

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DIS-INTEGRATION OF BODY AND SOUL

5.0 Introduction

As the synthesis between divine Revelation and Greek philosophical speculation increasingly predominated in Christian thought, earlier anthropological conceptions were gradually supplanted by an anthropology in which the body was merely the instrument of the soul, which was seen as the person. The hope of the resurrection at the *parousia* of Christ was eclipsed by the expectation that the immortal soul would enter the eschatological life immediately after death. In its separated state the soul continues to function independently of the body. This anti-bodily sentiment led to an ever-increasing dis-integration of this earthly life and the life of the soul, both now and after death, leading to growth in ascetic attitudes and the denigration of the body as the source of fleshly lusts and desires which warred against the soul in its aspirations for sanctity. The resurrection body of the righteous was considered by some to be like that of the angels, a view based on Matthew 22:30, correlated for many writers with the idea of virginity as the “angelic life.” Similarly, ascetic life came to be seen as the equivalent of martyrdom, and warranted the same reward. However, controversy arose over the views of Jovinian, who rejected the idea that asceticism warranted a greater reward than ordinary Christian life, or that there were distinctions of merits.

In this stream of thought the most powerful influence has undoubtedly been that of Origen. After his time, eschatological positions can be broadly divided into two camps: Origenism and its opponents. “In the first half of the fourth century two great systems of doctrine, which we may for want of a better term call the Irenaeian and the Origenist, were in fierce contention with each other.”¹ The influence of Origen extends far beyond the discussion of the orthodoxy or otherwise of his views. As Popma has said, the methodology he established is still influential, even though the content of his thought may not have been accepted. Popma sees his method as perhaps more destructive than his ideas.

Whether [Origen] was orthodox or not is still controversial. Even today he is difficult to interpret. He receives less criticism for his extreme theologism than for the doctrines which he developed by means of his theoretic theology. It is very remarkable that his doctrines have been condemned because of his indeed clearly unbiblical views, while at the same time his method has remained untouched, and has instead been maintained and adopted for use.²

¹ Brooks Otis. “Cappadocian thought as a coherent system.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958) 99.

² K J Popma. “Patristic evaluation of culture.” In: **The idea of a Christian philosophy**, pp. 102-103. Cf. the comments of Giovanni Filoramo, who said that in his polemics against the gnostic Heracleon [In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*], Origen “ends up adopting the same allegorical principles as his opponent and shares with him, in addition to interpretative

Fairweather said that Origen's speculative thinking was indissolubly bound up with the faith itself, so that the faith has "gradually assumed a more philosophic aspect."³ The influence of Origen's method, as well as his ideas, will confront us as we continue this study.

5.1 The body as instrument of the soul

The earliest Patristic anthropology which considered the person an integral unity of body and soul came to be replaced by an instrumentalist approach, in which the "spiritual" soul needed a "physical" body as its instrument for the purposes of this earthly life.⁴ After this life was concluded, the body was no longer necessary, at least not in that form. Instrumentalist anthropologies that retained any importance for the resurrection considered that the future body would be "spiritual" like the soul, not "material" as in the present life.⁵

The rationalistic approach to theology of Clement of Alexandria was characterised by synthesis with Greek philosophy, resulting in an intellectualising of the faith, which he expressed in terms of Christian "gnosis,"⁶ although according to Pelikan he always

accuracy and virtuosity, a taste for getting to the bottom of the mystery of the Scriptures, in which he reads those events concerning the pre-existence of the soul and its fall, those 'principles' of the divine world that are to be found in the same atmosphere as the reflections of those under his attack." **A History of Gnosticism**, pp. 5-6.

³ W Fairweather. **Origen and Greek Patristic Theology**, p. 212.

⁴ The image of the soul making use of the body as an instrument is occasionally compared to the use of a musical instrument by a musician. One of the most explicit expressions of this idea appears in Ambrose: "The soul too, playing in moderation on the body as if on a musical stringed instrument, strikes the passions of the flesh as if they were notes on the strings, but with its fingertips, so to speak. Thus it produces music in euphonious accord with a virtuous way of life, and in all its thoughts and works sees to it that its counsels harmonize with its deeds. The soul, then, is the user, the body that which is being used, and thus the one is in command, the other in service..." *Death as a good* 7.27. FC 65, p. 91. Even those who held to a unitary anthropology occasionally used this image to describe the relationship between the body and soul, but of course for them the body and soul together formed the person, and the image thus has rather different force. For instance, for Gregory of Nyssa, the human body is to the mind what a musician's instrument is to the musician. *On the making of man* 9. NPNF 2/5, p. 395. See also Ephrem. *Hymns on Paradise* 8.2, 8. **Hymns on Paradise**, pp. 132, 134. Nemesius gives the example of a workman's tools lying still when not in use to explain the nature of death: the body lies still just like these tools since the soul has abandoned it. *On the nature of man* 1.1. LCC 4, pp. 225-226. He also refers to the soul as the "craftsman" while the body is its "tool." *On the nature of man* 5.26. LCC 4, p. 319.

⁵ See Chapter Six for a discussion of this issue.

⁶ Clement was not the first Platonising Christian in Alexandria, although he perhaps gave the greatest impetus to the beginnings of the tradition. See R van den Broek. "The Authentikos Logos: A new document of Christian Platonism." *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1979) 260-286, for an account of a Christian Platonism in Alexandria which preceded Clement. This tradition had its roots in the thought of the Jewish philosopher Philo, with whose works Clement and Origen were well acquainted. See A van den Hoek. **Clement of Alexandria and his use of Philo in the Stromateis**. Philo rejected the idea of the resurrection, as "man's flesh is too corrupted to be renewed. The pure soul goes to heaven, according to Philo, while eternal

modified philosophical concepts on the basis of Scripture.⁷ But it must be acknowledged that Clement did more than use Greek philosophical concepts; he also used a Greek philosophising framework, which inevitably shaped and moulded the Scriptural givens according to a radically different perspective.⁸ Clement held that the body was an instrument of the soul,⁹ earthly in character, in contrast to the spiritual nature of the soul.

Well, the body tills the ground, and hastes to it; but the soul is raised to God: trained in the true philosophy, it speeds to its kindred above, turning away from the lusts of the body, and besides these, from toil and fear...¹⁰

One of the clearest approaches to the body as an instrument of the soul is the anthropology of Origen, who believed that human souls committed sin before the creation of the world, and were placed in bodies as punishment.¹¹ The body was but a testing-ground for the soul and not part of the original nature of human beings, and therefore superfluous to the real person. Salvation was to be released from the body to return to the former heavenly existence.¹² God created the world in order to purify these fallen spirits. Thus the creation is only for a stage in spiritual history. Life on earth is the consequence of conduct while in a purely spiritual state, resulting in the variety in the human condition which is a form of judgement, calculated so as to ensure the eventual salvation of all.¹³

Origen's anthropology is based on his view that God created matter as a shroud for the soul. At the creation the soul was given a subtle, luminous material body (created from the dust), which was the vehicle of the soul. After their sin, Adam and Eve received a dense, heavy body of flesh and bones (the garments of skin) which symbolises the transformation of the body of dust from incorruptibility to

destruction awaits the wicked." A J Visser. "Bird's eye view of ancient Christian eschatology." *Numen* 14 (1967) 5.

⁷ J Pelikan. **The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)**, p. 55.

⁸ See Chapter 1 for further discussion of Clement's synthesising approach to theology.

⁹ Clement of Alexandria. *The Instructor* 3.1. ANF 2, p. 271.

¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria. *The Stromata* 4.3. ANF 2, p. 410.

¹¹ There is an intrinsic danger in thinking of Adam's sin as a "fall" since it can easily be seen as a change in ontological status (a fall from a higher order of being or position in the cosmos) rather than the violation of a covenantal relationship. The latter implies no change in status but simply a change in spiritual orientation, away from God to an idolatrous conception of human religious obligation. See G C Berkouwer. **Sin**, p. 268.

¹² Origen's views continued to exercise influence, and can be found for instance in Eusebius, who held to his view of a pre-creation cosmic fall, after which souls were trapped in bodies from which they long to be free. *Ecclesiastical History* 1.2. NPNF 2/1, p. 84.

¹³ W Fairweather. **Origen and Greek Patristic Theology**, pp. 168-170.

corruptibility.¹⁴ The continuity between the earthly body and the resurrection body is a return to the body of dust and not to the dense body of the “garments of skin.”¹⁵

Origen held that the real person is the soul, while the body is only incidental importance, an instrument used by the soul in its earthly life. For instance, in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*, Origen argues that humans are composed of one immaterial person created in the image of God (the “inner man”) and one created of matter (the “outward man”).¹⁶ The body only has influence over the soul if the soul obeys the lusts of the flesh. The saints master the body and do not allow it to dominate the soul. Origen cites Galatians 5:17 to illustrate the conflict between soul and body.¹⁷ He also cites Wisdom 9:13-16, which reads: “For a perishable body presses down the soul, and this tent of clay weighs down the teeming mind.”¹⁸ The idea that the body is a burden to the soul, hindering its freedom, is a Hellenistic idea incorporated into this text,¹⁹ and then transmitted to Patristic anthropology.²⁰

¹⁴ The image of the body as the “garment” for the soul has a long lineage in Patristic thought (it appears in John of Damascus. *On the Orthodox Faith* 3.1. NPNF 2/9, p. 45), but Origen’s approach was highly controversial. Dechow discusses the accuracy of the charge that Origen taught that the body was the “garment of skin” of Genesis 3:21. J F Dechow. **Dogma and mysterium in early Christianity**, pp. 315-333.

¹⁵ L R Hennessey. “Gregory of Nyssa’s doctrine of the resurrected body.” *Studia Patristica* 22 (1989) 28-31. Hennessey is drawing on Crouzel’s analysis of Origen’s doctrine of the resurrection body, which influenced Gregory of Nyssa, who, according to Chryssavgis, it would seem was the first to take the “garments of skin” of Genesis 3:21 to refer to the body. Chryssavgis cites among other places: *On virginity* 12. NPNF 2/5, p. 359. *On the soul and the resurrection*. NPNF 2/5, p. 465. **Ascent to Heaven**, p. 61, n. 28.

¹⁶ Origen. *Dialogue with Heraclides* 154. LCC 2, p. 448.

¹⁷ Origen. *Commentary on Matthew* 14.3. ANF 10, p. 496.

¹⁸ Origen. *Treatise on Prayer* 1. ACW 19, p. 15. Text of *Wisdom* cited from the Jerusalem Bible. Cf. also *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 47, where Origen speaks of “the impediment of the corruptible body that is a load upon the soul, the earthly habitation pressing down the mind that museth upon many things.” If we are freed from the bonds of the body “We would then repose with Christ Jesus in the repose that comes with eternal bliss alone...” ACW 19, p. 191. This idea is also found in Augustine. He says that “we are mortals and sinners, and our corruptible bodies are a load upon our souls, and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that museth upon many things.” *The literal meaning of Genesis* 4.6.13. ACW 41, p. 111. Leo the Great also cites Wisdom 9:15 and says that this will no longer be the case after the resurrection, when the body will be in perfect harmony with the soul. *Sermon* 95.5. NPNF 2/12, p. 204.

¹⁹ Reider discusses possible Hellenistic influence on this text, but suggests it is merely a variation of a biblical theme such as is found in Psalm 103:14, *He remembers that we are dust*, which avoids the error of Philo. Joseph Reider. **The Book of Wisdom**, pp. 130-131. However, R H Charles acknowledges the influence on the author of “the Greek idea of the inherent evil of matter, though he probably did not accept it.” Charles suggests the undeniable influence of Plato’s *Phaedo* 81c. **The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English**. Vol 1, pp. 550, 532.

²⁰ Compare, however, the comment by Tatian with respect to the soul being liberated from the flesh, that “...it is difficult to think that the immortal soul is hampered by the parts of the body and becomes wiser when it moves out of it.” *Oration against the Greeks* 16.1. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 33.

In some places, Augustine held that the body was an instrument of the soul and that the soul receives rewards and punishments alone after death, and further rewards and punishments together with the body at the resurrection.²¹ He raised the question of whether “the soul itself is man, or soul and body both.” He answers this by saying that the question is not whether the person is either soul or body alone, or both together, but “what gives perfection to the soul.” This he sees as the highest good which the person can aspire to, regardless of where we locate the person.²² The question obviously has cogency for Augustine, even though he says that it is relatively unimportant, since it naturally arises from an instrumentalist anthropology, as can be seen from his comments that human nature “is a rational soul with a mortal and earthly body in its service,”²³ while “our souls are by nature not subject to bodies...”²⁴

Augustine follows Ambrose in asking whether the person is soul, or body, or union of both. Ambrose refers to Genesis 26:46 and Genesis 6:3 to demonstrate that the person can be either soul or flesh. However, the term “soul” refers to the one “who cleaves to God” and not the body, while “flesh” refers to a sinner, since the flesh is at war with the soul [Romans 7:23]. Ambrose concludes: “Although Paul said that both men were at war in him, the internal and the external, yet he preferred to establish himself in the part that comprises the soul rather than the body.”²⁵ He uses the idea of the body as a garment, and understands this in terms of the “temporal” nature of the flesh, in contrast to the “eternal” nature of the soul, which lays aside its garment at death.²⁶

5.1.1 The hierarchy of body and soul

The instrumentalist approach to anthropology is hierarchical, with the soul considered superior to the body, or even in conflict with it, leading to a denigration of the body and of bodily life.

A common idea, found also in unitary anthropologies,²⁷ is the view that the soul is of a heavenly nature while the body is of an earthly nature. Prudentius often incorporates

²¹ Augustine. *The City of God* 13.12. NPNF 1/2, pp. 250-251.

²² Augustine. *Of the morals of the Catholic Church* 5.7-8. NPNF 1/4, p. 43.

²³ Augustine. *Of the morals of the Catholic Church* 27.52. NPNF 1/4, p. 55. Miles cites R J O’Connell’s view [**St. Augustine’s early theory of man, 386-391**, p. 184] that Augustine uses Plotinus’ view of the body as an instrument used by the soul for a time [*Enneads* 4.7.1]. Margaret R Miles. **Augustine on the body**, p. 46.

²⁴ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 2.17.35. ACW 41, p. 71.

²⁵ Ambrose. *Isaac, or the soul* 2.3. FC 65, pp. 12-13.

²⁶ Ambrose. *On Hexaemeron* 9.6.39. FC 42, p. 252. Cf. the comment of Ambrose that “...we cannot comprehend such heavenly truth with hands or eyes or ears, because what is seen is temporal, but what is not seen is eternal.” *Death as a good* 3.10. FC 65, p. 77.

²⁷ For instance Cyprian. *On the Lord’s prayer* 16. ANF 5, p. 451. Novatian posits a strong opposition between the “earthly” flesh and the “heavenly” spirit, and an emphasis on the immortality of the soul. “...He also placed man at the head of the world, and man, too, made in the image of God, to whom He imparted mind, and reason, and foresight, that he might imitate God; and though the first elements of his body were earthly, yet the substance was

comments of this kind. He says that God united “two elements, one living and one dying” so as to create human beings. These two elements are incompatible, and in inevitable death they are separated, and thus will “every fabric of contrary parts be undone.” If the body is governed by the soul, it shall rise again and be drawn to heaven, carrying with it to the stars “the flesh with which it has sojourned,” but if the soul is governed by the body, the soul is drawn down towards “numbing contagion.”²⁸

An even more dualistic approach is found in Caesarius of Arles, who also maintains the instrumentalist view of the body, seeing it as a “handmaiden” as contrasted to the soul, its “mistress.”²⁹ He applies this theme in the following way:

What is it that you are doing, man? You exalt clay, and you despise gold; you adorn and satiate with pleasures the body which worms are going to devour in the grave, while you despise the soul which appears before God and the angels in heaven. Now the soul is of incomparably greater worth than the body; that is, the mistress deserves much greater attention than the handmaid... Otherwise perhaps the body, which was accustomed to be adorned, will be devoured by a multitude of worms when it is lying in the grave, while the soul will appear before the eyes of the divine majesty defiled with the stains of many sins.³⁰

Here the body and the soul have different fates, exemplified in the fact that while the body is still in the grave, the soul appears before God stained with many sins, alluding perhaps to an immediate judgement after death.

inspired by a heavenly and divine breathing.” *On the Trinity* 1. ANF 5, p. 612. Lactantius says: “Moreover, it is no slight proof of immortality that man alone makes use of the heavenly element... man alone makes use of fire, which is an element light, rising upward, and heavenly.” *The Divine Institutes* 7.9. ANF 7, p. 206. Cf. also *The Divine Institutes* 7.5. ANF 7, p. 200.

