it is impossible at the one and the same time to believe that our bodies will arise and then eat them as though they will not arise, or to think that the earth will yield up its dead and then suppose that those whom a man had buried within himself will not reclaim their bodies.¹⁷⁰

Athenagoras also refers to the physiological view that only the natural food of an animal can be digested by it, so therefore cannibalism does not result in that flesh becoming part of the animal.¹⁷¹ For Athenagoras this is correlated with his ethical views, since on both grounds human flesh is not the **proper** food of human beings. The particles ingested will not form part of a second body, only part of its blood, phlegm and bile, and so there will be no problem with the resurrection, as blood, phlegm and bile will not belong to risen bodies.¹⁷² However, Grant comments concerning this theory of digestion espoused by Athenagoras that “it was not regarded as true even in antiquity.”¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ This problem has been popularised in the song *On Ilkla Moor baht 'at*. “Where 'as tha been sin' I saw thee? On Ilkla Moor baht 'at. / Tha's bin a-coortin' Mary Jane / Tha'll go and get thi death o'cowld / Then we shall ha' to bury thee / Then t'worms'll come an' ate thee oop / Then t'ducks'll come an' ate oop t'worms / Then we shall go an' ate oop t'ducks / Then we shall all 'ave etten thee / That's where we gets our oahn back.”

¹⁶⁹ Grant has argued that the first treatment of this problem is found in Origen's *Commentary* on Psalm 1, based on his thesis that the treatise *On the resurrection of the dead* is a refutation of Origen by someone other than Athenagoras. R M Grant. “Athenagoras or Pseudo-Athenagoras.” *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954) 124. Grant is supported in his view by J Daniélou. **A History of Early Christian Doctrine**, Vol. 2, p. 26, n. 41, and W R Schoedel. **Athenagoras**. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. xxvi-xxxii. H E Lona. “Bemerkungen zu Athenagoras und Pseudo-Athenagoras.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988) 352-363. I do not accept their arguments, for reasons to be discussed below.

¹⁷⁰ Athenagoras. *A Plea for Christians* 36.1. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 85. Cf. the argument of Salvian, who says that the accusations of the Romans against the Christians showed their falsity, since the crimes they were supposed to commit in the name of Christ were in direct contrast with that which Christ desires of us. These crimes were “to win the right to eternal life, as if indeed, even supposing it could be won by such actions, it were worth while to attain it by such atrocious crimes!” *On the government of God* 4.17. E M Sanford, p. 128.

¹⁷¹ Athenagoras. *On the resurrection of the dead* 6.1-5. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 101, 103. Cf. the views of Theophilus of Antioch on digestion as a work of God's power. *To Autolycus* 1.13. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 19.

¹⁷² Athenagoras. *Concerning the resurrection of the dead* 7.1. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 105.

¹⁷³ R M Grant. **Miracle and natural law in Graeco-Roman and early Christian thought**, p. 100.

The problem of the resurrection of bodies which had been eaten by other creatures was an enduring one (even if the problem of cannibalism itself was only short-lived), and it appears again in instrumentalist writers hundreds of years later.¹⁷⁴

3.5.2 Transformation of the body in the resurrection

The Patristic writers held that the saints will be raised in glorious bodies, to receive their rewards and share in the eternal kingdom with Christ. The resurrection is not simply resuscitation, it is also transformation. Not only will the persons raised be made immortal and incorruptible; they will also be made whole and healthy. Justin Martyr says:

...even if any one be labouring under a defect of body, yet be an observer of the doctrines delivered by Him, He shall raise him up at His second advent perfectly sound, after He has made him immortal, and incorruptible, and free from grief.¹⁷⁵

Tertullian taught that the resurrection body of the saints is changed into glory. The present body of humiliation will be transformed and rendered immortal, after which we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air [1 Thessalonians 4:13-17].¹⁷⁶ It was an expression of confidence and faith in God to anticipate this eschatological transformation, which for many was seen as the special work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁷

Following the explicit teaching of Scripture [e.g. 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4], it is a commonplace in Patristic thought that the resurrection body of the righteous will be immortal and incorruptible. However, the Scriptures do not deal explicitly with the nature of the resurrection bodies of the wicked. So too the fate of the wicked is not the first concern of the Patristic writers; rather they concentrate on the rewards

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter 6.6.1. The reconstitution of the body.

¹⁷⁵ Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho* 69. ANF 1, p. 233.

¹⁷⁶ Tertullian. *Against Marcion* 5.20. ANF 3, p. 473.

¹⁷⁷ Irenaeus. *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 42. ACW 16, p. 74. Theodore of Mopsuestia. *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* 1. *Woodbrooke Studies* 6 (1933) 7; *ibid.* 4, p. 54. Theodore correlates eschatological life with the present when he says that "It is the Spirit who is the source of the immortal life which awaits us hereafter as well as of our spiritual life here." *Commentary on Romans* 8.2. Cited in: H B Swete. *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, p. 261. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* [20. R H Connolly, p. 170] cites *Isaiah* 26:19 and associates the idea of the "dew" with the work of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection, an idea found in a number of Patristic writers, for example: Clement of Alexandria. "For the field is the world, and we who are bedewed by the grace of God are the grass; and though cut down, we spring up again, as will be shown at greater length in the book *On the Resurrection*." *The Instructor* 2.11. ANF 2, p. 264 [unfortunately this book *On the Resurrection* has not survived]. Ephrem of Syria. "The bones of the dead who are in Sheol now drink the dew of life when they are named, being remembered before God at this moment [the Eucharist]." *Armenian Hymns* 49.16. *Harp of the Spirit*, p. 82. Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 648. R W Thomson, p. 160. Niceta of Remesiana. "What the rains do for the seed, the dew of the Spirit does for the body that is to be raised to life." *An explanation of the Creed* 12. FC 7, p. 52.

for the faithful believer.¹⁷⁸ This can be seen from Chrysostom, who says that the ungodly have a part in the common resurrection, but will not share the fate of the righteous. The words of Jesus that all who believe in him will be saved [John 6:37] Chrysostom interprets as said “for the sake of them that are saved.” He understands John 6:40 to include the unbelievers in a “common resurrection,” even though here Jesus speaks of it “as though it were the peculiar gift of those who believe on Him” because Jesus is stressing here the reward of the righteous, namely the resurrection of life [John 5:29].¹⁷⁹ Ambrose also says, in a similar vein, that “...it is better to know how the guiltless are saved than how sinners are tormented.”¹⁸⁰

However, some Patristic writers do comment on the resurrection of the wicked. Many considered that the resurrection body of the righteous was transformed while that of the wicked was merely revived without being changed, retaining the disfigurements and disabilities of this life, reflecting their spiritual state.¹⁸¹ Hippolytus believes that at the resurrection the unrighteous will have their present bodies returned to them, still suffering from the effects of disease and with all the deformities which they had in this life, while those of the saints will be free of these things.

But the unrighteous will receive their bodies unchanged, and unransomed from suffering and disease, and unglorified, and still with all the ills in which they died. And whatever manner of persons they (were when they) lived without faith, as such shall they be faithfully judged.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Similarly both Jesus and Paul do not always mention the resurrection and judgement of the wicked when they are discussing the future rewards of the righteous. For instance, when in Luke 14:14 Jesus speaks of the rewards to be distributed at the “resurrection of the righteous” this does not necessarily imply that only the righteous will be raised. Since the wicked will not be rewarded it was not necessary to mention them in this passage. Cf. N Geldenhuys. **Commentary on the Gospel of Luke**, p. 391, citing Theodore Zahn. **Das Evangelium des Lucas**. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, for instance, we find reference only to the resurrection of the believers. It is not to be concluded therefore that there is no resurrection for the wicked, since the intention is to encourage the believers who are losing heart, and it would be inappropriate in such passages to discuss the fate of the unbelievers. In passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:10 Paul is not denying the judgement of the unbelievers, but concentrating on his pastoral concern to instruct the Christians as to the need to live righteously. Paul mentions the judgement of the wicked elsewhere. Cf. Stephen H Travis. **Christ and the judgement of God**, p. 31. Adrio König comments: “So if certain matters are not mentioned in each section (if, e.g., the resurrection of unbelievers is not mentioned in 1 Cor. 15), it is illegitimate to conclude that it will happen as a separate event. It is not mentioned at a particular point simply because it is not at issue. The Bible is not a systematic handbook which deals fully with each matter in turn.” **The eclipse of Christ in eschatology**, p. 205. Cf. Simon Tugwell. **Human immortality and the redemption of death**, pp. 120-121.

¹⁷⁹ John Chrysostom. *Homilies on John* 45.2. NPNF 1/14, p. 161.

¹⁸⁰ Ambrose. *Death as a good* 10.48. FC 65, p. 106.

¹⁸¹ Aphrahat. *Demonstrations* 8.4-5. NPNF 2/13, p. 376. Augustine. *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 92. NPNF 1/3, p. 266.

¹⁸² Hippolytus. *Against Plato, On the Cause of the Universe* 2. ANF 5, p. 222. Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, who holds that sinners will rise unchanged, and “will remain in their dishonourable form, simply in order to be punished.” [*In 1 Corinthians* 15.51]. Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 110.

In a work ascribed to Hippolytus (but considered dubious), influenced by Daniel 12:2, we find an idea that will recur throughout the Patristic period: that the wicked will be raised in dark bodies, in contrast to the shining bodies of the righteous.

Then the righteous shall shine forth like the sun, while the wicked shall be shown to be mute and gloomy. For both the righteous and the wicked shall be raised incorruptible: the righteous, to be honoured eternally, and to taste immortal joys; and the wicked, to be punished in judgement eternally.¹⁸³

The *Didascalia* testifies to an early Patristic interpretation in maintaining that the wicked would be raised to see the glory of the righteous before themselves perishing. It quotes from the *Sibylline Oracles* where it deals with the destruction of the world by fire, and the resurrection, in which it is specified that the wicked would be raised but then after the judgement they will be returned to the earth in punishment.¹⁸⁴

3.5.3 The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:51

One passage which played a part in determining that while all are resurrected, not all are glorified and transformed, is 1 Corinthians 15:51, a passage which teaches the transformation of the body, but it is not at all clear as to whom this applies. This confusion is caused in part by the textual variants, which results in peculiar problems in interpretation. The reading commonly adopted in the Western church can be found in modern translations such as the NIV: *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.* This appears to mean that when Christ returns, the bodies of believers who are still alive will be transformed without passing through death, while those who have died will also be changed: they in no way miss out (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).¹⁸⁵ The variant readings of the text which provide the occasion for different interpretations in Patristic writings,¹⁸⁶ are as follows:

- a) *We will all sleep, but we will not all be changed.* That is, everyone will die, but while everyone will be raised, only believers will be transformed.
- b) *We will not all sleep, and we will not all be changed.* That is, not everyone will die, nor will everyone be transformed.
- c) *We will all be raised, but we will not all be changed.* That is, only believers will be transformed.

¹⁸³ Hippolytus (dubious). *A discourse on the end of the world, and on Antichrist, and on the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* 39. ANF 5, p. 252.