²⁸ Prudentius. *Cathemerinon* 10.1-33. Loeb, I, pp. 85, 87. Cf. *Cathemerinon* 6.34. Loeb, I, p. 51. Cf. also Peter Chrysologus. “Is not the soul from heaven and the body from earth?” *Sermon 109. On Romans 12:1*. FC 17, p. 171. Gregory of Nazianzus. *Oration 2.16-17*. NPNF 2/7, p. 208. *Oration 2.75*. NPNF 2/7, p. 220.

²⁹ Caesarius of Arles. *Sermon 179.7*. FC 47, p. 454. However, he stresses that both body and soul together will receive the reward, and applies Matthew 25:21 to the resurrected saints.

³⁰ Caesarius of Arles. *Sermon 224.3*. FC 66, pp. 150-151.

5.1.2 The image of God restricted to the soul

While the idea that the image of God is located in the soul came to predominate, some of the earlier writers who held this view felt obligated to specifically deny that the body was included. Clement of Alexandria says:

For conformity with the image and likeness is not meant of the body (for it were wrong for what is mortal to be made like what is immortal), but in mind and reason, on which fitly the Lord impresses the seal of likeness, both in respect of doing good and of exercising rule. For governments are directed not by corporeal qualities, but by judgements of the mind.³¹

Origen insisted that it was the soul, not the body which is made in the image of God. He says that the man who was made “according to the image of God” was not corporeal, since “the form of the body does not contain the image of God” and the body was “formed” not “made.” Origen rejects the idea that the body is included in the “image of God” since this would mean that God was corporeal, an idea he sees as “impious.”³²

Basil held that the fact that both male and female, with distinctly different corporeal forms, are created in the image of God means that the image is spiritual not corporeal.³³ Ambrose, followed by Augustine, also argued that the image of God was the soul not the whole person as body and soul.³⁴

³¹ Clement of Alexandria. *The Stromata* 2.19. ANF 2, p. 370. Cf. *Exhortation to the Heathen* 10. ANF 2, p. 199. The identification of the “image of God” with the intellect enabled Clement to distinguish humankind from the animals as the latter were “irrational.” Clement of Alexandria. *Protrepticus* 120. Cited in: E F Osborn. **The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria**, p. 90.

³² Origen. *Homilies on Genesis* 1.13. FC 71, 63-64. Cited in: David L Paulsen. “Early Christian belief in a corporeal deity: Origen and Augustine as reluctant witnesses.” *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990) 110. The relationship between changing conceptions of God and the understanding of the nature of the “image of God” is obviously important but cannot be considered here because of limitations of space. Cf. also Origen. *Dialogue with Heraclides* 154. LCC 2, p. 448.

³³ [Basil. *On the origin of man* 10-11. SC 160, 213-217] M C Horowitz. “The image of God in man: is woman included?” *Harvard Theological Review* 72 (1979) 196.

³⁴ Ambrose. *On Hexaemeron* 9.8.45-46. FC 42, pp. 257-259. *On hexaemeron* 9.7.43. FC 42, p. 256. Cf. *On the belief in the resurrection* 2.130. NPNF 2/10, p. 196, where Ambrose says that “it is not the form of the body but of the spirit which is made after the likeness of God.” Augustine says that it was from *On Hexaemeron* 6 that he learned that the “image of God” was a spiritual substance and not bodily form. *Confessions* 6.3.4. NPNF 1/1, p. 91. See G A McCool. “The Ambrosian origin of St Augustine’s theology of the image of God in man.” *Theological Studies* 20 (1959) 62-81. Cf. also Augustine. *On the Trinity* 12.7.12. NPNF 1/3, p. 159. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 3.20.30. ACW 41, p. 96.

Others who restricted the image of God to the soul include Tertullian, Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Athanasius and John of Damascus.³⁵

5.2 Denigration of the flesh

One of the consequences of instrumentalist anthropology was the denigration of the flesh, which for many writers bolstered the idea that redemption means escape in a Platonic manner from entanglement with this world. The desire to escape from the body became a significant aspect of eschatology, something to be desired as a good in itself. The idea of the body as a prison comes from Plato, and is found in a number of Patristic writers.³⁶ Tertullian mentions this theme, but criticises it. “In Platonic phrase, indeed, the body is a prison, but in the apostle’s it is ‘the temple of God,’ because it is in Christ.”³⁷

Gregory of Nyssa considers that our life here and now is in itself a burden which will be put off at the time of the resurrection, a view with more in common with pagan speculation and Gnosticism than Christianity.³⁸ Gregory said that

...this heavy and corporeal existence of ours waits, extended to some determinate time, for the term of the consummation of all things, that then man’s life may be set free as it were from the reins, and revert

³⁵ Tertullian. *Against Marcion* 2.5-6. ANF 3, pp. 301-302. Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History* 10.4. NPNF 2/1, p. 377. *Preparation for the Gospel* 7.10. E H Gifford, Vol. 1, pp. 340-341. Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 4.18. NPNF 2/7, p. 23. See W R Jenkinson. “The image and likeness of God in man in the eighteen lectures on Credo of Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315-387).” *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 40 (1964) 50. John Chrysostom. *Homily in Genesis* 8.3-4. PG 53, 72f. Athanasius. *Contra Gentes* 34. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 95. C Kannengeisser. “Athanasius of Alexandria and the foundation of traditional Christology.” *Theological Studies* 34 (1973) 109. John of Damascus. *On the orthodox faith* 2.12. NPNF 2/9, pp. 30-31.

³⁶ For instance, Ambrose repeatedly speaks of death as a release of the soul from the prison of the body, and is to be welcomed as much as the body shrinks from being imprisoned behind bars. *On the belief in the resurrection* 2.20-22. NPNF 2/10, p. 177. *Death as a good* 2.5. FC 65, pp. 72-73. *Cain and Abel* 2.9.36. FC 42, pp. 434-435. Paulinus of Nola. *Poem* 11. ACW 40, p. 72.

³⁷ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 53. ANF 3, p. 230.

³⁸ Cf. the comment by Margaret R Miles. “It is important to remember that late classical people, pagan and Christian, had a great deal in common with each other; the experience of discomfort with being in a body appears in Christian thought because patristic writers are classical men; not because it is characteristically Christian... To the extent that a patristic author has understood the significance of the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ, he will insist on the meaning and value of the human body; insofar as these doctrines have not permeated his consciousness and values, he will write as a late classical author, demonstrating the negative evaluation of the body characteristic of the culture. Thus, we find Ambrose, for example, using the classical model for the human composite: the soul, he writes in *De bono mortis* 26, is our ‘true substance’ and the ‘superior element’ ought not to be mixed or confounded with the inferior element, the body.” **Augustine on the body**, pp. 3-4.

once more, released and free, to the life of blessedness and impassibility.³⁹

Gregory the Great held that the body proves an obstacle on earth to the soul's desire to see and be with God.⁴⁰ The burden of the flesh thwarts the soul's longing to behold God. But the resurrection and glorification of the body enables the soul to see God and will share in the soul's joy at that time.⁴¹ In another text Gregory calls the soul of a saint "a pearl of God hidden in a dungheap," by which he meant "the corruptible body."⁴² This anti-bodily sentiment distorts the Scriptural teaching on the goodness of creation, as can be seen in the rejection of the idea that the soul longs for reunion with its body.

In the writings of many of the Fathers one finds, either explicitly taught or clearly implied, the notion that the separated soul cannot be completely happy in heaven, because it does not have there its body. One can scarcely claim that this is the case in the writings of St. Gregory. If this idea appears in his writings at all, the indications of it are subtle [sic]. There is only one instance in which Gregory certainly refers to the separated soul's longing for the resurrection of the body. In this instance he is speaking of the martyrs' desire that retribution be demanded from their persecutors for their blood. This desire is accompanied by the sure knowledge that such retribution will be exacted from their persecutors at the judgement. Gregory expresses God's answer to this petition in the words of Apocalypse 6:11: *They were told to rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete.*⁴³

McClain points out that Gregory the Great frequently speaks of our longing in this life for the resurrection, in response to the problems of this life and the spiritual warfare we are engaged in, and the desire for rest. It is not a longing for the eschatological bodily renewal as such.

³⁹ Gregory of Nyssa. *On the Making of Man* 22.2. NPNF 2/5, p. 411. "The yearning for peace, quiet and solitude which marked all of Gregory's life was in fact a yearning for an earthly approximation to that kind of life which he believed to characterise the heavenly state. But this desire to escape the world was, however, less of a dissatisfaction with the world than it was an eager anticipation for what lay ahead, namely, a joyful existence with Christ in the Jerusalem above. Accordingly, when Gregory describes the heavenly state, it is often by means of a comparison to the instability and transitoriness of earthly existence." Donald F Winslow. **The dynamics of salvation**, p. 171.

⁴⁰ There is an implicit rationalism in the view that the soul can behold God separately from the body, which is rooted in the idea that the soul is rational in nature, and thus is able to behold God, who is also rational.

⁴¹ [Gregory the Great. *Morals on Job* 4.34.68, 10.8.13, 27.5.8. LF 23, p. 203; 31.51.101. LF 31, p. 500. *Homily on Ezekiel* 2.1.17. PL 76, 917-918] J P McClain. **The doctrine of heaven in the writings of Saint Gregory the Great**, p. 79.

⁴² Gregory the Great. *Homily* 40. **Forty Gospel Homilies of Gregory the Great**, p. 385. Cf. John of Damascus, who refers several times to the "grossness of flesh" [*sarkos pachuteti*]. *On the Orthodox Faith* 3.1. NPNF 2/9, p. 45. *On the Orthodox Faith* 3.6. NPNF 2/9, p. 50.

⁴³ [Gregory the Great. *Morals on Job* 2.7.11.] J P McClain. **The doctrine of heaven in the writings of Saint Gregory the Great**, pp. 79-80.

The soul, however, realizes the fulfillment of this desire, even in its separated state. To regard the separated soul as pining for the resurrection of the body, so that it might enjoy a fuller measure of the heavenly delight, is to be deceived by the imagination. Such a notion is foreign to Gregory's teaching.⁴⁴

The same denigration of the flesh is found in Maximus the Confessor, who held that the soul is "immortal, divine, and in process of deification through the virtues," while the flesh on the contrary is "subject to corruption and death and able to soil the soul's dignity by its carelessness,"⁴⁵ until such time as the body is made incorrupt, implying a different nature, through deification. Thus "in the age to come ...the human body now rendered immortal by the resurrection will no longer weigh down the soul by corruption..."⁴⁶

The negative evaluation of bodiliness was given exegetical support through interpreting Philippians 3:21 from within a dualistic framework, for instance in the thought of Hilary of Poitiers. He sees the glorification of the body in the resurrection as "a transition from one nature to another, for our nature ceases, so far as its present character is concerned, and is subjected to Him, into Whose form it passes." He explains that the "ceasing" of our nature is not its extinction, but "a promotion into something higher" when it receives a new form.⁴⁷ Hilary thus sees the transformation of the resurrection as a transition to a totally different state, radically discontinuous with this present life.

5.2.1 The flesh as the cause of sin

The idea that the body is dissolved in death so as to be remade in the resurrection without the sin which is bound up with it, appears in instrumentalist models as well as in unitary models.⁴⁸ However, in instrumentalist models it is often correlated with the idea that the flesh is the cause of sin, through seducing the soul to gratify its lusts. The Christian life was understood in terms of a conflict between the will of God and the desires of the flesh. Through death this characteristic of the flesh (understood as the **body** and not the principle of sin) is destroyed, thus fortifying an anti-bodily sentiment, unlike the positive body-affirming purpose given to this theme in unitary conceptions.

⁴⁴ J P McClain. **The doctrine of heaven in the writings of Saint Gregory the Great**, p. 80.

⁴⁵ Maximus the Confessor. *The Church's Mystagogy* 7. Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 197.

⁴⁶ Maximus the Confessor. *The Church's Mystagogy* 24. Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 210.

⁴⁷ Hilary of Poitiers. *On the Trinity* 11.35. NPNF 2/9, p. 213. See also *On the Trinity* 11.43. NPNF 2/9, p. 215.

⁴⁸ See Chapter **2.4.1. Death as release of the body from sin**. Ambrose states: "But so that the end set by nature might not also be in death, there was granted a resurrection of the dead, that the guilt might fail through death, but the nature be continued through resurrection." *Death as a good* 4.15. FC 65, p. 81.

Peter Chrysologus expresses an extreme view of the body as the cause of sin.

Sins master the body, crimes bind it fast, and transgressions depress it. Vices corrupt it, and passions weigh it down. Therefore, the Apostle desires to release the body. He is eager to set it free, he is striving to elevate it, and he is hastening to purify it by expiation. He wants the body to rise up to where the soul took its origin, rather than have the soul descend to the nature of the body. He desires the body to accompany the soul to heaven, rather than to have the soul follow the body to earth.⁴⁹

Similarly, Nemesius sees “carnal desires” arising from the animal body.⁵⁰ Another extreme expression of this view is found in Prudentius, who sees the soul as something pure which is thrust into foul flesh that then leads it astray according to its own impurity. Sin is the consequence of having a fleshly body, “because it arises from the mingling of the clay and the pure spirit,” a view which owes more to the heresy of Gnosticism than to orthodox Christian belief.⁵¹ This instrumentalist view of the body is made explicit in Alexander of Alexandria.

The soul, therefore, governed man, as long as the body survived; even as the king governs the city, the general the army, the helmsman the ship. But it was powerless to rule it, from the time when it was immoveably tied to it, and became immersed in error; therefore it was that it declined from the straight path, and followed tempers, giving heed to fornication, idolatry, and shedding of blood...⁵²

Here an anti-bodily attitude is betrayed, when it is maintained that the soul is brought into bondage to sin, through being unable to control the body. The soul should be using the body as its instrument, but when the soul succumbed to error, the body

⁴⁹ Peter Chrysologus. *Sermon 109. On Romans 12:1*. FC 17, pp. 171-172.

⁵⁰ Nemesius. *On the nature of man* 1.1. LCC 4, pp. 225-226.

⁵¹ Prudentius. *Apotheosis* 814-819. Loeb I, p. 181. Cf. *Apotheosis* 910-912. Loeb I, p. 187. “Thus pure at creation, [the soul] fell into sin through unclean alliance with the flesh...” Again he says: “Savage war rages hotly, rages within our bones, and man’s two-sided nature is in an uproar of rebellion; for the flesh that was formed of clay bears down upon the spirit, but again the spirit that issued from the pure breath of God is hot within the dark prison-house of the heart, and even in its close bondage rejects the body’s filth.” *Psychomachia* 903-909. Loeb I, p. 343. Tertullian had already expressed something of this idea when he said that the soul is liberated by death from the veil of the flesh which obstructs and sullies the soul, and that in death the soul is “by the very release cleansed and purified.” *A treatise on the soul* 53. ANF 3, p. 230.

⁵² Alexander of Alexandria. *On the soul and body and passions of the Lord* 3. ANF 6, p. 300. Cf. Leo the Great. “...that by controlling the struggles that go on between our two natures, the spirit which, if it is under the guidance of God, should be the governor of the body, may uphold the dignity of its rule...” *Sermon 42.2*. NPNF 2/12, p. 156.

broke away from its control and led the soul into sin.⁵³ This tendency of the body towards sin, unless it is kept in strict control by the soul, implies that there is something defective in the creation, and betrays something of a Gnostic attitude.⁵⁴

The idea of the dominion of the soul over the body is central in Gregory the Great's concept of what it means to be regenerate and sanctified. McClain says that Gregory

...appeals to his readers not to be *mere men*. As long as they possess bodies of flesh the motions of carnal passion will be in these bodies, but they must seek to be *new creatures* by excluding these motions of carnal passion from their hearts.⁵⁵

This dominion of soul over body is expressed in his view that while the soul has immortality along with the angels, the body acquires immortality only in the resurrection through being reunited with the glorified soul.⁵⁶ The dichotomy of the mortal body and the rational and immortal soul in Gregory's anthropology leads to the antagonism between them. The soul is the strength of the human person, while the flesh is his weakness, hindering the soul and causing internal conflict.⁵⁷ However, he rejects the Manichean idea of two creators: both are made by the Creator God.⁵⁸ Gregory insists that such antagonism is the result of sin.⁵⁹ Why God should create humans in such an incompatible way is difficult to explain, and is one of the major flaws in such an anthropology, as can be seen from Gregory's comment that "the human creature by this alone, that it is a creature, has it inherent in itself to sink down below itself..."⁶⁰ It is only by contemplation that he is delivered from this.