¹⁸⁴ *Sibylline Oracles* 4.179-185, 187, 198-190. Cited in: *Didascalia Apostolorum* 20. R H Connolly, p. 172. It is thought that this passage of the *Oracles* is alluded to by Justin Martyr in his *Apology* 20. R H Connolly, p. lxxix.

¹⁸⁵ Gordon Fee. **The First Epistle to the Corinthians**, p. 796. Fee prefers the first textual variation as original with the others being derivative, and interprets 1 Corinthians 15:51 to refer solely to believers, and therefore he accepts that all bodies will be transformed at the resurrection. *Ibid.*, p. 801.

¹⁸⁶ See **The Greek New Testament**. Ed. K Aland et al. *Nouum Testamentum Domine Nostri Iesu Christi Latine*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913-1941. Vol. 2, p. 272.

Thus the debate hinges around whether Paul is referring only to the resurrection of believers in this verse, or discussing the contrasting fates of believers and non-believers. The antiquity of the problem of the state of the text, and thus its interpretation, can be seen in the discussion of the subject by various Patristic authors, for instance Rufinus and Augustine. Rufinus quotes two of the variant readings, and refers to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, as if this clears up the confusion.¹⁸⁷ Augustine also quotes two variants of 1 Corinthians 15:51 and proposes a harmonisation of the texts.

We shall all rise, or, as other manuscripts read, *we shall all sleep*. Since, then, there can be no resurrection unless death has preceded, and since we can in this passage understand by sleep nothing else than death, how shall **all** either sleep or rise again if so many persons whom Christ shall find in the body shall neither sleep nor rise again? If, then, we believe that the saints who shall be found alive at Christ's coming, and shall be caught up to meet him, shall in that same ascent pass from mortal to immortal bodies, we shall find no difficulty in the words of the apostle either when he says, *That which you sow is not quickened, unless it dies*, or when he says, *We shall all rise, or all sleep*, for not even the saints shall be quickened to immortality unless they first die, however briefly; and consequently they shall not be exempt from resurrection which is preceded by sleep, however brief.¹⁸⁸

The solution propounded by Augustine, who like Rufinus refers to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 to clarify the issue, is that all shall die, even if only momentarily, before being instantly raised immortal and taken up to meet the Lord in the air.¹⁸⁹ This view was earlier stated by Tertullian, who used the third variant, *We will all be raised, but we will not all be changed*. He argues that we shall all rise, since those who are still alive at the return of the Lord will undergo an instantaneous death,¹⁹⁰ but not all who rise will be changed, that is, only believers will be glorified and will “assume the condition of angels.”¹⁹¹ The state of the text is also discussed by Jerome:

¹⁸⁷ Rufinus. *A Commentary on the Apostle's Creed* 43. ACW 20, p. 82.

¹⁸⁸ Augustine. *The City of God* 20.20. NPNF 1/2, p. 439.

¹⁸⁹ Elsewhere Augustine suggests that the reading “we shall all sleep” makes it easier to understand the phrase “we shall all rise again” since there is no resurrection without there first being a death. He cites 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 to demonstrate his view that “every other similar passage found in holy Writ seems to force us to conclude that no man will attain immortality without first passing through death.” He thinks that the fact that “the Lord will come to judge the living and the dead” means that some may still be in the body, so that the need to pass through death before being raised requires an interpretation “consistent with this view which holds that some will enter into eternal life in their bodies without first tasting death.” *Letter* 193. FC 30, pp. 298-300.

¹⁹⁰ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 41. ANF 3, p. 575. *Against Marcion* 5.12. ANF 3, p. 455. Whether this is an acceptable solution cannot be discussed here, although it can be admitted that it is ingenious! This idea was still in use in Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I.II, q. 81, a. 3 ad. 1. Simon Tugwell. **Human immortality and the redemption of death**, p. 107.

¹⁹¹ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 42. ANF 3, p. 575.

Therefore we will all rise, but we will not all be changed. Everyone will rise, but only those who are to reign in glory will be changed. Or alternatively thus, we will all rise, who will be found dead at the advent of Christ. We will not all be changed, who are [still] found in the body: because only the saints will attain to the blessedness of glory. It is preserved otherwise in some Greek books: *For we will all sleep, but we will not all be changed*, which suits more the meaning of the Apostle: because this word is not spoken of everyone generally, but only of the saints.¹⁹²

Hilary interprets the resurrection to mean a change for the righteous but not for the wicked, since they have their original bodies returned to them for the purpose of punishment. Because Hilary sees the present body as one of humiliation and shame, to be raised again in that body is the reason for the contempt and shame which comes upon the wicked, as they are “unworthy to be conformed to his glory and resurrection.”¹⁹³

This is very different from the interpretation given by Peter of Alexandria, who understands 1 Corinthians 15:51 to mean that because we are all changed, the resurrection of the wicked means a change for them as well: it is not enough for them to rise again in their present bodies, they must be given bodies which are different from those of the saints, and thereby they are given a shameful resurrection.

Therefore, by this phrase (*we shall all be changed* [1 Cor. 15:51]), we mean this: when indeed *we shall all arise* together, we shall again wear the appropriate aspects of the body, good or bad, according to the way we lived. *We shall be changed* signifies one thing: that we are perfected in glory and honor, and thus pass over strong and powerful so that the body can sustain the splendour of the air since each person will be led to immortality and incorruptibility.¹⁹⁴

Thus he holds that the body will reflect the reward or punishment of which it is worthy. A similar view is found in the works of John Chrysostom, who believes that all not only rise, but are given incorruption; but this is not the same for all, since some are given incorruption for honour, but others for punishment. Chrysostom cites 1 Corinthians 15:22 and says: “For the resurrection indeed is common to all, but the

¹⁹² Jerome. *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 15:51. PL 30, 770. Jerome also discussed this passage in his *Letter* 119.2-7, to Minervius and Alexander. PL 22, 967-973. Cf. Eucherius, who says: “That is, not everyone will be changed in glory, because while the resurrection and incorruption are common for all, however the change to glory is proper only for the just.” *Instructiones*. PL 50, 806.

¹⁹³ Hilary of Poitiers. *Homily on Psalm* 52.17. PL 9, 334C. In another place he says that while all will rise from the dead, “the glory and honour of rising is not, however, awaiting all indifferently.” *Commentary on Psalm* 55.7. Translation cited from: Brian E Daley. *The hope of the early Church*, p. 95. Cf. John of Damascus. “That is, wickedness [will not attain to] that glory and the enjoyment of imperishable things.” *On 1 Corinthians* 15:51. PG 95, 700B.

¹⁹⁴ Peter of Alexandria. *On the resurrection* [Fragment IV.5]. In: T Vivian. *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr*, p. 134. Vivian argues that there is no evidence from any of the surviving undoubtedly authentic fragments that Peter was an anti-Origenist, as has traditionally been held. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

glory is not common; but some shall rise in honor and others in dishonor, and some to a kingdom but others to punishment.”¹⁹⁵ The transformation of the saints in the resurrection he explains in connection with 1 Corinthians 15:51.

If by any means, he says, *I may attain to the resurrection of the dead*. What do you say? All men will have a share in that. *For we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed* [1 Corinthians 15:51], and shall all share not only in the resurrection, but in incorruption. Some indeed to honor, but others as a means of punishment. If therefore all have a share in the resurrection, and not in the resurrection only, but also in incorruption, how does he say, *If by any means I may attain*, as if about to share in some especial thing? *For this cause*, said he, *I endure these things, if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead...* What resurrection does he mention here? That which leads to Christ himself.¹⁹⁶

Just as Chrysostom says that the change in the resurrection for the believers brings them into conformity with Christ, so Augustine also says that the saints rise the same way that Christ rose, so that we can follow him. The wicked rise also, but not in the same way as Christ.

For all indeed shall rise, but not as His beloved [Christ]. There is a resurrection of all the dead; but what says the apostle? *We shall all rise, but we shall not all be changed*. They rise unto punishment: we rise as our Lord rose, that we may follow our Head, if we are members of Him.¹⁹⁷

Fulgence of Ruspe believes that the transformation of the bodies of the righteous will be denied the wicked who will be resurrected in the body, but in order to be tormented in both body and soul for eternity. The wicked will be raised but not transformed, citing the version *We shall all indeed rise, but we shall not all be changed*. But he mentions that Paul goes on to say *And we shall be changed*. This the righteous will be transformed but the wicked will not, but rather their bodies will be raised with “the corruption, shame and weakness in which they were sown.” The resulting punishment for the wicked will be a “never-ending torment to body and soul” that is “eternal death.”¹⁹⁸

Grant identifies a passage in Athenagoras' *Apology* (31) as an allusion to 1 Corinthians 15:51 on the basis of the use of the word “changed” (*allagesometha*), a

¹⁹⁵ John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Second Corinthians* 10.2. NPNF 1/12, p. 327. Cf. Maximus the Confessor, who says that through Christ we all have “the hope of resurrection, though each individual makes himself fit either for glory or for punishment.” *Four centuries on charity* 1.71. ACW 21, p. 147.

¹⁹⁶ John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Philippians* 11. NPNF 1/13, p. 236.

¹⁹⁷ Augustine. *On the Psalms* 127.4. NPNF 1/8, p. 607.

¹⁹⁸ Fulgence of Ruspe. *The Rule of Faith* 37. Cited in: W A Jurgens. **The Faith of the Early Fathers**. Vol. 3, p. 296. Cf. Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 651. R W Thomson, p. 162.

view repeated by Barnard.¹⁹⁹ Grant translates the relevant passage thus: “We believe that being 'changed' (1 Cor. 15:51) from this life we shall live another life better than this one...”²⁰⁰ However Schoedel translates the passage differently. “...and since we are persuaded that when we depart this present life we shall live another life better than that here...”²⁰¹ The Greek underlying his text is *apallagentes* [root *apallassoo*], “to be free from or released from,” not *allagesometha* [root *allassoo*], “to be changed,” which is the term used in reference to the resurrection in the NT only in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.²⁰² There is thus no necessary connection with 1 Corinthians 15:51 in this passage in Athenagoras.²⁰³

3.5.4 The wicked made immortal in order to suffer

It was held by a number of Patristic writers that the fire of punishment both consumes and restores the bodies of the wicked, thereby making them immortal to continue to suffer forever. This horrible idea seems to originate with pagan myths rather than any necessary or implied Christian teaching, a view which is confirmed from the correlation of the idea by Lactantius with the myth of Tityus, whose liver was daily consumed by an eagle and yet grew again to be once more consumed.²⁰⁴

Justin is one of the first to make a clear distinction between the resurrection of the just, who are transformed and glorified, and the resurrection of the wicked, who are not endowed with glory but are made immortal with the ability to feel their punishment.²⁰⁵ This idea is also found in Rufinus, who cites Daniel 12:2 in this connection.

But sinners too, as I explained above, will have the state of incorruption and immortality granted to them at the resurrection. As God bestows this state on the just with a view to their everlasting glory, so He will bestow it upon sinners so as to prolong their confusion and punishment. That prophetic utterance to which I referred a few moments ago made this perfectly clear in the words: *And many shall rise again from the dust of the earth: some to everlasting life, but others to confusion and everlasting reproach.*²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁹ L W Barnard. “The authenticity of Athenagoras' De Resurrectione.” *Studia Patristica* 15 (1984) 40.