As a result of this dualism, the judgement was considered to concern only the soul, so as to determine the extent to which it was controlled or dominated by the lusts of the

⁵³ John of Damascus held that the body could be subjected to the soul and thus led into holiness, or the soul could be subjected to the body and thus led into sin. *On the Orthodox Faith* 2.30. NPNF 2/9, p. 43.

⁵⁴ Cf. the view of Leo the Great. "For human nature has this flaw in itself, not planted there by the Creator but contracted by the transgressor, and transmitted to his posterity by the law of generation, so that from the corruptible body springs that which may corrupt the soul also. Hence although the inner man be now reborn in Christ and rescued from the bonds of captivity, it has unceasing conflicts with the flesh, and has to endure resistance in seeking to restrain vain desires." *Sermon* 90.1. NPNF 2/12, p. 200. He avoids the Gnostic error of seeing the creation as defective, but still has an anti-body attitude.

⁵⁵ J P McClain. **The doctrine of heaven in the writings of Saint Gregory the Great**, p. 96, n. 49.

⁵⁶ J P McClain. **The doctrine of heaven in the writings of Saint Gregory the Great**, p. 99.

⁵⁷ Paulinus of Nola sees the weakness of the flesh as the **female** element in human nature, while the spirit is the **male** and stronger element. *Letter* 23.11. ACW 36, p. 13.

⁵⁸ F H Dudden. **Gregory the Great**, vol. 2, p. 375.

⁵⁹ F H Dudden. **Gregory the Great**, vol. 2, p. 377.

⁶⁰ Gregory the Great. *Morals on Job* 12.15.19. LF 21, p. 57.

flesh. The flesh itself is judged through its death: it need not then be present at this judgement, which could then take place immediately after death.

5.2.2 Asceticism and the flight from bodily life

A common response to the anthropological view which saw the body as cause of sin was to seek to deny the body the opportunity to lead the soul into sin through an ascetic lifestyle, denying to the body the comforts and pleasures it craved.⁶¹ Thus asceticism is rooted in an anthropology which did not perceive the goodness of the bodily existence (which could be set free from sin).⁶² It unfavourably compares the creation around us with a Platonised concept of heaven.⁶³ This problematic view can be found for instance in Athanasius in his *Life of Anthony*.

Nor let us think, as we look at the world, that we have renounced anything of much consequence, for the whole earth is very small compared with all the heaven. Wherefore if it even chanced that we were lords of all the earth and gave it all up, it would be nought worthy of comparison with the kingdom of heaven.⁶⁴

If therefore the heavenly life is of such great value, there is no loss for the one who abandons his worldly goods and comforts in order to gain eternal reward. The ascetic life is thus not only a non-worldly life (in the sense of abandoning the tawdriness of wealth), it is also a creation-negating life, as it is a desire to be released from this earth to partake of a better form of life. John of Damascus said that death is of two kinds: the separation of the soul from the body, which is natural death, and there is also voluntary death, “by which we disdain this present life and aspire to that which is to come.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Cf. Leo the Great. *Sermon* 19.1. NPNF 2/12, p. 127.

⁶² H Musurillo indicates that asceticism was not simply rooted in anti-bodily sentiment, but had positive features such as mourning loss of immortality and the desire to conquer demons, among others he documents. “The problem of ascetical fasting in the Greek Patristic writers.” *Traditio* 12 (1956) 1-64. However, even his “positive” features still incorporate anti-bodily concepts, and this can be seen in his admission that asceticism was oriented towards a “war on the the flesh and the passions.” The idea of the passions of the body as the source of sin is unbiblical.

⁶³ Perkins makes the interesting comment that this ascetic attitude is in sharp contrast to pagan views. “One may still wonder how appropriate this presentation of the body as the source of evil impulses is, since it fits more comfortably into the anti-body ascetic traditions of Christianity and Gnosticism than it does into the views of pagans in general. The ascetic traditions intensified the stoicized Platonism of the period in which freedom from all the body’s concerns was represented as passionlessness (*apatheia*) and turning the mind to its eternal home. The general philosophic view was that the passions could be made allies of the soul.” PHEME PERKINS. **Resurrection: New Testament Witness and contemporary reflection**, p. 385, n. 54.

⁶⁴ Athanasius. *The Life of Anthony* 17. NPNF 2/4, p. 200. Cf. *The Life of Anthony* 16. NPNF 2/4, p. 200, where Athanasius expresses the same sentiments.

⁶⁵ John of Damascus. *Philosophical Chapters* 3. FC 37, p. 11.

John Cassian understood the attainment of perfection as the release of the soul from bondage to bodily desires through asceticism and mediation on God. Thus the soul “no longer feels that it is prisoned in this fragile flesh, and bodily form,” and through ecstasy attains already to a state paralleling the future eschatological condition.⁶⁶

Perkins comments that the apocryphal material from the second and third centuries often emphasises the necessity of ascetic practices such as continence in order to make the flesh a worthy vehicle for salvation through bodily resurrection.⁶⁷ This, however, assumes that somehow sexuality for instance is incompatible with salvation in that it renders the body unworthy. Since sexuality is God’s good gift, proper exercise of that gift cannot be in conflict with God’s purpose of redemption, although sexual immorality is in conflict with the redemption of the **whole person**, and not merely the body.⁶⁸

Even views which had a more positive assessment of bodily life, as for instance that of John Climacus, still see asceticism in terms of a conflict between body and soul. He asks: “What is this mystery in me? What is the principle of this mixture of body and soul? How can I be my own friend and my own enemy?”⁶⁹ The answer from the body is to practice self-denial, obedience and humility, and this will bring the reward of victory over the body. “He who has earned it while still alive has died and been resurrected. From now on he has a taste of the immortality to come.”⁷⁰

5.2.3 Asceticism and spiritual martyrdom

The continuance of the ethos of martyrdom in the ascetic theology of the post-Constantinian church enabled the transference of the reward for physical torment perpetrated by persecutors to that of voluntary self-denial (in what were sometimes extreme forms).⁷¹ There was strong opposition to the actions of some (including Origen) who actively sought persecution in order to suffer martyrdom and attain the

⁶⁶ John Cassian. *Conferences* 3.7. NPNF 2/11, p. 322.

⁶⁷ PHEME PERKINS. **Resurrection: New Testament Witness and contemporary reflection**, p. 343.

⁶⁸ See the comments on sexuality by John W Cooper. **Body, soul and life everlasting**, p. 203.

⁶⁹ John Climacus. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* 15. Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 186.

⁷⁰ John Climacus. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* 15. Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 186.

⁷¹ See A C Rush. “Spiritual martyrdom in St. Gregory the Great.” *Theological Studies* 23 (1962) 569-589, for a discussion of the development of the concept of spiritual martyrdom. In a recent article, Tilley asserts that asceticism did not replace martyrdom, since asceticism flourished in Christianity from its inception. She claims that asceticism provided the practical and theoretical basis for heroic martyrdom, and that the martyrs practiced asceticism (i.e. deprivation of food and water) to prepare for torture [Tilley cites as an example Tertullian. *On fasting* 12. ANF 4, pp. 110-111]. Tilley concludes that asceticism logically and practically preceded martyrdom and made it possible; it was not a substitute for martyrdom when Christianity was legalised. M A Tilley. “The ascetic body and the (un)making of the world of the martyr.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991) 467-479.

promised reward, but voluntary asceticism was acceptable (although there was criticism of some of the forms it took).⁷²

Ferguson says that Origen, “who had been denied martyrdom, prepared the way for the development of the concept of spiritual martyrdom based on a life of asceticism,”⁷³ although Frend claims that Clement of Alexandria first “placed the ascetic ideal on the same level as that of the martyr.”⁷⁴ Asceticism, a voluntary act, was therefore differentiated from martyrdom, which was involuntarily imposed by others,⁷⁵ although it was considered to merit the same reward, as the basis of both asceticism and martyrdom was the refusal to allow the instinct for physical self-preservation to compromise loyalty to Christ. This can be seen for instance in the *Teaching* of Gregory the Illuminator, who spoke of the characteristic of the martyr as overcoming the (often legitimate) “desires of the flesh,” an attitude which is possible for everyone, not just those persecuted for the faith.⁷⁶

⁷² Musurillo comments citing Duchesne that “except in the case of the Encratites and of Eustathius and his followers, the Church does not seem officially to have stepped in to prevent what seem to us ascetical exaggerations.” H Musurillo. “The problem of ascetical fasting in the Greek Patristic writers.” *Traditio* 12 (1956) 34. It is claimed for instance that Origen castrated himself. R P C Hanson argues for the historicity of this. “A note on Origen’s self-mutilation.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 20 (1966) 81-82. Jerome seems to comment on this in his attack on Origen’s views when he asks “Do you suppose that what we feared was that we might rise without noses and ears, that we should find that our genital organs would be cut off or maimed and that a city of eunuchs was built up in the new Jerusalem?” *Apology Against Rufinus* 2.5. NPNF 2/3, p. 503. However, Origen’s self-castration is doubted by Dechow, who subjects the story to extensive analysis. J F Dechow. **Dogma and mysterium in early Christianity**, pp. 128-135.

⁷³ E Ferguson. “Martyr, martyrdom.” **Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity**, p. 577. See Origen. *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 21. ACW 19, pp. 160-161. *Ibid.*, 30, pp. 171-172. *Ibid.*, 42, pp. 185-186.

⁷⁴ W H Frend. **Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church**, p. 356. Cited in: Margaret R Miles. **Augustine on the body**, p. 43.

⁷⁵ John Chrysostom said: “Mortify your body, and crucify it, and you will yourself receive the crown of martyrdom. For what in the other case the sword accomplishes, that in this case let a willing mind effect.” *Homily on Hebrews* 11.6. NPNF 1/14, p. 420. Similarly Jerome says: “If we become martyrs, straightway we are in Paradise; if we endure the pains of poverty, instantly we are in Abraham’s bosom. Blood has its own abode and so has peace. Poverty, too, has its martyrdom; need well borne is martyrdom - but need suffered for the sake of Christ and not from necessity.” Jerome. *Homily 86, On Luke 16:19-31. The rich man and Lazarus*. FC 57, p. 211. Margaret R Miles points out that both martyrdom and asceticism are considered the gift of God, as they are beyond ordinary human achievement. **Augustine on the body**, p. 43. Cf. J P Burns. “Fidelity to Christ qualifies him for a glory which no human growth or effort could achieve.” “The economy of salvation: Two patristic traditions.” *Theological Studies* 37 (1976) 600.

⁷⁶ Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 563. R W Thomson, p. 135. Cf. also Basil. “Be martyrs in intention, and attain without persecution... the reward of which the martyrs were judged worthy.” *In sanctos quadraginta martyres*. PG 31, 508B. Basil also said to a grieving mother that she had “the opportunity of attaining the reward of the martyrs through your perseverance.” *Letter* 6. Cited in: H Musurillo. “The problem of ascetical fasting in the Greek Patristic writers.” *Traditio* 12 (1956) 59.

The concept of “spiritual martyrdom” opened the way for the concept that others besides the martyrs receive “immortality” and enter into glory immediately after death without waiting for the resurrection. The doctrine of immediate rewards for the martyrs was soon extended to those who lived a “life of martyrdom” as ascetics, thus reinforcing the development of an individualistic eschatology.

This can be seen in the ‘realised eschatology’ of many ascetic theologians, such as the comment of Gregory of Tours concerning the body of Gregory of Langres:

His face was so filled with glory that it looked like a rose. It was a deep rose red, and the rest of his body was glowing white like a lily. You would have said that he was even now ready for the coming glory of the resurrection.⁷⁷

Anthony wrote that the ascetic who mortifies the flesh has “already received a portion of that spiritual body which it is to assume in the resurrection of the just.”⁷⁸ Sulpitius also expressed the possibility of the glorified resurrection body being anticipated in the life of the ascetic. When Martin died his body was seen to be white as snow, even though he had spent his life in sackcloth and ashes. Sulpitius comments that he appeared “as if he had been manifested in the glory of the future resurrection, and with the nature of a body which had been changed.”⁷⁹

5.2.4. The controversy with Jovinian

It was maintained by many Patristic writers that there were distinctions of rewards and the corresponding glory of the resurrection body among the righteous.⁸⁰ The principal passages used in support of this idea were John 14:2, *in my Father’s house there are many mansions*,⁸¹ and 1 Corinthians 15:41, *The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour*.⁸² Differences of punishment for the wicked are also asserted on such

⁷⁷ Gregory of Tours. *Liber Vitae Patrum* 7.3. [PL 71, 1038B] Cited in: Peter Brown. **The cult of the saints**, p. 77.

⁷⁸ Anthony. *Letter* 1.6. PG 40, 981. Translation cited in: Peter Brown. **The Body and Society**, p. 224.

⁷⁹ Sulpitius Severus. *Letter to Bassula*. NPNF 2/11, p. 23.

⁸⁰ Augustine also asserts, but without giving textual support, that there shall be degrees of reward, apparently considering it evident enough, as he says simply “it cannot be doubted that there shall be degrees [of honour and glory].” *The City of God* 22.30. NPNF 1/2, p. 510. See also Ambrose. *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke* 7.220. PL 15, 1848. *Letter 42 to Siricius*. PL 16, 1172-1177.

⁸¹ For example, an early use of John 14:2 (in conjunction with Matthew 13:8) which leads to the idea of the distinctions of rewards is found in Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.36.2. ANF 1, p. 567.

⁸² Cf. for instance Augustine, who cites 1 Corinthians 15:40-43 and says, “You see, glory was promised to the bodies of the saints and different degrees of glory because the merits of charity are different.” *Sermon* 241.8. FC 38, p. 263. Augustine discusses these two passages in other places. *Tractate in John* 67.2. NPNF 1/7, p. 321. *Tractate in John* 68.3. NPNF 1/7,

grounds as that “it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgement” than for those who rejected Christ.⁸³ The most extensive discussion of this subject is perhaps that found in the rebuttal by Jerome of the view held by Jovinian,⁸⁴ namely that there were no differences in the rewards or punishments given to the dead at the judgement: the same reward or punishment was given to all.⁸⁵ Jovinian was opposing the view that differences of reward and punishment were associated with different earthly states: virgins, widows, wives, monks, priests, laymen. Jovinian also taught the equality of marriage and virginity,⁸⁶ the uselessness of fasting, and that the baptised could not be induced to sin by the devil.⁸⁷

pp. 323-324. *On the spirit and the letter* 41. NPNF 1/5, p. 100. *On the spirit and the letter* 48. NPNF 1/5, p. 104. *Of holy virginity* 26. NPNF 1/3, p. 426. However, Jerome interprets Daniel 12:3 to mean that the “learned teachers” will shine brighter than the “righteous who are without learning,” so that there are different degrees of glory depending on intellectual attainment, an elitist idea at odds with the gospel. *Commentary on Daniel* 12.3. G L Archer, pp. 146-147. This is also found in another of his writings: “In the close of his most solemn vision Daniel declares that *the righteous shall shine as the stars; and the wise, that is the learned, as the firmament.* You can see, therefore, how great is the difference between righteous ignorance and instructed righteousness. Those who have the first are compared with the stars, those who have the second with the heavens. Yet, according to the exact sense of the Hebrew, both statements may be understood of the learned, for it is to be read in this way: *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.*” Jerome. *Letter* 53.3. NPNF 2/6, pp. 97-98. Cf. by way of contrast the words of Herman Bavinck on his deathbed: “My learning does not help me now; neither does my Dogmatics; faith alone saves me.” Translator’s Preface. Herman Bavinck. **The Doctrine of God** (n. p.).

⁸³ Augustine. *On baptism, against the Donatists* 4.19. NPNF 1/4, p. 459.

⁸⁴ Jerome. *Against Jovinianus* 2.18-38. NPNF 2/6, pp. 402-416. For an account of the controversy concerning the views of Jovinian, see: F H Dudden. **The life and times of Saint Ambrose**. Vol. 2, pp. 393-398. J N D Kelly. **Jerome. His life, writings and controversies**, pp. 180-189.

⁸⁵ For Jovinian the equality of all Christians based on their common baptism was the starting point of his thought. David G Hunter. “Resistance to the virginal ideal in late fourth-century Rome: the case of Jovinian.” *Theological Studies* 48 (1987) 47.

⁸⁶ Augustine attacked this view in his tractate *Of Holy Virginity* 6, where for instance he asserted that virgins give birth to spiritual children in Christ, while mothers give birth to fleshly children in Adam. NPNF 1/3, p. 419. Jovinian was also condemned for his view in an encyclical of pope Siricius. *Letter 7. Against Jovinian the heretic*. PL 13, 1168-1172. Siricius also wrote the first papal document insisting on clerical celibacy. *Decretal to Bishop Himerius*. PL 13, 1131-1147. See the discussion of these documents by Daniel Callam. “Clerical continence in the fourth century: Three papal decretals.” *Theological Studies* 41 (1980) 3-50.

⁸⁷ David G Hunter has shown that Jovinian was attacking the Manichean heresy, and that each of his points has its opposite proposition in Manichean teaching as well as in Priscillianism. The sensitivity of Jerome and Ambrose to the views of Jovinian is because their exegesis of the Scriptural passages in dispute is identical to that of the Manicheans and the Priscillianists, whom Jovinian was attacking. Hunter says that while Augustine tried to distinguish between Manichean and orthodox Christian asceticism, Jovinian tried to undercut the appeal to asceticism as such, since he saw it as a denigration of the goodness of marriage and bodily life. As a result, Jovinian held to the equality of the rewards for the saints, with no advantage given to ascetics. “Resistance to the virginal ideal in late fourth-century Rome: the case of Jovinian.” *Theological Studies* 48 (1987) 45-64.

Jerome saw his rejection of the differences of rewards and punishments as an attack on the value of the merits of the saints, and a denial of the seriousness of the depravity of some sinners, since all were punished alike.⁸⁸ While the details of the controversy take us away from our theme, it is of interest in that here Jerome is specifically defending the idea that while it is valid to distinguish between the just and the unjust, as Jovinian did, it is also legitimate to make distinctions among those in each group.

To establish his position, Jovinian cited various passages of Scripture. In the parable of the ten virgins, five remained outside and five went in to the marriage feast. With Noah's ark, and in Sodom and Gomorrah, the righteous were delivered and the sinners perished. In Egypt the ten plagues fell with equal violence on all that sinned, and at the Red Sea the righteous passed over while the sinners were destroyed. Thus, at the judgement there will be two classes: the sheep and the goats, the just and the unjust. With these and similar examples, Jovinian sought to show there were only two classes: the sinners and the righteous.⁸⁹

Jerome attempts to refute Jovinian by showing that in the parable of the sower [Matthew 13], there were three degrees of fruitfulness and of sterility,⁹⁰ while Jovinian focused on the fact that there was a difference between good soil and bad soil. Similarly he accepts that there is a distinction between the good and the bad, as in the examples given by Jovinian, but he then asks:

But what are we to think of your assertion, that because there is a division into good and bad, the good, or the bad it may be, are not distinguished one from another, and that it makes no difference whether one is a ram in the flock or a poor little sheep?⁹¹

Jovinian had argued that as one star differs from another in glory, so spiritual persons differ from carnal. He argues that the one who calls his brother a fool, a murderer and an adulterer, will all be sent to Gehenna, in spite of the differences in their sins. Similarly some martyrs were burned, some were strangled, and some beheaded, but

⁸⁸ However, although both Jerome and Jovinian agreed that all sins can be forgiven in baptism, Jovinian opposed the idea of rank among Christians whether here or hereafter. Elizabeth Clark. "The place of Jerome's Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist controversy: the apokatastasis and ascetic ideals." *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987) 165.

⁸⁹ Cited by Jerome. *Against Jovinian* 2.18. NPNF 2/6, p. 402.

⁹⁰ This idea appears also in Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.36.2. ANF 1, p. 567. Pseudo-Cyprian. *Sermo de centesima, sexagesima, tricesima*. PLS 1, 53-67, identifies the "thirty-fold" fruit of the seed as the reward of married people who practice chastity. Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 234, n. 13. Cf. for this idea also Jerome. *Letter* 22.15. NPNF 2/6, p. 27. Athanasius. *Letter* 48. NPNF 2/4, p. 557. Augustine. *On holy virginity* 46. NPNF 1/3, p. 434.

⁹¹ Jerome. *Against Jovinian* 2.22. NPNF 2/6, p. 404. Jerome said elsewhere that if a human king is not satisfied with a single order of servants, instead of a hierarchy of officers, why should God, the King of kings, accept this? *Commentary on Ephesians* 1. PL 26, 491-492. Cited in: Elizabeth Clark. "The place of Jerome's Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist controversy: the apokatastasis and ascetic ideals." *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987) 160.

all share the same victor's crown. He cites especially the parable of the labourers in the vineyard who all laboured for different periods, but were all nevertheless paid the same wages.⁹² Jerome argues that this is twisting Scripture with perverse ingenuity, and a Stoic outlook on rewards and punishments.⁹³ He says that to say that all sins are equal is to say that all deserve the same punishment, and a hungry man stealing food is as guilty as a murderer. He wishes to maintain the distinction of merits and punishments, correlated with the distinctions in the resurrection bodies among both the wicked and the just, so that we do not all receive identical rewards and punishments.⁹⁴ Jerome argues from Ezekiel 34:17, *I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats*, that God will indeed distinguish not only between the sinners and the saints, but also between those in each group.⁹⁵ Jerome uses many other texts to establish his case, and he is convinced of the justice of making distinctions among the righteous and among the wicked, seeing them as deserving of different rewards and punishments.⁹⁶ A similar argument is found in the works of Ambrose, who also wrote against Jovinian.⁹⁷ Again 1 Corinthians 15:40-44 is used to support this idea.

⁹² Cited by Jerome. *Against Jovinian* 2.20. NPNF 2/6, p. 403. Tertullian had earlier used this text to demonstrate the equality of all but the difference in the reward given. "Consequently, we who shall be with God shall be together; since we shall all be with the one God - albeit the wages be various, albeit there be "many mansions" in the house of the same Father - having laboured for the "one penny" of the self-same hire, that is, of eternal life..." *On Monogamy* 10. ANF 4, p. 67. Thus Tertullian provides a precedent for Jovinian's interpretation, even though he wishes to allow for different rewards as well.

⁹³ Jerome also accused Jovinian of being an Epicurean (*Against Jovinian* 1.1, 1.4, 2.6, 2.21, 2.36. NPNF 2/6, pp. 346-416) as did Augustine (*Letter* 167.2.4. NPNF 1/1, p. 534). This Patristic tendency to trace heretical ideas to pagan philosophers such as Epicurus is frequently based on a gross oversimplification of the ideas of both Epicurus and the opponents of the Fathers, but was used to impute hedonistic motives to anyone who cast aspersions on the value placed on ascetic life. R Jungkuntz. "Fathers, Heretics and Epicureans." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 17 (1966) 3-10. It is interesting to note that Jerome's treatise against Jovinian "marks the full revival of his unrestrained use of the pagan classics and of 'rhetoric'." J N D Kelly. **Jerome. His life, writings and controversies**, p. 182.

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Clark argues that the desire to allow for a heavenly hierarchy with distinctions of merits based on ascetic renunciation is one reason why Jerome rejected Origen's doctrine of *apokatastasis*, which did not allow for this because of the universal restitution to goodness. This is found in his *Commentary on Ephesians* which he wrote before the controversy with Jovinian, as well as in his *Letter* 84.7. NPNF 2/6, p. 179. "The place of Jerome's Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist controversy: the apokatastasis and ascetic ideals." *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987) 155.

⁹⁵ Jerome. *Against Jovinian* 2.21-22. NPNF 2/6, p. 404.

⁹⁶ Cf. Herman Bavinck, who also says there are distinctions of rewards and punishments, basing his view on passages such as Romans 2:6, 12, Matthew 10:15, 11:22, 24, 16:27, Luke 12:47. **Our Reasonable Faith**, p. 565.

⁹⁷ Jovinian was condemned in a letter by Ambrose [*Letter* 42, to *Siricius*. PL 16, 1172-1177] resulting from a synod in Milan. On another occasion Ambrose also condemned two monks who taught much the same ideas, labelling them Epicureans. *Letter* 63.7-19. NPNF 2/10, pp. 457-459. Ambrose also condemned the Novatianists who considered all sins alike. *On repentance* 1.5. NPNF 2/10, p. 330.

All men rise again, but let no one lose heart, and let not the just grieve at the common lot of rising again, since he awaits the chief fruit of his virtue. All indeed shall rise again, but, as says the Apostle, *each in his own order*. The fruit of the divine mercy is common to all, but the order of merit differs. The day gives light to all, the sun warms all, the rain fertilises the possessions of all with genial showers. We are all born, and we shall all rise again, but in each state, whether of living or of living again, grace differs and the condition differs.⁹⁸

The phrase, *each in his own order*, was thus understood by Ambrose to refer to the differing merits of those raised,⁹⁹ as can be seen from his view that the resurrection is an “order of grace” in which “all are raised again in a moment, yet all are raised in the order of their merits.”¹⁰⁰

Chrysostom answers the problem of the differences of rewards not by the distinction of the groups who shall face judgement, but by distinctions in the glory of the resurrection which the righteous share, as well as the differences in the resurrection bodies of the sinners. Some receive honour and others dishonour, fates which are reflected in the character of the bodies they receive.

As he also said in the former epistle, *We shall all be raised, but each in his own order* [1 Corinthians 15:22,23]. And, *There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial* [1 Corinthians 15:40]. For the resurrection indeed is common to all, but the glory is not common; but some shall rise in honour and others in dishonour, and some to a kingdom but others to punishment.¹⁰¹

The resurrection is general, he says, as indicated in 1 Corinthians 15 by the image of the seed, and all will be raised; but the honour received by each differs, and only those who are in Christ are raised in glory.¹⁰² The difference between the resurrection bodies is described by Paul in the imagery of the differences between the sun, the moon and the stars. Thus there are also distinctions between the different saints, as

⁹⁸ Ambrose. *On belief in the resurrection* 2.92-93. NPNF 2/10, p. 189.

⁹⁹ Gordon Fee, **The First Epistle to the Corinthians**, p. 753, understands this phrase to mean “each event in its own order,” that is, first the resurrection of Christ, then the resurrection of the believers.

¹⁰⁰ Ambrose. *On belief in the resurrection* 2.115-116. NPNF 2/10, p. 194.

¹⁰¹ John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Second Corinthians* 10.3. NPNF 1/12, p. 327. This idea appears in one of Chrysostom’s earliest writings. “*He shall reward every man according to his works* [Romans 2:6]. And not only in hell, but also in the kingdom one will find many differences, for he said, *in my Father’s house are many mansions*, and, *there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon*. And what wonder, if in dealing with such great matters he has spoken with such precision, seeing that He declares there is a difference in that world even between one star and another?” *To the fallen Theodore* 1.19. NPNF 1/9, p. 111. See also Basil. *The Long Rules* 267. Translation cited in: Richard Travers Smith. **St. Basil the Great**, pp. 137-138.

¹⁰² John Chrysostom. *Homilies on First Thessalonians* 7. NPNF 1/13, p. 353.

well as a general distinction between the saints and the sinners. Chrysostom insists that while disbelief in the resurrection results in carelessness about behaviour (on the assumption there is no judgement to face), the idea that all receive the same reward makes people lazy. Just as the sun, moon and stars are all in the heavens yet differ in their glory, so too all the believers will be saved but will differ in their rewards. Nor will all sinners receive the same punishment.¹⁰³ He maintains then, as did many other Patristic writers, that there are distinctions of merit in the resurrection, and different degrees of glory for the saints. The consistent conclusion drawn from making distinctions among those resurrected is the distinctions of rewards and punishments. Emma Disley states that “The writings of the Fathers were weightily disposed towards the concept of degrees of reward and punishment...”¹⁰⁴ She argues that

Men’s ideas of a hierarchic heaven seem to have been constructed to reflect social patterns on earth: the notion of an equality of heavenly bliss, or of hellish torments, seems to have played no part in the medieval picture of the hereafter. Jovinian’s ideas, that all sins are equal and that there is but one grade of punishment and one of reward in the future states, seem to have been effectively silenced after their condemnation at the synods of Rome and Milan (c. 390). Jerome’s refutation of Jovinian had been constructed upon the argument that all sins are not equal, and that degrees of holiness (Jerome referred specifically to chastity and martyrdom) attained in this life, are intimately linked with our future position within the hierarchy of heaven. It seemed self-evident that some sins were graver than others, that a truly evil man would receive severer punishments in the depths of hell than one who had committed sins of a more “trivial” nature. Hence the Church’s division of sins into classes of “venial” and “mortal.”... Once the notion of varying degrees of torment in hell had been accepted, it seemed logical to extend the idea to heaven and to varying degrees of reward, associated with the varying degrees of holiness achieved in this life.¹⁰⁵

The notion of a hierarchy is inconsistent with a coherent concept of the people of God, with a diversity of offices, which does not elevate one office over others which are subordinated to it.¹⁰⁶

5.2.5 Rejection of sexuality

¹⁰³ John Chrysostom. *Homilies on First Corinthians* 41.4. NPNF 1/12, p. 251.

¹⁰⁴ E Disley. “Degrees of glory: Protestant doctrines and the concepts of rewards hereafter.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991) 80.

¹⁰⁵ E Disley. “Degrees of glory: Protestant doctrines and the concepts of rewards hereafter.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991) 80-81.

¹⁰⁶ The concept of sphere sovereignty in neo-Calvinist thought exposes the dualistic and authoritarian roots of hierarchical approaches to both society, church and (it would seem) the eschaton. See Gordon Spykman. “Sphere sovereignty in Calvin and the Calvinist Tradition.” In: **Exploring the heritage of John Calvin**, pp. 164-169.

As a result of the denigration of the flesh, marriage and family life, and human sexuality itself, were all repudiated by ascetics. The virginal life was not merely presented as a choice for those who wished to give greater attention to evangelism or pastoral care, as with the apostle Paul [1 Corinthians 7:32-35], but was considered one of the highest virtues of the the ascetic life,¹⁰⁷ although that by itself would not earn an eternal reward, as this would be granted on the basis of obedience to the commandments.¹⁰⁸

The denigration of marriage and childbearing, which continued through the Patristic period,¹⁰⁹ was partly rooted in the idea that it became part of human life only with the sin of Adam and Eve and the consequent loss of immortality, to prevent the human race dying out.¹¹⁰ This correlation of sexuality with sin foisted a burden of guilt and repression on the church which it still struggles to discard. In the resurrection there will be no need of marriage and childbearing, since we will be immortal and the human race therefore cannot diminish.¹¹¹

All this implies that marriage, which in this present age is necessary, inter-alia with a view to the preservation of the human race, whose numbers are constantly reduced by death, can be abolished in the world to come, because there no one can ever die again

¹⁰⁷ Some of the Patristics did not seem to distinguish (on an ethical level) between true virginity and the chaste life of widows and widowers, or those who had left their spouses. Cf. Peter Brown. **The body and society**, p. 71. See, however, Jerome's comment: "I extol virginity to the skies, not because I myself possess it, but because, not possessing it, I admire it all the more." *Letter* 48.20. NPNF 2/6, p. 78. Jerome seems to have led a rather liberated life in Rome as a youth. See *Letter* 3.1. NPNF 2/6, p. 4; *Letter* 7.4. NPNF 2/6, p. 9; *Letter* 22.7. NPNF 2/6, p. 25. Jerome also says that it is possible to be a virgin in the flesh, but not in the spirit. *Letter* 22.5. NPNF 2/6, p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ Sulpitius Severus (doubtful). *Letter to Claudia concerning virginity* 4. NPNF 2/11, p. 59. Methodius. *The Symposium* 10.6. ACW 27, p. 148. Cf. John Cassian, who says that the ascetic life will not help us if we still give way to anger and hatred. *Institutes* 8.22. NPNF 2/11, p. 264.

¹⁰⁹ It is held by such writers as: Gregory of Nyssa. *An accurate exposition of the Song of Songs* 4. **From glory to glory**, p. 183.

¹¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa. *On the Making of Man* 17.1-3. NPNF 2/5, pp. 406-407. Theodoret. *Therapy of Hellenic Maladies* 3.89. SC 57/1, pp. 196-197. Basil of Ancyra. *On virginity* 55. PG 30, 780A. T H C van Eijk. "Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality." In: **Epiktasis**, p. 225.