²⁰⁰ R M Grant. “Athenagoras or Pseudo-Athenagoras.” *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954) 122.

²⁰¹ W R Schoedel. **Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione**. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 77.

²⁰² This root is not listed in G W H Lampe. **A Patristic Greek Lexicon**, so it appears not to have been used by Patristic writers.

²⁰³ See also the discussion in Chapter 8.2.1 concerning whether Athenagoras uses 1 Corinthians 15:51 in *Concerning the resurrection of the dead*.

²⁰⁴ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.21. ANF 7, p. 217.

²⁰⁵ Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 52. ANF 1, p. 180. *Dialogue with Trypho* 117. ANF 1, p. 257; *Dialogue with Trypho* 130. ANF 1, pp. 264-265.

²⁰⁶ Rufinus. *Commentary on the Apostle's Creed* 47. ACW 20, pp. 85-86. Cf. also *Commentary on the Apostle's Creed* 45. ACW 20, p. 84, where he says that the bodies of the wicked will be

Cyril of Jerusalem emphasises the transformation of the bodies of believers in the resurrection, while the bodies of the unbelieving will not be transformed but raised in bodies fitted for punishment. He bases this idea on Daniel 12:2 which speaks of the contrast between the two groups in the resurrection.

But though to rise again is common to all men, yet the resurrection is not alike for all: for the bodies received by us all are eternal, but not like bodies for all: for the just receive them, that through eternity they may join the Choirs of angels; but the sinners, that they may endure for ever the torment of their sins.²⁰⁷

The resurrection body for both righteous and wicked will be immortal, but that of the righteous will be glorious, while the body of the wicked will be destined for punishment and shame.

We shall be raised therefore, all with our bodies eternal, but not all bodies alike: for if a man is righteous, he will receive a heavenly body, that he may be able worthily to hold converse with Angels; but if a man is a sinner, he shall receive an eternal body, fitted to endure the penalties of sins, that he may burn eternally in fire, nor ever be consumed. And righteously will God assign this portion to either company; for we do nothing without the body... Since then the body has been our minister in all things, it shall also share with us in the future the fruits of the past.²⁰⁸

Augustine insists that the wicked rise in the body, not to a glorious resurrection, but to a resurrection for punishment. The righteous will on the other hand receive eternal life.

made immortal to endure their eternal punishment. This idea is found in many others, for instance Minucius Felix. *Octavius* 35. ANF 4, p. 195. Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.21. ANF 7, p. 217. Agathangelos. *History of the Armenians* 65. R W Thomson, p. 75. In Justin's *Dialogue*, the old man, who does not think the soul is immortal, comments that the souls of the wicked "are punished so long as God wills them to exist and to be punished." *Dialogue with Trypho* 5. ANF 1, p. 197.

²⁰⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 4.31. NPNF 2/7, p. 26. Cf. also *Catechetical Lectures* 18.29-30. NPNF 2/7, p. 141. Cyril argues that the Scriptures speak of the "multitudes that will be raised," not to limit the number, but because it was so great it could not be expressed exactly. *Catechetical Lectures* 15.24. NPNF 2/7, pp. 111-112. He thus sees this passage to speak of a general resurrection of all the dead. The translation "multitudes" is preferable to "many," since it speaks not of the proportion of the dead who are raised (while some are not raised), but rather of the great number of the dead, who are all raised, that is in view. This interpretation is found in the way this passage is cited in John 5:28, which says that "all" shall be raised, as well as in Patristic texts. "Neither is it to be supposed a difference, though in place of the expression in the Gospel, 'All who are in their graves,' the prophet does not say 'all,' but 'many of them that sleep in the mound of earth.' For *many* is sometimes used in Scripture for *all*." Augustine. *The City of God* 20.23. NPNF 1/2, p. 443. See also Cassiodorus. *Explanation of the Psalms* 95.13. ACW 52, pp. 422-423.

²⁰⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.19. NPNF 2/7, p. 139. Cf. Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 35. ANF 3, p. 571. Ambrosiaster. *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 15:51. PL 17, 285-286.

Now he whose soul does not die to this world and begin here to be conformed to the truth, falls when the body dies into a more terrible death, and shall revive, not to change his earthly for a heavenly habitation, but to endure the penalty of his sin. And so faith clings to the assurance, and we must believe that it is so in fact, that neither the human soul nor the human body suffers complete extinction, but that the wicked rise again to endure inconceivable punishment, and the good to receive eternal life.²⁰⁹

Augustine stressed that the wicked will wish to die but will be unable to do so, in spite of their sufferings.

The former shall have no will, the latter no power, to sin, and neither shall have any power to choose death; but the former shall live truly and happily in eternal life, the latter shall drag a miserable existence in eternal death without the power of dying; for both shall be without end.²¹⁰

We find these ideas in the earliest of John Chrysostom's works, a letter to Theodore (later bishop of Mopsuestia), who had abandoned the ascetic life and was contemplating marriage. Chrysostom says that the bodies of the wicked will be made immortal and inconsumable so as to be able to be punished eternally.²¹¹ Chrysostom repeats this idea in a later work, stressing that the wicked also have a part in the resurrection, since some of those who are raised are cast out and some are destroyed in hell [Matthew 10:28 and 22:13, John 5:29].²¹² Chrysostom stressed that while everybody would be resurrected and therefore receive "life," that life is not the same for all, since the life that is important is life in immortality and incorruption, a life which is not shared by the wicked, even though they live. He uses this to distinguish the resurrection of the wicked from that of the saints, a resurrection which carried with it a reward in the very nature of the resurrection body.