¹¹¹ There is something of this hinted at by Jesus in Luke 10:36, for he says that in the resurrection there is no need for marriage, since "they can no longer die; for they are like the angels." It is in this respect that we become like the angels, and not in terms of the speculation about sexuality and non-human angelic bodies. Peter Steen. "The Problem of Time and Eternity in its Relation to the Nature-Grace Ground-motive." In: **Hearing and Doing**, p. 144, n. 14. Cf. also J A Schep. "Resurrection of the flesh-body in the light of 1 Corinthians 15:50a and Matthew 22:30." *Vox Reformata Occasional Papers* 2. August, 1964, p. 22. Robert H Smith. **Matthew**, p. 263. Origen asserted the contrary, stressing that it is not merely the absence of marriage that is in view, but transformation to angelic natures. *Commentary on Matthew* 17.30. Cited in: L Hennessey. "Origen of Alexandria: The fate of the soul and the body after death." *Second Century* 8 (1991) 177.

and no vacant places need to be filled any more. In that respect redeemed mankind will resemble the realm of the angels, who do not know death and whose number therefore never changes.¹¹²

Prior to their sin Adam and Eve lived an asexual life, and so eschatological life, which is a return to the former Paradisaical state of humankind, will also be asexual, like that of the angels.¹¹³ Some even held that the resurrection body will be a-sexual, on the basis that Adam had been so in the beginning,¹¹⁴ and that sexuality will be absent in the eschatological life.¹¹⁵ Ephrem of Syria and Zeno of Verona thought humankind was originally hermaphrodite,¹¹⁶ while others thought that in the resurrection there would be no distinctions of sex, based on such passages as Galatians 3:28.¹¹⁷

¹¹² J A Schep. "Resurrection of the flesh-body in the light of 1 Corinthians 15:50a and Matthew 22:30." *Vox Reformata Occasional Papers* 2. August, 1964, p. 22.

¹¹³ See the discussion by Gary Anderson of the Rabbinic acceptance of Adam and Eve's sexuality, which points out the distinction between Jewish and Christian ideas in this regard. "Celibacy or consummation in the Garden? Reflections on early Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Garden of Eden." *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989) 121-148. Cf. the concept of the Qumran community in the Dead Sea Scrolls of being like the "holy angels," not as sexless beings but as warriors practising continence for the duration of a holy war [as in 1 Samuel 21:4-5, 2 Samuel 11:11]. Peter Brown. **The body and society**, p. 38.

¹¹⁴ Clement of Alexandria. "For in this world, he says, they marry, and are given in marriage, in which alone the female is distinguished from the male; but in that world it is so no more. There the rewards of this social and holy life, which is based on conjugal union, are laid up, not for male and female, but for man [*anthropos*], the sexual desire which divides humanity being removed." *The Instructor* 1.4. ANF 2, p. 211.

¹¹⁵ Commodian would possibly be unique among the Patristics in suggesting that the resurrected saints will marry and beget children during the millennium. *Instructions* 44. ANF 4, p. 212. C Cooper claims that Justin mentioned marriage and childbearing in the millennium, on the basis that he cites Isaiah 65:17-25, which states (v.23) *No longer will they toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune.* "Chiliasm and the chiliasts." *Reformed Theological Review* 29 (1970) 17. This view is repeated by J Webb Mealy, who adds that Irenaeus holds the same view. **After the thousand years**, pp. 49-50, n. 2. Justin does not assert this, but on the contrary goes on to quote Luke 20:35, to the effect that the saints will neither marry nor give in marriage. *Dialogue with Trypho* 81. ANF 1, pp. 239-240. Irenaeus says that it is the saints who are **living** at the return of the Lord who will bear children during the millennium, not the **resurrected** saints, and Irenaeus cites a prophet (unnamed) who presents this idea. *Against Heresies* 5.35.1. ANF 1, p. 565. Lactantius repeats this latter idea, saying that during the millennium the living saints will "produce an infinite multitude, and their offspring shall be holy, and beloved by God." However, the resurrected saints have no part in this. *The Divine Institutes* 7.24. ANF 7, p. 219. Lactantius does not appear to hold that the living saints will be transformed until after the millennium [*The Divine Institutes* 7.26]. Mealy suggests that since Irenaeus knows of the passage in Matthew 22:30 which teaches that in the resurrection there is no marriage, Irenaeus is proposing an interim situation between resurrection and the final eschatological state. This is untenable because Irenaeus restricts this to the **non-resurrected** saints, nor does he anywhere cite either Matthew 22:30 or its cognate passage in Luke 20:35. Irenaeus does not appear to have a clear picture of how the living saints are finally included in the number of those resurrected.

¹¹⁶ Ephrem of Syria. *Commentary on Genesis* 2.12-13. **Hymns on Paradise**, pp. 205-206. Cf. E ten Napel. "Concepts of Paradise in the Seventh Memra of the *Hexaemeron* by Emmanuel bar Shahhare." *Studia Patristica* 17/3 (1982) 1387, n. 37. This idea appears also in Zeno of Verona. *Tractatus* 1.16.9. PL 11. 381. "The bisexual phoenix is here a symbol of eschatological man arisen from the dead, for whom male and female coincide, and who has

Augustine sees a problem in the creation of Adam and Eve as immortal, but given food to eat and a command to procreate and fill the earth, activities which he sees as incompatible with immortality. With respect to food he says: “If it was by sin that he was made mortal, surely before sinning he did not need such food, since his body could not corrupt for lack of it.”¹¹⁸ He states further, “But at least no one will go so far as to say that there can be a need of food for nourishment except in the case of mortal bodies.”¹¹⁹ With regard to procreation, Augustine suggests that sexual intercourse indicates that the bodies of Adam and Eve were mortal, although it is possible that immortal bodies could produce children without “the concupiscence associated with our corrupt flesh” and these children would be immortal also. When the earth was full of immortal people, there would be no more reproduction, “as we believe it will be after the resurrection.”¹²⁰

Macarius Magnes goes so far as to say that we have the misfortune to be born “through the unclean growth of the flesh,” but can attain to a “rational existence in heaven” which is free of such things. We can therefore imitate this life here and now by eschewing marriage (which he calls “the symbols of corruption”) and living in virginity.¹²¹ Lactantius even said that there is nothing more removed from the nature of God than sexuality and reproduction, since it demands bodiliness for its accomplishment.¹²²

John Climacus wrote of a man who had such chastity that when he looked on a body of great beauty he at once gave praise to its Creator and was stirred to love God. Such

had returned to him his original, perfect unity.” R van den Broek. **The myth of the Phoenix**, pp. 374-375.

¹¹⁷ [Gregory of Nyssa. *On the making of man* 17.2-4. NPNF 2/5, p. 407. Cf. *In ecclesiasten Salomonis* i (PG 44.633) and *On the soul and resurrection*. NPNF 2/5, pp. 464-467]. John Bugge. **Virginitas**, p. 31. Jerome argued on the basis of Galatians 3:28 for the the sexless life here and now through chastity in anticipation of the resurrection. [Jerome. *Commentary on Ephesians* 3. PL 26, 567-568]. Elizabeth Clark. “The place of Jerome’s Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist controversy: the apokatastasis and ascetic ideals.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987) 160. In the *Acts of Peter* 2.275, sexual purity is the condition of salvation, while in the *Acts of John, Andrew and Thomas*, 2.188-259, 390-425, 425-531, sexlessness is the dominant feature of the last age and a requirement for redemption. John Bugge. **Virginitas**, p. 31, n. 2.

¹¹⁸ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 3.21.33. ACW 41, p. 97.

¹¹⁹ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 3.21.33. ACW 41, p. 98. Cf. *ibid.*, 6.21.32. ACW 41, p. 202.

¹²⁰ Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 3.21.33. ACW 41, p. 98. Cf. *ibid.*, 9.3.6. ACW 42, pp. 73-74.

¹²¹ Macarius Magnes. *Apocriticus* 4.27. **The Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes**, p. 147. Cf. Augustine’s criticism of his early depreciation of bodily life in his opinion that but for the Fall we would have escaped the ‘encumbrance’ of family relationships, which Burnaby says receives the severest criticism in his entire *Retractationes*. J Burnaby. “The *Retractationes* of Saint Augustine: self-criticism or apologia?” In: **Augustinus Magister**. Vol. 1, pp. 89-90.

¹²² Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 1.8. ANF 7, p. 18.

a man, said John Climacus, “has already risen to immortality before the general resurrection.”¹²³ John holds that the chaste man who is not stirred by any sexual thoughts “even when he himself is still in this life, is someone who has already risen from the dead.”¹²⁴ As a result of such views, human bodily existence and especially sexuality was denigrated under the influence of ascetic theology.

5.2.6 To be like the angels: Matthew 22:30

The idea that the saints become angels after death is found in numerous Patristic texts,¹²⁵ based on the words of Jesus, who says that we shall be “like the angels” in the resurrection, neither marrying nor giving in marriage [Matthew 22:30, Luke 20:34-36].¹²⁶ The practice of asceticism was commonly called the “angelic life,” since those who are practising virginity are imitating the life of the angels,¹²⁷ an idea deriving from the Alexandrian tradition.

Clement of Alexandria is perhaps the first to stress the transformation of the soul into an angelic nature, when it is no longer able to be “unrighteous or evil,” that is, it does not “have the opportunity of again sinning by the assumption of flesh.” His anti-fleshly view leads to the idea that the eschatological life is non-fleshly, that is, like

¹²³ John Climacus. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* 15. Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 179.

¹²⁴ John Climacus. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* 15. Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 172. Peter Brown comments on this phenomenon: “Former objects of sexual desire might be glimpsed, at last, in terms of the abstract beauty of their created form. Their beauty became translucent to the eye. It would shake the soul to its depths, but gently now, much as the impalpable beauty of the liturgy now swayed the heart of the monk...” **The Body and Society**, p. 239. The reason this gives a foretaste of the resurrection is that the monk has attained to the state which shall prevail after the resurrection. The concept of eternal life as contemplation of beauty is apparent in this view, but it is rather more akin to Neo-platonism than to a Biblical view.

¹²⁵ Examples are: *Letter of the Church at Smyrna, concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp*, 2. ANF 1, p. 39. Origen. *Homily on Leviticus* 9.11. PG 12, 524A. *De principiis* 1.8.4. ANF 4, pp. 266-267. Hippolytus. *Fragment of the Discourse on the Resurrection and Incorruption*. ANF 5, p. 238. Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 364. R W Thomson, p. 74. Cf. also *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 414. R W Thomson, pp. 89-90. Eusebius “Gallicanus,” *Sermon* 17.8 (On Pascha 6) attributed to Faustus of Lerins. Cited in: D J Sheerin. **The Eucharist**, p. 115. Hilary of Poitiers. P T Wild. **Man’s divinization according to St. Hilary**, p. 125.

¹²⁶ Cf. David E Aune. **The cultic setting of realized eschatology in the early church**, pp. 202-211, for a discussion of the view of Marcion that being “like the angels” precluded a resurrection of the physical body, since the angels were bodiless beings, and implied the necessity of celibacy in this life, assuming the characteristics of the future life here and now as a result of baptism. Aune notes that in his polemics with Marcion, Tertullian, unlike other Patristic writers, defended the idea that angels do have bodies. [*Against Marcion* 3.9. ANF 3, p. 329] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹²⁷ T H C van Eijk. “Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality.” In: **Epiktasis**, p. 225. This idea is found for instance in Methodius. *The Symposium* 8.2. ACW 27, p. 107; *ibid.*, 9.5. ACW 27, p. 139. Gregory of Nyssa. *On virginity* 13. NPNF 2/5, p. 360. Ambrose. *Concerning virgins* 1.9.48. NPNF 2/10, p. 370. Novatian. *In Praise of Purity* 7.2. FC 67, p. 170.

that of the angels.¹²⁸ But he stresses that this life can be attained already through knowledge. “The gnostic who has attained perfection on earth is already equal to an angel.”¹²⁹ This view of the transformation of the resurrection is evident in Origen’s statement concerning the relative conditions of the saved and the damned.

The judgement of the just is the transformation from the active [physical] body to angelic bodies, the judgement of the impious is a change from the active [physical] body to dark and dismal bodies. For the impious shall rise not in the first judgement but in the second.¹³⁰

Eusebius said that after her death the soul of Helena, mother of Constantine, was “remoulded... into an incorruptible and angelic essence.”¹³¹ Augustine suggested that human beings become angels in the eschatological life to complete the angelic hierarchy which has been fragmented because of the defection of Satan and the angels who followed him,¹³² an idea which implicitly denigrates the goodness of **human** creaturely being. Methodius had earlier rejected this idea, arguing that it destroys the order and intention of God in the creation.

Moreover, man also having been appointed by the original order of things to inhabit the world, and to rule over all that is in it, when he is immortal, will never be changed from being a man into the form either of angels or any other; for neither do angels undergo a change from their original form to another. For Christ at His coming did not proclaim that the human nature should, when it is immortal, be remoulded or transformed into another nature, but into what it was before the fall.¹³³

¹²⁸ Clement of Alexandria. *Comments on the First Epistle of Peter* 1.3. ANF 2, p. 571. *The Instructor* 2.10. ANF 2, p. 263.

¹²⁹ [Clement of Alexandria. *The Stromata* 6.13. ANF 2, p. 504] E F Osborn. **The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria**, p. 81. Similarly in the eschatological life, human beings can become angels and then archangels. E F Osborn, *ibid.*, pp. 82-83, citing *Prophetic Eclogues* 57.

¹³⁰ Origen. *Selecta in Psalmos* 1.5. PG 12, 1097-1100. Origen says that the saints will be so much like the angels that they can be said to have become angels. [*Commentary in Matthew* 17.30, *Homily in Leviticus* 9.11.] Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 52. Paulinus of Nola says simply that “we are changed into the appearance of angels.” *Poem* 31. ACW 40, p. 315. Augustine speaks of the resurrection of the body as an “angelic change.” *On faith and the creed* 10.24. NPNF 1/3, p. 332.

¹³¹ Eusebius. *Life of Constantine* 3.46. NPNF 2/1, p. 531.

¹³² Augustine. *The City of God* 22.1. NPNF 1/2, p. 480. *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 29. NPNF 1/3, p. 247. *On faith and the creed* 10.24. NPNF 1/3, p. 332.

¹³³ Methodius. *The Discourse on the Resurrection* 1.10. ANF 6, p. 366. Methodius thinks that after the millennium the saints will undergo another change, from human form to angelic grandeur and beauty. *The Symposium* 9.5. ACW 27, p. 139. However, he denies that the saints “become angels” in any literal sense. Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 63. Similarly, Lactantius says the righteous dead are made immortal like the angels in the millenium. *The Divine Institutes* 7.6. ANF 7, p. 203. Cf. also *The Divine Institutes* 7.26. ANF 7, p. 221. *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 72. ANF 7, p. 255. Tertullian says that we will not engage in marriage in the eschaton, since we will be “translated... into the condition and

The suggestion that we shall be like the angels, who do not marry, was seen by some as meaning that we will not be raised in the flesh, as it is the flesh that is involved in marriage.¹³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa held that in the eschaton we will be transformed into something divine, no longer with a nature composed of flesh and blood. We will instead be like the angels, free from the lusts of the body as the passions of the flesh will not make war on the soul.¹³⁵

Ambrose even says that virgins are like the angels, not after the resurrection but in this life. He interprets Matthew 22:30 to mean that “they who marry not nor are given in marriage are as the angels in heaven.” Ambrose says that this is “the practice of the life of heaven” spread through the whole world, a “heavenly service which the host of rejoicing angels spoke of for the earth.”¹³⁶ That which is promised in the resurrection for the rest of the believers is already given to the virgins, so that they are of this world, yet not in this world.¹³⁷

5.3. Death as liberation of the soul from the body

Patristic authors who did see the flesh as the source of sin saw in it only passions, lusts, and desires. Salvation was then considered to involve deliverance from the flesh, and implicitly, from bodily life with its passions.¹³⁸ This association of sin with bodiliness negates the Biblical view that humankind in its bodily existence was originally created good.

What we find if we penetrate beneath the thought of this whole era is an almost irreconcilable conflict between the biblical doctrine of creation and a Greek-Platonic dualism. This is accompanied and paralleled by a similar conflict between the biblical and Greek views of sin. In fact both conflicts are at bottom identical. Christians in the second century had rejected the gnostic attack on creator and creation, and had in rebuttal asserted both the goodness of the Creator and the Creation. But their Platonism nonetheless persisted in their attempts to explain the material creation as either a kind of immaturity (Irenaeus) or a penal and pedagogical necessity (Origen). This was fundamentally because they equated sin (or in Origen the consequence of sin) with bodily passion, and salvation or *theosis* with the unpassioned or *impassible*

sanctity of angels.” *To his wife* 1.1. ANF 4, p. 39. Cf. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 62. ANF 3, 593.

¹³⁴ Justin Martyr writes against this view. *Fragments of the lost work of Justin on the Resurrection*, 2. ANF 1, pp. 294-295.

¹³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa. *An accurate exposition of the Song of Songs* 1. **From glory to glory**, pp. 154-155. Gregory held that in the resurrection we shall be returned to our former pristine state, which was that of the angels, a view he deduces from Luke 20:35-36. *On the making of man* 17.2. NPNF 2/5, p. 407.

¹³⁶ Ambrose. *Concerning virgins* 1.3.11. NPNF 2/10, p. 365.

¹³⁷ Ambrose. *Concerning virgins* 1.9.52. NPNF 2/10, p. 371.

¹³⁸ See the discussion in Chapter 5.4.2 below concerning the unchanging nature of the immortal soul, which is the basis for this idea.

life. Had they conceived of sin as a really spiritual phenomenon they would have experienced much less difficulty either in explaining the angelic Fall or in dissociating evil from the body and its normal passions.¹³⁹

However, in the Origenist tradition, sin was associated with bodiliness,¹⁴⁰ and salvation with being freed from the body. Origen cites Philippians 3:21, “our soul has been humbled down to the dust, and imprisoned in the body of our lowliness.”¹⁴¹ Elsewhere he says that we are burdened with “the body of humiliation,” but in the resurrection this body shall be “conformed to the body of the glory of Christ.”¹⁴² Following Origen death itself was seen differently, no more as the way in which the flesh was delivered from sin, but the way in which the soul was delivered from the flesh!

By the Origenist tradition, I mean not the authentic doctrine of Origen, but its modified fourth-century form. In this tradition emphasis is not on the flesh, but on the liberation of the immortal soul from the flesh. Basically flesh is the locus of passion, change, evil, death: sin is very closely equated with flesh; salvation with the unfleshed existence of the soul. With this goes a theology in which Christ and the Holy Spirit are subordinate, mediatory agents of the Father. The Father as passionless, immortal, a genetic deity cannot make direct contact with sinful, enfleshed man. The ascent of man from his genetic, mortal condition to *theosis* or union with Deity is thus mediated by agents who are, so to speak, at home in both worlds: as less than God they can meet man; as more than man they can meet God.¹⁴³

Ambrose stresses that the death of the body, “the departure from this life,” is not a penalty but a remedy, “because it is the end of evils.”¹⁴⁴ Ambrose stresses “how much more is that rest to be sought for, which shall be followed by the eternal pleasure of the resurrection to come, where there is no succession of faults, no enticement to sin.”¹⁴⁵ Ambrose states that in the body we are surrounded by snares, and the body is an enemy in conflict with the soul. He urges distancing ourselves from the body, since

¹³⁹ Brooks Otis. “Cappadocian thought as a coherent system.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958) 114. See Appendix 1 for a discussion of *theosis*.

¹⁴⁰ Note that Origen himself does not see bodiliness as the cause of sin, since it is the consequence of sin in a pre-incarnate state. He sees evil as originating in the will and not in corporeal nature.

¹⁴¹ Origen. *Treatise on Prayer* 2.3. ACW 19, p. 19. He further refers to “the body of lowliness” in *Treatise on Prayer* 23.4. ACW 19, p. 80.

¹⁴² Origen. *Commentary on Matthew* 13.21. ANF 10, p. 488.

¹⁴³ Brooks Otis. “Cappadocian thought as a coherent system.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958) 101. Otis shows that for the Cappadocians, sin was essentially ignorance based on the fleshly passions. *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 123.

¹⁴⁴ Ambrose. *On the belief in the resurrection* 2.36-38. NPNF 2/10, p. 179.

¹⁴⁵ Ambrose. *On the belief in the resurrection* 2.123. NPNF 2/10, p. 195.

the soul gives life to the body, but “the flesh pours death into the soul.”¹⁴⁶ Any view of salvation which denigrates the body, seeing it as the source of sin, thereby takes an essentially gnostic view.

According to Daley, Ambrose’s conception is centred on the fate of the soul after death rather than on the resurrection and subsequent judgement. He considers death a release from the cares of this fleshly life, and thus urges his hearers not to be afraid of death or to grieve over those who have died.¹⁴⁷

Death brings rest for the body and freedom for the soul,¹⁴⁸ a casting aside of the trappings of the flesh and freedom from the prison of the body. “Then we are free to fly to that place above, where our souls once groaned in the act of commingling with the bodily passions of this flesh of ours.” The purpose of embodiment was the use of reason by the soul to “bring under subjection the irrational emotions of our bodies.”¹⁴⁹ Thus the body is denigrated as a source of sin, a hindrance to the soul, and ruled by irrational emotions, passions and desires.

5.3.1 Can the soul feel without the body? The instrumentalist view

Those who maintained that the soul could feel directly, without the instrumentality of the body, were able to assert that the soul could thereby endure punishment or enjoy rewards. But those who held that the soul, being a simple substance, cannot suffer, were forced to insist that it needs the body to experience the suffering which the soul then feels, and so judgement requires the resurrection.

John Cassian argues that it is unreasonable to think that “the nobler part of man, in which as the blessed Apostle shows, the image and likeness of God consists,” will be without ability to sense after death and separation from the body, which he describes as a burden with which the soul is oppressed in this world. The soul contains the power of reason and it is this which enables the body to sense things, so that after the soul has “put off the grossness of the flesh with which it is now weighed down,” its intellectual powers will be better able to function than ever. For this reason, the apostle Paul “actually wished to depart from this flesh” so as to be “joined more earnestly to the Lord.” Cassian cites Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:6, and says that “continuance of the soul which is in the flesh is distance from the Lord, and absence from Christ” whereas “separation and departure from this flesh involves

¹⁴⁶ Ambrose. *Death as a good* 7.26. FC 65, p. 90. However, Peter Chrysologus rejects the idea of death as a “good” as this is the result of death’s war on humanity using violence and deception [*Sermon* 118.6]. Peter may be thinking of Ambrose here, or at least the tradition which informed his treatise *Death as a good*. Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early Church**, p. 165, and n. 69, p. 254.

¹⁴⁷ Brian E Daley. **The hope of the early church**, p. 100.

¹⁴⁸ Ambrose. *Isaac, or the soul* 8.79. FC 65, pp. 64-65. Cf. *Death as a good* 1.1. FC 65, p. 70, where Ambrose also says that death cannot harm the soul.

¹⁴⁹ Ambrose. *Cain and Abel* 2.9.36. FC 42, pp. 434-435.

presence with Christ.”¹⁵⁰ Cassian is quite convinced that the soul is able to suffer, and understands the story of Luke 16 in that light.

For that they are not idle after the separation from this body, and are not incapable of feeling, the parable in the gospel shows, which tells us of the beggar Lazarus and Dives clothed in purple, one of whom obtained a position of bliss, i.e., Abraham’s bosom, the other is consumed with the dreadful heat of eternal fire. But if you care too to understand the words spoken to the thief, “Today you shall be with me in Paradise,” what do they clearly show but that not only does their former intelligence continue with the souls, but also that in their changed condition they partake of some state which corresponds to their actions and deserts? For the Lord would certainly never have promised him this, if he had known that his soul after being separated from the flesh would either have been deprived of perception or have been resolved into nothing.¹⁵¹

The idea that the soul was not without sensation after death did not lead automatically to the idea of immediate judgement and punishments. The *Teaching of Addaeus* holds that souls are still conscious and able to perceive, but will not receive punishment or rewards until the resurrection, as both body and soul are responsible for the deeds of the person and must receive their just deserts together.¹⁵²

Lactantius held that the soul is not corporeal, but is the source of sensation and life, so that when the soul is withdrawn at death, the body is left lifeless and without sensation. The soul cannot suffer from corporeal punishments directly, but because God is a spirit, just as the soul is, God is able to make the soul suffer.

It must not, however, be supposed that, because the perception of the body fails, the sensibility of the soul is extinguished and perishes. For it is not the soul that becomes senseless when the body fails, but it is the body which becomes senseless when the soul takes its departure, because it draws all sensibility with it. But since the soul by its presence gives sensibility to the body, and causes it to live, it is impossible that it should not live and perceive by itself, since it is in itself both consciousness and life.¹⁵³

Lactantius goes on to deal with an objection concerning the judgement, which may be raised because of his anthropological views, namely, that the simple immortal soul cannot suffer, as suffering involves change, impossible for a simple substance. He gets out of this conundrum by suggesting that the souls of the wicked are no longer purely simple substances. For this he is drawing on a Stoic idea expressed by Virgil

¹⁵⁰ John Cassian. *Conferences* 1.14. NPNF 2/11, p. 302.

¹⁵¹ John Cassian. *Conference* 1.14. NPNF 2/11, p. 301.

¹⁵² *The Teaching of Addaeus the Apostle*. ANF 8, p. 655.

¹⁵³ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.12. ANF 7, p. 209.

[*Aeneid* 6.735] (which Lactantius says is “near to the truth”) of a “middle nature in between that of an immortal and a mortal” because of the corruption of their sins, which corruption of their immortal nature then makes it possible for them to experience suffering.¹⁵⁴

However, even in this speculative doctrine, Lactantius maintains the original Patristic conception that the soul must suffer together with the body, because both were involved in sin. Since the punishments for sin are corporeal in nature, they require the body to be resurrected in order to be able to sense those punishments. Since the purpose of these new bodies is to endure eternal suffering, they will not be like these present bodies, but created especially to suffer eternally. But the contrast between spirit and body, which postulates the inability of one to cause suffering to the other, both violates the distinction between God and the creatures he has made, since the spirit is considered to be of the same substance with God; and it generates unsolvable pseudo-problems concerning the relationship of the soul to the body.

Pettersen says that the current neo-Platonic teaching was that the soul was *apathes* in its own being, but was able to suffer the *pathe* of the body: “the soul was united to a body which, in its own bodily being, suffered.”¹⁵⁵ He says further “Nemesius reports that most learned authors took the view that the body was the sole sufferer, and that, even though the body derived its capacity to feel pain from the soul, the soul itself remained impassible.”¹⁵⁶

The debate as to whether or not the soul can “feel” without the body is relevant to the discussion of post-mortem punishment. Can the soul be punished by material fire? Origen circumvented this by proposing that the fire of hell was spiritual and thus could act on the soul. Others saw the fire of hell as material, and held that the soul could not “feel” without the medium of the body.

5.3.2 Death as separation of the soul from God

Origen distinguishes three kinds of death in Scripture: a) death **to** sin, b) death **because of** sin, i.e. “The soul that sins, it shall die,” and c) bodily death, in the separation of the soul from the body.¹⁵⁷ It is interesting that Origen, as one of the first

¹⁵⁴ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.20. ANF 7, p. 216.

¹⁵⁵ Alwyn Pettersen. **Athanasius and the human body**, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Alwyn Pettersen. **Athanasius and the human body**, p. 7. Nemesius. *On the nature of man* 3.22. LCC 4, pp. 300-304. This view is also found in Cyril of Alexandria. *Scholion* 2. Cited in: Lionel R Wickham. **Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters**. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. xxxiii, n. 70.

¹⁵⁷ Origen. *Dialogue with Heraclides* 168. LCC 2, p. 453. This three-fold distinction of the meaning of sin can be found in the commentary on Luke by Ambrose, who drew on this discourse of Origen with Heraclides, incorporating whole passages verbatim. H C Puech & P Hadot. “L’Entretien d’Origène avec Héraclide et le commentaire de Saint Ambroise sur l’Évangile de Saint Luc.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (1959) 206-207. Ambrose says that death **because of** sin is ignorance of Christ who is life. Idem, p. 209. Hennessey suggests that this three-fold distinction in Origen is derived from the Stoic understanding of human acts as

to maintain the immortality of the soul, finds it necessary to define death so as to exclude the soul from his meaning. He says: “There being, then, three kinds of death, let us see whether the human soul is immortal in respect of the three kinds of death, or if not in respect of the three, yet in respect to some of them.” Origen then says that all suffer bodily death, which is “a matter of moral indifference,” but this does not affect the soul, which is thus immortal in this sense. The soul can also die **to** sin, which is a cause of blessedness and immortality, or it can die **because of** sin, and as a result is punished after death, as it is immortal and remains in existence.¹⁵⁸ Origen uses this distinction to show that to say “the soul is immortal” lacks subtlety, in that the soul **is** mortal in the sense of being dead because of sin. Origen argues that the soul is immortal if it has been given eternal life by Christ.¹⁵⁹

Augustine held that although the soul is considered immortal, it has in a sense its own death. It is immortal because it continues to live and feel, but it “dies” when God forsakes it, and it lives only in punishment. It does not die as the body dies, since it could not thereby feel the punishments it deserves. But these punishments are not those which precede the resurrection; rather, they are those which follow the resurrection. The soul is necessary as only by means of the soul can the suffering of the body be experienced. Thus the body must undergo punishment together with the soul, since it could not otherwise suffer.¹⁶⁰

Augustine defines death as the separation of the soul from the body, which then dies since it is the soul which gives the body life. The death of the soul is its separation from God as a result of the loss of communion because of sin. Since the soul is indestructible, it cannot cease to exist, but its separation from God is justly called the death of the soul. This is the first death.¹⁶¹ The second death for Augustine is the damnation following the last judgement, where the soul together with the resurrected body are given over to eternal death, which is also not cessation of existence, but separation from God.¹⁶² Thus Augustine speaks of death in two respects, that of human nature as creaturely, and that in terms of its relation to God. These two views are found in his interpretation of 1 Timothy 4:16, where he says that the immortality

good, bad and indifferent. “Origen of Alexandria: The fate of the soul and the body after death.” *Second Century* 8 (1991) 163.

¹⁵⁸ Origen. *Dialogue with Heraclides* 168. LCC 2, p. 453.

¹⁵⁹ Origen. *Dialogue with Heraclides* 171-172. LCC 2, p. 454. See H C Puech & P Hadot. “L’Entretien d’Origène avec Héraclide et le commentaire de Saint Ambroise sur l’Évangile de Saint Luc.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (1959) 206-207.

¹⁶⁰ Augustine. *The City of God* 13.2. NPNF 1/2, p. 245. Cf. *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 93. NPNF 1/3, p. 267, where Augustine says that the “first death” took place when the soul was compelled to be separated from the body, while the “second death” is when the soul is compelled to remain joined to the suffering body.

¹⁶¹ [Augustine. *The City of God* 13.2. NPNF 1/2, p. 245. *The City of God* 13.15. NPNF 1/2, pp. 251-252. *On the Trinity* 4.3.5. NPNF 1/3, pp. 71-72. *On the Psalms* 69.2-3. NPNF 1/8, p. 300. *Sermon* 65.4. PL 38, 428-429] Kari E Børresen. “Augustin, interprète du dogme de la résurrection.” *Studia Theologica* 23 (1969) 147.

¹⁶² [Augustine. *The City of God* 13.8; 21.2. NPNF 1/2, pp. 248, 452-453] Kari E Børresen. “Augustin, interprète du dogme de la résurrection.” *Studia Theologica* 23 (1969) 147.

of God is absolute and immutable, whereas the immortality of the soul is its continual existence although mutable, and thus able to experience either a better or a worse fate depending on its deserts.¹⁶³

5.4 The inherent immortality of the soul

While the Patristic writers who held to a unitary anthropology generally did not hold that the soul was inherently immortal, there were exceptions such as Athenagoras. Similarly, while the instrumentalist anthropology was generally correlated with belief in the inherent immortality of the soul, there were exceptions, such as Clement of Alexandria. Clement held that the body was merely an instrument of the soul, but the soul for him was not naturally immortal, although he has often been understood to teach the immortality of the soul, on the basis of a number of fragments ascribed to him, which taught that all souls were naturally immortal.¹⁶⁴ However, these fragments are now considered spurious,¹⁶⁵ and in authentic fragments from Clement's Biblical commentary, the *Hypotyposes*, he rejects the inherent immortality of the soul, stating in commenting on 1 Peter 1:5, 9, that the soul is made immortal by the grace of God.¹⁶⁶ However, Clement was an exception, as most writers who used an instrumentalist anthropology held to the inherent immortality of the soul.

5.4.1 Exegetical arguments for immortality of the soul

There are few instances when immortality is mentioned in the Scriptures, and of these, two refer to the eternal life of **God**,¹⁶⁷ and the instances where it is predicated of human beings apply only to that immortality of the **whole person** received in the resurrection as the gift of God.¹⁶⁸ Any exegetical arguments in support of a doctrine of the immortality of the soul are deductive and inferential, using implications of the textual evidence, but always uncritically presupposing that the soul is an immortal substance ontologically separate from the body.