²⁰⁹ Augustine. *On Christian doctrine* 20-21. NPNF 1/2, p. 527.

²¹⁰ Augustine. *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 111. NPNF 1/3, p. 273. Cf. *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 92-93. NPNF 1/3, pp. 266-267. Cf. Paulinus of Nola who says that the wicked rise again "in immortality not of glory but of punishment." *Letter* 40.11-12. ACW 36, p. 216.

²¹¹ John Chrysostom. *To the fallen Theodore* 1.10. NPNF 1/9, pp. 98-99.

²¹² John Chrysostom. *Homilies on St. John* 45.2. NPNF 1/14, p. 161. While many authors spoke of the bodies of the wicked being made immortal for enduring eternal punishment, Prudentius transforms the whole theme on the basis of the immortality of the soul, and says that the punishments of the soul also sustain it in order to enable it to endure these sufferings eternally. The soul polluted with sin cannot return to heaven, but must be tormented in punishment. God gave "deathless endurance" to the worms and the flames, so the punishment of the immortal soul should never cease. The concept of hell in the works of Prudentius appears to owe more to Greek myth than to Scripture, as he describes it as Tartarus, Avernus and Phlegethon's gulf. He uses the idea of immortal worms and fire which appears to come from Isaiah 66:24, but otherwise his imagery is of pagan origin. Prudentius thus changes the content of this idea, while retaining its form. Prudentius. *Hamartigenia* 829-840. Loeb I, p. 263. Cf. also *A reply to the address of Symmachus* 2.184-221. Loeb II, pp. 21, 23.

And the “life” of which he speaks is not life merely, but the excellent life, for that he spoke not simply of life, but of that glorious and ineffable life, is clear from this. For all men “live,” even unbelievers, and uninitiated, who do not eat of that flesh. Do you see that the words do not relate to this life, but to that other? And what he said is of this kind: *He that eats my flesh, when he dies shall not perish or suffer punishment.* He did not speak of the general resurrection (for all alike rise again), but concerning the special, the glorious resurrection, that which has a reward.²¹³

He thus makes a distinction, as do many other Patristic writers, between the wicked and the righteous in terms of whether they receive glory or disgrace. This is the only distinction it is valid to make in terms of the Scriptures, as there it is stated that all will be raised, but not all will receive glory.

One of the problems which is presented by the idea that at the resurrection each person's body is either transformed or left unchanged is that the fate of those who are yet to be judged appears to have been pre-empted by this difference. The decision which has apparently yet to be made can be discerned from the kind of body which is given in the resurrection.²¹⁴ In the *Teaching of Addaeus the Apostle*, the distinction of the two groups as revealed in their differing resurrection states is clearly made.

For the purpose of the Lord's coming into the world assuredly was, that He might teach us and show us that at the consummation of the creation there will be a resuscitation of all men, and at that time their course of conduct will be portrayed in their persons, and their bodies will be volumes for the writings of justice; nor will anyone be there who is unacquainted with books, because every one will read that which is written in His own book.²¹⁵

Similarly, the *Apocriticus* of Macarius Magnes mentions the resurrection “suitable to each” which seems to be a reference to the different rewards which each receives in the judgement.²¹⁶ This is confirmed by a further comment he makes on the nature of the resurrection.

²¹³ John Chrysostom. *Homilies on John* 47.1. NPNF 1/14, p. 168. He repeats this idea elsewhere: “Since his discourse is not concerning the resurrection only, but both concerning the resurrection and concerning the honour in glory; all then shall partake of a resurrection, he says, but not all shall be in glory, only those in Christ.” *Homilies on Thessalonians* 7. NPNF 1/13, p. 353. Cf. John of Damascus. “...have the spirit, and you will be raised. What then? Do those who do not have it not rise? Yes, he says; but not to life. For this reason he did not say, he will raise, but he will give life, which is more than resurrection, and has been given only to the righteous.” *On the Epistle to the Romans* 8:11. PG 95, 501C.

²¹⁴ Bernhard Lang discusses this issue in connection with the *Apocalypse of Baruch* 50.2, which states that the resurrection is a restoration of the body possessed in this life, which is transformed into glory or disfigurement in accordance with the sentence passed at the judgement. “No sex in heaven: the logic of procreation, death and eternal life in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.” In: **Melanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M Mathias Delchor**, p. 241.

²¹⁵ *The Teaching of Addaeus the Apostle*. ANF 8, p. 658.

²¹⁶ Macarius Magnes. *Apocriticus* 4.30. Translations of Christian Literature, p. 158.

And even if it is as you say, and Priam or Nestor died a thousand years ago, while some other man may die three days before the resurrection, none of them when he rises again will feel either measureless grief or abundance of joy therefrom, but each of them will receive what is suitable to him in accordance to his own deeds, and he will not have either praise or blame for the arrangement of the resurrection, neither for its speediness nor again for its tardiness, but it will be his own manner of life that he will either delight in or find fault with.²¹⁷

Here Macarius states that in the resurrection what each one receives is entirely consistent with their former manner of life. Another Macarius, of Egypt, states that in this present life the soul conceals the state of the individual, but in the eschatological life this state will be manifest to all through the nature of the body in which they are resurrected: that of the saints will be as light, while that of the wicked will be darkness. The providence of God is thus seen as the sinners and the saints are already distinguished in this life, even though the distinction is not yet apparent to us.