¹⁶³ [Augustine. *The literal meaning of Genesis* 7.28.43. ACW 42, p. 31. *Tractate in John* 23.9. NPNF 1/7, pp. 154-155. *Sermon* 65.3. PL 38, 428. *Letter* 166.2.3. NPNF 1/1, pp. 523-524.] Kari E Børresen. "Augustin, interprète du dogme de la résurrection." *Studia Theologica* 23 (1969) 147-148.

¹⁶⁴ Clement of Alexandria. *From the book on the soul*. ANF 2, p. 580.

¹⁶⁵ According to Stählin, the fragments from Clement's book *On the Soul*, preserved in Maximus the Confessor, are spurious. Stählin. **Clemens**. III, p. lxxi. Cited by: E A Clark. "The influence of Aristotelian thought on Clement of Alexandria: a study in philosophical transmission," p. 93. The fragments from the book *On Providence* [ANF 2, p. 580.], also preserved in Maximus, have been rejected as spurious by E F Osborn. **The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria**, p. 190.

¹⁶⁶ E A Clark. "The influence of Aristotelian thought on Clement of Alexandria: a study in philosophical transmission," p. 94.

¹⁶⁷ 1 Timothy 1:17, 6:16.

¹⁶⁸ Romans 2:7, 1 Corinthians 15:53-54.

One such passage of Scripture, which when interpreted within the framework of a dualistic anthropology, appeared to “demonstrate” the immortality of the soul, was Matthew 10:28.¹⁶⁹ This passage states that while human beings can only kill the body, God can destroy both body and soul in hell. It was understood to mean that since the soul survives death and is unable to be harmed by human beings, it has an inherent immortality that only God can remove. This view is found in Eusebius,¹⁷⁰ Hippolytus,¹⁷¹ Gregory the Illuminator,¹⁷² Salvian,¹⁷³ and Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁷⁴

Genesis 1:26, which states that humankind was created “in the image and likeness of God,” was also used to demonstrate the immortality of the soul. This was interpreted ontologically by some Patristic writers,¹⁷⁵ even though there is no indication in the Scriptures that the passage should be understood in that way, since they present the whole person as created in the image of God, but increasingly this was restricted to the soul alone.¹⁷⁶

It was held that the nature of the soul is like the God who created it, and since God is immortal and eternal, the soul is also immortal. This appears in the thought of Lactantius. “For the soul cannot entirely perish, since it received its origin from the

¹⁶⁹ The the immortality of the soul was pronounced an article of faith at the Lateran Council under Leo X (1513). Kristeller notes that Matthew 10:28 and John 12:25 are the only Scriptural references in the Lateran decree. P O Kristeller. **Renaissance thought and its sources**, p. 309, n. 10. See further on the subsequent debate over this decree, *ibid.*, pp. 194-196.

¹⁷⁰ Eusebius. *On the Theophania* 4.7. Samuel Lee, p. 223. Cf. *Preparation for the Gospel* 13.8. E H Gifford, vol. 2, pp. 711-712.

¹⁷¹ Hippolytus. *Fragments from the Commentary on Susannah* 1.24. ANF 5, p. 193.

¹⁷² Gregory the Illuminator. *The Teaching of Saint Gregory* 600. R W Thomson, p. 146.

¹⁷³ Salvian. “Of the two deadly evils, it is less, I think, for a Christian to endure captivity of the body than of the soul, according to the teachings of the Saviour himself in the Gospel, that the death of the soul is much more fatal than that of the body.” *On the government of God* 6.12. E M Sanford, p. 179.

¹⁷⁴ Theodore of Mopsuestia. *Commentary on the Nicene Creed* 5. *Woodbrooke Studies* 5 (1932) 59. Those writers who held to a unitary anthropology who accepted the immortality of the soul tended to see this text as an argument for the **resurrection** since both soul **and** body were to be destroyed in hell. See for instance Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 35. ANF 3, p. 570. *Scorpiace* 9. ANF 3, pp. 641-642. This passage in Matthew fits in well with his views, since it explicitly refers to the punishment of both soul and body in hell: one does not suffer without the other. Cf. also Peter of Alexandria. *That the soul did not pre-exist (the body) nor did it sin (before)* [Fragment II.2]. **St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr**, p. 131. Peter Chrysologus. *Sermon 101. On Luke 12:4-6*. FC 17, pp. 165-166.

¹⁷⁵ Theodore of Mopsuestia correlated the immortality of the soul with an ontological similarity with God, so that we should be like God not only in character but also in nature, with the soul bound to God not by need alone, “but also by kinship of nature.” Devreese, “Anciens commentateurs grecs de l’Octateuque.” *Revue Biblique* 45 (1936) p. 368, n. 1. Cited in: R A Norris. **Manhood and Christ**, p. 143.

¹⁷⁶ For a survey of the Patristic interpretation of the “image of God” see Z C Xintaras. “Man the image of God according to the Greek Fathers.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 1 (1954) 48-62.

Spirit of God, which is eternal.”¹⁷⁷ Prudentius argued that the nature of the Creator is reflected in what he created, so that “...it is the eternal who gives the eternal, the mortal who bestows mortal things; divine gifts are from God, transitory things from one whose life is fleeting.” Thus God must have created souls immortal, as otherwise they would decay and vanish, and if God creates only what “is decayed or doomed to decay and possesses nothing that is more precious than these, then is He poor and weak and undeserving of supreme honour, not all-powerful but a vain shadow of godhead.”¹⁷⁸ While the soul is not immortal in itself, it does endure since it originates from the eternal Spirit of God, and therefore must also be eternal. Lactantius says that souls are immortal because they naturally seek after God, who is immortal. “Therefore we alone receive religion, that we may know from this source that the soul of man is not mortal, since it longs for and acknowledges God, who is immortal.”¹⁷⁹ This argument presupposes a dualistic anthropology that would be difficult to defend against the charge of gnosticism, since the Spirit of God is also the originator of the body and other creatures, which are nevertheless not considered eternal. The ontologising of the relationship between God and the creation in this way is the source of a number of errors concerning redemption and eschatology in Patristic thought.

Another argument for the immortality of the soul derived from Scripture was based on the statement that God is not the God of the dead but of the living [Matthew 22:32], even though this saying is introduced by Jesus as an argument for the **resurrection**:

But about the resurrection of the dead - have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’: He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

Various Patristic writers understood this text to mean that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not dead, but alive, that is, their souls were immortal and living with God. The resurrection means merely that they will once again receive their bodies, but even now they are alive although without bodies. For instance, Novatian argues from the view that because God is the God of the living, not of the dead, and because he is also the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that therefore the dead are immortal and alive unto God, since otherwise he could not be the God of the living, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had all died.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.12. ANF 7, p. 209. Cf. Methodius, who says that God created souls in his image, and thus they are “endowed with reason and immortality.” *The Symposium* 6.1. ACW 27, p. 91. Eusebius argues that human beings must be different from animals, contrary to the assertions of the philosophers, since the immortal soul bears a resemblance to God. *The proof of the Gospel* 3.3. Translations of Christian Literature. Vol. 1, p. 123.

¹⁷⁸ Prudentius. *A reply to the address of Symmachus* 2.110-120. Loeb II, pp. 15, 17.

¹⁷⁹ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 3.12. ANF 7, p. 80. Cf. *The Divine Institutes* 7.9. “Since therefore wisdom, which is given to man alone, is nothing else but the knowledge of God, it is evident that the soul does not perish, nor undergo dissolution, but that it remains forever, because it seeks after and loves God, who is everlasting...” ANF 7, p. 206.

¹⁸⁰ Novatian. *On the Trinity* 25. ANF 5, p. 636.

John of Damascus argues in a similar vein, and on the basis of this text (and others), asserts that “it is clear that the souls do not lie in the graves, but the bodies.”¹⁸¹ This is in contrast to the approach taken by Justin Martyr, who from this same text argues **against** the idea that the dead are now in heaven.

For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but do not admit this [truth], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say that there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians...¹⁸²

Justin goes on to assert that therefore “I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead” followed by the millennium. Justin thus correctly interprets this text as speaking of the resurrection and not of the immortality of the soul.

Exegetical arguments for the immortality of the soul are thus few and somewhat strained. They all presuppose the idea, and are attempts to interpret the Scriptures in terms of a presupposition that can not be derived from Scripture itself, but in fact has its origins in pagan views of the afterlife.

5.4.2 Philosophical arguments for immortality of the soul

Since the idea of the immortality of the soul originated in pagan religion and philosophical speculation, it is not surprising that throughout the Patristic period the principal arguments for the immortality of the soul are philosophical in nature. O’Daly comments on this phenomenon in connection with Augustine.

There are, however, topics on which Scripture is silent. One such topic is the nature of the soul. Hence Augustine’s concept of the soul as an immaterial, immortal, rational and dynamic entity is substantially a philosophical one. He will inevitably ask questions that are less raised by the opacity of Scripture than by the self-generated problems of a particular line of speculative inquiry.¹⁸³

The problems which arise from this non-Scriptural approach to the nature of the human person are in fact pseudo-problems, rooted in a perspective other than that

¹⁸¹ John of Damascus. *On the Orthodox Faith* 4.27. NPNF 2/9, p. 100. See also John Cassian. *Conferences* 1.14. NPNF 2/11, p. 301.

¹⁸² Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho* 80. ANF 1, p. 239.

¹⁸³ G J P O’Daly. “Augustine on the origin of souls.” In: **Platonismus und Christentum**, p. 184. L Schopp says that “To Augustine of Hippo belongs the distinction of having been the first philosopher in the Christian tradition of the West to compose a formal treatise on the immortality of the soul.” Introduction. **St. Augustine. On the Immortality of the Soul**. FC 2, p. 3. This was the fifth book written by Augustine, prior to his baptism (ca. 387 AD). However R J O’Connell says that in his *Soliloquies* Augustine is attempting to evolve a *reasoned demonstration* for the soul’s immortality. **St Augustine’s Early Theory of Man, AD 386-391**, pp. 112-113.

which Scripture itself adopts. All attempts to resolve these problems simply compound the difficulties, as they result in moving thought even further away from the true basis of Christian faith, God's revelation in Scripture.¹⁸⁴ This can be seen in the development of Augustine's thought.

...Augustine himself began his career as a Christian priest and author with an idea of immortality of the soul which excludes resurrection of the body. Yet Augustine's theology of the resurrection of the body came to be what one of his biographers has called "a central preoccupation" in his old age, tremendously enriched by a life-long struggle to grasp its essential meaning.¹⁸⁵

Miles argues that in his dialogue *De quantitate animae* 76, Augustine implies and requires the assumption of the immortality of the soul, and demonstrate his eagerness to interpret the dogma of the resurrection "in a way which is congruent with the philosophers' idea of the immortality of the soul."¹⁸⁶ The result is that Augustine states:

Then death, which was an object of fear and an obstacle to the soul's fullest union with the full truth, death, namely, the sheer flight and escape from this body, is now yearned for as the greatest boon.¹⁸⁷

There are a number of different philosophical arguments used for the immortality of the soul. One of the most common was the idea that if the soul was not immortal, then there was no reason to live moral lives, since the implication was that after death there would be no punishment.¹⁸⁸ Rejecting the immortality of the soul, even though

¹⁸⁴ See for instance the analysis given by Albrecht Dihle. "Immortality as a problem of philosophical investigation - not as a hope implied in religious faith - can be dealt with only in the context of the wider question of whether reality is to be found apart from the world as we perceive it by our senses. Such a reality, however, which would transcend empirical vicissitudes, has to be open to intellectual understanding. Immortality, a concept which clearly contradicts our experience, can only be conceived if the true self or soul of man does, in fact, belong to this intelligible reality, and it is only the intelligible which bestows structure, life, and consciousness on our empirical world." **The theory of will in Classical Antiquity**, p. 9. This clearly shows the speculative philosophical character of the concept of immortality, an approach foreign to the covenantal thrust of Scripture which is presented to us in ordinary language for ordinary people, and thus accessible to all and not just to an intellectual elite.

¹⁸⁵ Margaret R Miles. **Augustine on the body**, p. 99, citing: P Brown. **Augustine of Hippo**, p. 366. Cf. the survey of the development of Augustine's views on the resurrection in Frederick van Fleteren. "Augustine and the resurrection." *Studies in Medieval Culture* 12, pp. 9-15.

¹⁸⁶ Margaret R Miles. **Augustine on the body**, pp. 107-108.

¹⁸⁷ [Augustine. *The greatness of the soul* 33.76. ACW 9, p. 106] Margaret R Miles. **Augustine on the body**, p. 108.

¹⁸⁸ Josephus sees this in the doctrines of the Essenes. "Their aim was first to establish the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and secondly to promote virtue and deter from vice; for the good are made better in their lifetime by the hope of a reward after death, and the passions of the wicked are restrained by the fear that, even though they escape detection while alive, they will undergo never-ending punishment after their decease." *The Jewish War* 2.156-157. Loeb, Vol. 2, p. 383.

holding to the resurrection, implied there was no punishment for the wicked after death.¹⁸⁹ Many Patristic authors resorted to arguments from the immortality of the soul and the judgement or rewards it would experience following death as the incentive for moral behaviour.¹⁹⁰ Without such an incentive, it was considered that there would be no reason for people to restrain their brutal natures.¹⁹¹

Many Patristic writers use the idea of simplicity of the nature of the soul as an argument for its immortality, since an entity of a single substance cannot be further divided, nor can it change or alter from one state to another. Thus, those entities which comprise one substance only, for instance, the soul and God,¹⁹² continue to exist without change, and the soul was therefore immortal, as once brought into existence it could never cease to exist since that involves a change.¹⁹³ For those

¹⁸⁹ The text, *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*, is frequently cited by Patristic writers as the justification given by the wicked for denying the judgement and the resurrection which precedes it. For instance, John Chrysostom says of this phrase: "Not tomorrow; but now you are dead, when you speak thus. Shall we then be in nothing different from swine and asses? tell me. For if there be neither a judgement, nor a retribution, nor a tribunal, wherefore have we been honoured with such a gift as reason, and have all things put under us?" *Homilies on Colossians* 2. NPNF 1/13, p. 268.

¹⁹⁰ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 3.17. ANF 7, p. 88; *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 35. ANF 7, p. 235. Eusebius. *The Oration of Eusebius in praise of the Emperor Constantine* 13.13. NPNF 2/1, p. 602. *On the Theophania* 3.61. Samuel Lee, pp. 197-198. John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Colossians* 2. NPNF 1/13, p. 269. Prudentius. *A reply to the address of Symmachus* 2.161-171. Loeb II, p. 19. Basil. *Rules Briefly Treated* 276. Translation cited in: W A Jurgens. **The Faith of the Early Fathers**. Vol. 2, p. 26. Athenagoras. *A Plea for Christians* 36.2. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 85. Writers who held a unitary anthropology but did not accept the immortality of the soul also argued that if there was no threat of a future punishment people would lead immoral lives. In this approach, the focus was on the resurrection and the judgement to follow. Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 19. ANF 1, p. 169. *First Apology* 8. ANF 1, p. 165. *First Apology* 57. ANF 1, p. 182.

¹⁹¹ This argument is predominant in the thought of Eusebius, where it has an intellectualistic and elitist flavour. He considered that rationality (understood as theorising) is the highest attribute of humanity. Those who were not engaged in theoretical thinking (philosophy or theology), and who were lovers of physical pleasure, needed an impetus to keep them moral, namely, fear of punishment. Ethical standards alone would not suffice to maintain their good behaviour. *On the Theophania* 3.61. Samuel Lee, pp. 197-198. *The Oration of Eusebius in praise of the Emperor Constantine* 13.13. NPNF 2/1, p. 602.

¹⁹² According to Pannenberg, the idea of the simplicity of God was first clearly stated by Plato in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*. "Everything composite can also be divided again, and consequently is mutable, as Plato in the *Timaeus* allows the Demiurge to say to the gods brought forth by him. The meaning of the simplicity of God in Plato can be understood from this standpoint. Everything composite necessarily has a ground of its composition outside itself, and therefore cannot be the ultimate origin. This origin must therefore be simple. Aristotle also shared this conviction." [Plato. *Republic* B. 382e. *Timaeus* 41a-b. Aristotle. *Metaphysics* 1074a33-38.] Wolfhart Pannenberg. **Basic Questions in Theology**. Vol. 2, p. 131. Cf. also Cicero. *On the nature of the gods* 3.14.34. H C P McGregor, p. 206. Pannenberg rejected the synthesis inherent in adopting this view of God.