For the world is divided into two parts. One flock of sheep is of darkness and this group departs into inextinguishable and eternal fire. But the other flock is full of light and this is led into the heavenly inheritance. That which, therefore, we now possess in our souls, that same then will shine in splendour and will be manifested and will clothe our bodies with glory. Just as in the month of April the roots that have been covered with soil now put forth their own fruits, their flowers and beauties and they will bring forth fruit. The good roots become manifest as well as those that have thorns. Likewise in that day of judgement everyone shows openly what he has done in his body.²¹⁸

According to Cyril of Jerusalem, the nature of the judgement is evident already in the resurrection, as the heretics arise in bodies which parallel their rebellion. He is perhaps implicitly attacking the idea of the heretics that the body is only a garment,²¹⁹ when he says that they shall rise in the body, and this shall be a garment of sins which will convict them of their misdeeds along with their conscience.²²⁰

The purpose of the judgement is therefore somewhat obscure, if the very resurrection body reveals what fate is due to each. However, it was also stressed by many Patristic writers that the judgement can only be passed on the body and the soul together. The resurrection therefore must precede the judgement, and unless a further transformation after the judgement is expected, it is hard to see how they could have avoided the idea that the decision of the judgement can be discerned already in the character of the resurrection body.

²¹⁷ Macarius Magnes. *Apocriticus* 4.30. Translations of Christian Literature, p. 158.

²¹⁸ Macarius of Egypt. *Homily* 12.13-14. **Intoxicated with God**, p. 87. Cf. also *Homily* 2.5. *Intoxicated with God*, p. 35.

²¹⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 18.20. NPNF 2/7, p. 139.

²²⁰ Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 15.25. NPNF 2/7, p. 112.

Lactantius holds that the judgement takes place **prior to** the resurrection, so that the problem of the nature of the resurrection body is dealt with by stating that after the judgement the righteous are raised, while the wicked are not raised but sent into punishment.²²¹ This is perhaps a unique variation on the theme of this study, found in no other Patristic writer.

Whether such a distinction makes the judgement a foregone conclusion is perhaps a matter of opinion, since there is considerable debate in Patristic thought as to the nature and purpose of the eschatological judgement. In some views at least a distinction in state before the judgement indicates the limited nature of the judgement, not that there is a pre-empting of the result of the judgement itself.

3.6 The first resurrection a bodily resurrection

For Irenaeus the allegorical approach to Scripture used by both the heretical Gnostics (e.g. Valentinians) and the Christian Gnostics (e.g. Clement of Alexandria and Origen) was tantamount to a denial of the resurrection of the flesh, since an “allegorical” resurrection was no resurrection at all. He thus insists that the “first resurrection” of Revelation 20:4 is a bodily resurrection.

For as it is God truly who raises up man, so also does man truly rise from the dead, and not allegorically, as I have shown repeatedly. And as he rises actually, so also shall he be actually disciplined beforehand for incorruption, and shall go forwards and flourish in the times of the kingdom, in order that he may be capable of receiving the glory of the Father. Then, when all things are made new, he shall truly dwell in the city of God.²²²

Irenaeus not only defended the doctrine of the resurrection as such, he also defended it against those who would “spiritualise” it and make it into something other than the resurrection of the **flesh**, which for him is intrinsically related to belief in the earthly reign of Christ and the vindication of his saints before those at whose hands they had suffered, and in the same place where they had suffered.²²³ Against the Gnostic dualism of the sinful flesh and the pure spirit, Irenaeus posits the “pure flesh” of the resurrection body, which will be raised incorruptible and sharing in the characteristics of the spirit.²²⁴ Irenaeus clearly associates the “real” resurrection with the millennial reign of Christ, while he rejects the “allegorical” or “spiritual” resurrection of the heretics. A “spiritualised” resurrection is a denatured resurrection, since it denies the connection between the Holy Spirit and the redemption of the flesh. For Irenaeus the spirit and the flesh are not in opposition: the conflict is between **sin** and the creation of God, including the flesh. Those who would deny the reality of the new earth and the redemption of the cosmos have difficulty in accepting the reality of the resurrection and the significance of the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

²²¹ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.21. ANF 7, p. 217.

²²² Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.35.2. ANF 1, p. 566.

²²³ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.32.1. ANF 1, p. 561.

²²⁴ Irenaeus. *Fragments of Lost Writings* 12. ANF 1, p. 570.

Victorinus distinguishes the first resurrection, that of the just who were to enter into glory, from the second, the resurrection of the wicked who were to be punished.²²⁵ He interprets Revelation 2:28, *And I will give to him the morning star*, as a reference to the first resurrection, since the morning star ends the night and announces the beginning of day.²²⁶ Following the return of Christ, all the living and dead are judged.²²⁷ Other Patristic writers to hold similar conceptions are Commodian, Hilarianus and Lactantius.²²⁸ Irenaeus says that the righteous shall be raised first and receive their glorified bodies, and then the wicked are raised unglorified in order to be judged.²²⁹

Tertullian mentions the first resurrection only once, significantly in the context of attacking the views of the heretics that there is a present “spiritual” resurrection. Any doctrine of a “spiritual resurrection” proves there is a bodily resurrection, since the spiritual resurrection is spoken of in terms of the resurrection of the body. The resurrection in the eschaton is not a spiritual one, but it is definitely a resurrection, and therefore must be a bodily resurrection.²³⁰

Tertullian attacks the hermeneutics of the heretics who interpret death and resurrection in what they claim is a “spiritual” sense, but who in fact misinterpret the clear teaching of Scripture. The Gnostic view that death is ignorance of God, and resurrection the coming to knowledge of God, undermines the meaning of Scripture which insists on the resurrection as the raising of the fleshly body.²³¹ Worse than that, they even “will go so far as to say that it actually means escaping out of the body itself, since they imagine that the body detains the soul, when it is shut up in the death of a worldly life, as in a grave.”²³² Tertullian counters these arguments by challenging the method used for the interpretation of Scripture, saying that not every passage of Scripture must be interpreted figuratively, and that the passages speaking of the

²²⁵ J Daniélou. **A History of Early Christian Doctrine**, Vol. 3, p. 124.

²²⁶ Victorinus of Pettau. *On the Apocalypse* 2.28. ANF 7, p. 347.

²²⁷ Victorinus of Pettau. *On the Apocalypse* 19.11. ANF 7, p. 358.

²²⁸ Commodian. *Instructions* 33. ANF 4, p. 209. *Instructions* 44. ANF 4, p. 212. *Instructions* 80. ANF 4, p. 218. Quintus Julius Hilarianus. *The progress of time* 18-19. [PL 13, 1105-1106] Translation in: B McGinn. *Visions of the End*, p. 53. Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.24. ANF 7, p. 219.

²²⁹ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 4.22.2. ANF 1, p. 494. While Lawson understands Irenaeus to mean that both good and wicked rise together at the beginning of the millennium to face the judgement [J Lawson. *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus*, p. 282], Wood says that there is no simultaneous resurrection in the views of Irenaeus, since the righteous are raised prior to the millennium, the wicked after it. [Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.27.1. ANF 1, p. 556.] A S Wood. “The eschatology of Irenaeus.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 41 (1969) 34.

²³⁰ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 25. ANF 3, p. 563. *Against Marcion* 5.10. ANF 3, p. 450.

²³¹ It is significant that the greatest impetus towards “spiritualising” the resurrection body from within Christianity came from the Alexandrians (principally Clement and Origen), who had adopted the idea of “gnosis” as foundational to their thought.

²³² Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 19. ANF 3, pp. 558-559.

resurrection will not sustain anything but a literal sense.²³³ Tertullian then argues that the prophecies of the resurrection speak of the other great events of the end time which must occur together with the resurrection, and since these have in no way happened, the resurrection is also still to come. It cannot then be a past event, or one which takes place immediately on coming to know the “truth” (of the heretical teaching) or when we leave this life.²³⁴ He then demonstrates that while Paul writing to the Colossians speaks of those who are spiritually dead, he also speaks of bodily death. Thus a spiritual resurrection to new life now does not preclude, indeed demands, a bodily resurrection which is yet to come.²³⁵

While the resurrection of the righteous was temporally distinct from the resurrection of the wicked, this was not considered to deny or minimise belief in a general resurrection of all the dead. This general resurrection simply took place at two separate times. However, in his commentary on the book of Revelation, Hippolytus rejects the idea that the reference to the “first resurrection” thereby implies that there will be a second, later resurrection. The just will be raised in the first resurrection, simultaneously with the wicked, but unlike the wicked they will be immune to the power of the second death. Hippolytus stresses that the “first resurrection” refers to the precedence the just have over the wicked: it is an order of honour, first the saints, then the wicked, who are separated from the saints like the goats from the sheep. It is not an order of time, with a distinction between those who are raised earlier and those raised at a later point. All are raised “in the twinkling of an eye,” there is only one resurrection followed by the day of judgement.²³⁶

3.7 Conclusion

The Patristic writers who held to a unitary anthropology held that the saints would not enter into eschatological life until the resurrection, although an exception was made with respect to the martyrs, who were considered to have entered heaven already. However, some held that even then, although the rewards of the martyrs are certain, while those of other believers are still uncertain, these rewards would not be received until the resurrection.

²³³ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 21. ANF 3, p. 560. Tertullian insists that Ezekiel 37 is included in the passages speaking of a literal resurrection, since a metaphor of the restoration of Israel would have no meaning if it was not based on a real event which happened to the bones in the prophet's vision. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 30. ANF 3, pp. 566-567. Cf. also *On the resurrection of the flesh* 25. ANF 3, p. 563. Cf. in contrast, Augustine who says: “...the prophet Ezekiel in the passage cited foresaw, in a revelation given under figures, not the resurrection of the body as it will be one day, but the unexpected restoration of a people without hope through the Spirit of the Lord who has *filled the whole world.*” *The literal meaning of Genesis* 10.5.8. ACW 42, p. 103.

²³⁴ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 22. ANF 3, pp. 560-561.

²³⁵ Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 23. ANF 3, pp. 561-562.

²³⁶ Hippolytus. *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 20:5-6. Cited in: P Prigent. “Hippolyte, commentateur de l'Apocalypse.” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 28 (1972) 404. The Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* also speak of the “first resurrection” as a rank of honour and not a precedence in time. *Recognitions* 1.52. ANF 8, p. 91.

The rest of the dead were considered to be waiting in Hades (or Paradise) until the resurrection where they had a foretaste, or at least a presentiment of, the rewards or punishments they would eventually receive. The Syrian tradition departed from this approach and held that the dead were waiting in unconsciousness, asleep in the grave, to be woken by the trumpet at the return of Christ.

The power of God to create was seen, against the objections of pagans and heretics, as the basis on which God was able and willing to raise the dead. The body buried would be identical with the body raised, with all that ensured the identity of the present and future body. The resurrection was of a **fleshly** body, again in opposition to the views of pagans and heretics as to the desirability of this. The resurrection body is immortal, although not all are alike, a view which is influenced by the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:51. Those of the saints are glorified, and made fit for eternity with God, while those of the wicked are made immortal so as to be fit for eternal punishment. The wicked are not glorified, and in the view of many remain unchanged, although some held that all will be changed, the bodies of the wicked being made dark, in contrast to the bodies of the saints which are like the light and free from any defect.

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