¹⁹³ God is described by a number of Patristic writers as possessing immortality on the basis of being a simple substance. Gregory of Nazianzus. *Oration* 2.7. NPNF 2/7, pp. 290-291. John of Damascus. *On the Orthodox Faith* 2.12. NPNF 2/9, p. 31. Eusebius. *On the Theophania* 1.27. Samuel Lee, pp. 17-18. Novatian. *On the Trinity* 6. ANF 5, p. 616. See also Richard R

entities composed of more than one substance, change is possible, since the combination of substances itself can alter.¹⁹⁴ This is understood to be a process of corruption. Hence incorruptibility, or immortality, is considered to be a quality of those entities which comprise a single substance only.¹⁹⁵ This argument is found in a treatise ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus,¹⁹⁶ and was used by many writers throughout the Patristic period.¹⁹⁷ Tertullian even goes so far as to assert that anyone who does not agree with Plato on this point is a heretic!

La Croix. "Augustine on the simplicity of God." *New Scholasticism* 51 (1977) 453-469. Abp. Basil Krivocheine. "Simplicity of the Divine nature and the distinctions in God according to Gregory of Nyssa." *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 21 (1977) 2:76-104. This doctrine created considerable difficulties for both Lactantius and Tertullian, as a simple substance cannot change. How then can God become angry at sin? Novatian suggests that God does not change in himself, but relates to us and reveals himself in terms we understand, namely as being wrathful and merciful, in spite of the fact that God has not begun (or ceased) to be wrathful or merciful; an "accommodation" of God to our limitations, a concept later to be picked up by Calvin and the Reformed tradition but used in rather different way. Novatian cannot ensure the truth of our knowledge of God. Novatian. *On the Trinity* 6. ANF 5, p. 616. Cf. J M Hallman. "The mutability of God: Tertullian to Lactantius." *Theological Studies* 42 (1981) 373-393. A study which I have been unable to examine is: E F Micka. **The problem of divine anger in Arnobius and Lactantius**. Studies in Christian Antiquity 4. Washington: Catholic University of America, 1943. The idea that God is immortal is also correlated with changelessness, a characteristic of that which is "simple." Theophilus. *To Autolytus* 1.4. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 7. Tertullian. *Against Praxeas* 27. ANF 3, pp. 623-624. God is thus considered a static being, and not the source of life with whom we can have a dynamic relationship. However, incorruptibility is not identical to changelessness, nor is change identical to decay. J M Hallman has critiqued the Patristic dependence on the Middle Platonic concept of God and the Stoic concept of *apatheia* for the doctrine of divine impassibility. "Divine suffering and change in Origen and *Ad Theopompum*." *Second Century* 7 (1989-1990) 85-98. See also J Bayes. "Divine *apatheia* in Ignatius of Antioch." *Studia Patristica* 21 (1989) 27-31.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Hippolytus. "And some objects He formed of one essence, but others He compounded from two, and others from three, and others from four. And those formed of one substance were immortal, for in their case dissolution does not follow, for what is one will never be dissolved. Those, on the other hand, which are formed out of two, three or four substances, are dissoluble; wherefore they also are named mortal. For this has been denominated death, namely, the dissolution of substances connected." *The Refutation of all Heresies* 10.28. ANF 5, p. 150.

¹⁹⁵ Thus in the *Letter to Diognetus* we read that "Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens." *The Letter to Diognetus* 6. ANF 1, p. 27. In this view incorruptibility is the reward of the soul in heaven, not of the resurrected body on the new earth.

¹⁹⁶ Gregory Thaumaturgus (dubious). *To Tatian, on the Subject of the soul*. ANF 6, pp. 54-56.

¹⁹⁷ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 5.7.1. ANF 1, p. 533. Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 14. ANF 3, p. 193. *A treatise on the soul* 22. ANF 3, p. 202. *A treatise on the soul* 51. ANF 3, p. 228. Gregory of Nyssa. *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. NPNF 2/5, pp. 431-432. Theodoret. *Letter 230, to Bishop Timotheus*. NPNF 2/3, p. 302. Cassiodorus presents the opinions of secular teachers "who say the soul is a simple substance, a natural shape, separate from the matter of its body, a divisible whole, having the power of life." *De Anima* 4.1-4. Cited in: J J O'Donnell. **Cassiodorus**, p. 122. Julius Firmicus Maternus gives an extended argument against seeing the functions of the soul as implying it has parts and therefore is not simple and immortal. *On the error of the pagan religions* 5.4. ACW 37, p. 53.

It is essential to a firm faith to declare with Plato that the soul is simple; in other words uniform and uncompounded; simply that is to say in respect of its substance. Never mind men's artificial views and theories, and away with the fabrications of heresy!¹⁹⁸

This idea was not universally accepted, however. Athenagoras argued against the idea of the immortality of the soul based on its simplicity, since he believes that we receive immortality in the resurrection, that is, through change, not from lack of change.¹⁹⁹ Two other Patristic writers who denied that the soul is immortal, Arnobius and Tatian, significantly assert that the soul is not simple but compound.²⁰⁰

Associated with simplicity is the doctrine of impassibility, the denial of the possibility of suffering to God and to the soul. Suffering is an alteration in mental composure, and alteration is change, which is impossible for those entities which are of one substance only. Therefore, neither God nor the soul can truly suffer.²⁰¹ The impassibility of the soul as a proof of immortality is found in Gregory Thaumaturgus and Athenagoras (who saw this as something acquired after death).²⁰² This view is attacked by Arnobius on the basis that the soul does suffer punishment from God.²⁰³

Theodore of Mopsuestia connected immortality with immutability, although he does not see the soul as originally immortal and immutable, but granted this by God through salvation. This immutability then means we will be “exempt from all

¹⁹⁸ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 10. ANF 3, p. 189. Cf. *A treatise on the soul* 23, ANF 3, p. 203, where Tertullian says that various heretical views originated ultimately with Plato. He comments regretfully “I am sorry from my heart that Plato has been the caterer to these heretics... I shall sufficiently refute the heretics if I overthrow the argument of Plato.”

¹⁹⁹ Athenagoras. *Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead* 16.3-6. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 127, 129. Cf. also *A Plea for Christians* 31.4. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 77, 79, where Athenagoras says that in the heavenly life “we may then abide with God and with his help remain changeless and impassible in soul as though we were not body, even if we have one, but heavenly spirit...”

²⁰⁰ Arnobius. *The case against the Pagans* 2.14-15. ACW 7, pp. 127-128. *The case against the Pagans* 2.27. ACW 7, p. 140. Fortin states that the ideas Arnobius attacks in this passage are expressed in Plotinus, *Anneads* 4.7.12. 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. 215. Fortin argues that Arnobius is combatting the Neoplatonists, by deprecating the human soul in response to the exorbitant claims made for it by the philosophers, including the idea that the soul is simple and immortal. *Ibid.*, p. 205. See further Chapter 3.7.1.

²⁰¹ The basis of this idea is that suffering is associated with imperfection, since the being that suffers is under the control of another. For details of the Greek philosophical origin of this idea, and the use of it in Patristic thought, see: Joseph M Hallman. “Impassibility.” **Encyclopedia of Early Christianity**, pp. 458-459.

²⁰² Gregory Thaumaturgus (dubious). *To Tatian, On the subject of the soul* 6. ANF 6, pp. 55-56. Athenagoras. *A Plea for Christians* 31.4. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 77, 79.

²⁰³ Arnobius. *The case against the Pagans* 2.27. ACW 7, p. 140. *The case against the Pagans* 2.14-15. ACW 7, pp. 127-128.

inclination, however slight, towards evil.”²⁰⁴ This idea is found also in Theodoret of Cyrhus and Diodore of Tarsus.²⁰⁵

Another argument for the doctrine of the inherent immortality of the soul is that the soul is rational.²⁰⁶ It is stated by some, and assumed by others, that what is rational is immortal.²⁰⁷ For instance, Fulgence of Ruspe says that “Angels, therefore, and men, because they were created rational, received from God the gift of eternity and beatitude in the very creation of the spiritual nature...”²⁰⁸ The rationalist approach can be seen in the way in which the eschatological relationship with God, and its present anticipation, is seen in terms of contemplation.²⁰⁹ However, human nature is not rational but multi-aspectual, and the “rational” or analytical function of human nature is but one of a number of aspects. A reductionist approach, such as the argument for immortality from a rational nature, is an unfortunate consequence of the influence of Greek intellectualism, since all that which makes us human is distorted by seeing in terms of only one aspect of the creation.²¹⁰

A further proof used by the Patristic writers for the immortality of the soul was that of motion. That which is always in motion is immortal; the soul is always in motion; therefore, the soul is immortal.²¹¹ This proof seems to be derived from Plato’s *Phaedrus*.²¹² Van Assendelft cites the comment of Dulacey that the notion that the

²⁰⁴ Theodore of Mopsuestia. *Commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* 4. *Woodbrooke Studies* 6 (1933) 68-69. See also *ibid.*, pp. 56, 104; *Commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* 3. *Woodbrooke Studies* 6 (1933) 45. *Commentary on Galatians* 2.15f. Cited in: H B Swete. **The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church**, p. 261.

²⁰⁵ Theodoret. *Letter 145, to the monks of Constantinople*. NPNF 2/3, p. 314. R A Greer. “The Antiochene Christology of Diodore of Tarsus.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1966) 332.

²⁰⁶ Cf. the comment of Cassiodorus who speaks of those “who sincerely long to enter heaven through intellectual exertions.” *Institutiones* 2.Conclusion.3. **An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings**, p. 205.

²⁰⁷ Eusebius. *On the Theophania* 1.64. Samuel Lee, p. 48. *On the Theophania* 5.6. Samuel Lee, p. 289. Cassiodorus. *De Anima* 4.4-7. Cited in: J J O’Donnell. **Cassiodorus**, p. 122. John of Damascus. *On the Orthodox Faith* 3.16. NPNF 2/9, pp. 64-65.

²⁰⁸ Fulgence of Ruspe. *The Rule of Faith*, 32. Cited in: W A Jurgens. **The Faith of the Early Fathers**. Vol. 3, p. 296.

²⁰⁹ John Chrysostom. *Baptismal Instructions* 7.11. ACW 31, p. 108. Gregory the Great, *Homily on the Mystical Church* 13. **The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers**, Vol. 1, p. 95. [PL 76, 1159-1170]

²¹⁰ See Herman Dooyeweerd. **In the twilight of Western thought**, pp. 179-180, 185-186.

²¹¹ Tertullian. *A treatise on the soul* 43. ANF 3, p. 222. Lactantius. *On the workmanship of God* 17. ANF 7, p. 297. Origen. *De Principiis* 2.11.1. ANF 4, pp. 296-297. Eusebius. *The Treatise of Eusebius against the life of Apollonius of Tyana* 41. Loeb Classical Library, Vol 2, pp. 593/595. John of Damascus. *Philosophical Chapters* 64. FC 37, p. 98. *Philosophical Chapters* 68. FC 37, p. 107. Pseudo-Dionysius argues on this basis for the immortality of both souls and angels. *The Divine Names* 6.1-2. *Classics of Western Spirituality*, pp. 103-104. See the analysis of this argument in E Evans. **Tertullian’s Treatise on the Resurrection**, p. 203.

²¹² Plato. *Phaedrus* 245. **The Dialogues of Plato**. Vol. 1, pp. 451-452.

soul's immortality is due to its continuous mobility is Platonic, but also Stoic.²¹³ While Lactantius used this argument, he qualified Plato's approach since in Lactantius' opinion, Plato thereby gave eternal existence even to the animals.²¹⁴

Athenagoras was perhaps the first to advance the view that the soul was immortal since the design of God for humankind was not able to be accomplished in this life because of sin, and therefore it was yet to be realised. This meant that the person must be kept in being in order to take part in the accomplishment of that design.²¹⁵ That same idea is found in other Patristic writers such as Lactantius, Athanasius, Prudentius and Gregory of Nyssa.²¹⁶ While the *Apostolic Constitutions* refer to the "rational nature of man," this is used as an argument not for the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection, since what is rational should continue in existence. What God has made will not be wasted, since he cares for his creatures, and will ensure that they receive their due reward and the end for which they were made: namely, continuance through all the ages.²¹⁷

The Patristic arguments for the immortality of the soul were thus philosophical in nature, and this intellectualistic cast to their doctrine does not comport well with the Biblical call to faith addressed to everyone, since understanding the faith is possible only for the educated who can understand arcane doctrines,²¹⁸ although the

²¹³ M M van Assendelft. *Sol Ecce Surgit Igneus*, p. 209, citing M Dulaey. "La rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin." *Études Augustiniens* Paris, 1973, p. 57, n. 73. See also G Verbeke. *L'évolution de la doctrine du Pneuma du Stoïcisme à St. Augustin*. Paris, 1945, pp. 20-27.

²¹⁴ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.8. ANF 7, p. 205. Gregory of Nyssa departed from the Platonic view as he held that perfection comes in movement towards God, opposing the Greek idea that motion was instability and imperfection. Gregory associates change with created nature and so does not see it as evil, so human nature is called to change perpetually. Br. Casimir. "Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Peri Teleiotes: *On Perfection*." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29 (1984) 350.

²¹⁵ Athenagoras. *On the resurrection of the dead* 12.3-8. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 117, 119.

²¹⁶ Lactantius. *The Divine Institutes* 7.6. ANF 7, p. 203. *The Divine Institutes* 7.9. ANF 7, p. 206. Athanasius. *On the Incarnation* 6. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 149. Prudentius. *A reply to the address of Symmachus* 2.104-123. Loeb II, pp. 15, 17. Hilary of Poitiers. *On the Trinity* 1.12. NPNF 2/9, p. 43. Gregory of Nyssa. *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. NPNF 2/5, p. 465.

²¹⁷ *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.7. ANF 7, pp. 440-441.

²¹⁸ Synesius of Cyrene, a Neo-platonist philosopher who was elected bishop, agreed to serve only if he was allowed to retain his philosophical views on the pre-existence of the soul, the eternity of the world and the resurrection of the flesh, which he interpreted allegorically [*Letter* 105]. B Altaner. *Patrology*, p. 326. He said: "Now you know that philosophy rejects many of those convictions which are cherished by the common people. For my own part, I can never persuade myself that the soul is of more recent origin than the body. Never would I admit that the world and the parts which make it up must perish. This resurrection, which is an object of common belief, is nothing for me but a sacred and mysterious allegory, and I am far from sharing the views of the vulgar crowd thereon... What can there be in common between the ordinary man and philosophy? Divine truth should remain hidden, but the vulgar

immortality of the soul is also considered something self-evident to the faithful but not to the philosophers.²¹⁹

Eusebius, however, affirmed the inherent immortality of the soul, and cited at length from Plato concerning the nature of the soul in his book *Preparation for the Gospel*.²²⁰ He claims that this idea was taken from the Old Testament.

Also all the other passages expressed like these in the words of the Hebrews anticipated the interpretation put forth at length by Plato. And so you will find, by carefully examining each of them point by point, that it agrees with the Hebrew writings. And by doctrines of the Hebrews I mean not only the oracles of Moses, but also those of all the other godly men after Moses, whether prophets or apostles of our Saviour, whose consent in doctrines must fairly render them worthy of one and the same title.²²¹

But Eusebius has read Plato into the Old Testament, and then discovered the harmonies between them, using the synthesis method of *eisegesis-exegesis*.²²² Eusebius does sometimes critique Plato's doctrine of the soul, not because it conflicts with the Scriptural testimony concerning human nature, but because it conflicts with other philosophical doctrines which are themselves in conflict with Scripture. For instance, he suggests Plato is mistaken when he says the soul is not simple but compound.

Plato, although he agreed with the Hebrews in supposing the soul immortal, and saying that it was like unto God, no longer follows them when he sometimes says that its essence is composite, as if involving a

need a different system." Synesius of Cyrene. *Letter 105. The Letters of Synesius of Cyrene*, pp. 200-201.

²¹⁹ Cf. Augustine. "...is there even now an imbecile, however weak, or a silly woman, however low, that does not believe the immortality of the soul and the reality of a life after death?" *Letter 137.3.12*. NPNF 1/1, p. 478. John Chrysostom. "For when you ask the widow who sits in the streets and begs - and often she is lame - about the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body... she answers you accurately and with great assurance. But the philosopher, arrogant because of his hair and staff, after many long laps of discussion, after all his pointless prating, cannot even open his mouth nor can he speak on these matters." *De mutatione nominum homilia 4*. PG 51, 152D-153A. Cited in: P E Harkins. **St. John Chrysostom. Baptismal Instructions**. ACW 31, p. 283, n. 14. See also John of Damascus. *Philosophical Chapters 68*. FC 37, p. 108.

²²⁰ The very title of the work indicates something of its contents. It takes the position that pagan beliefs have elements of truth in them which can be seen as a preparation for the preaching of the gospel. This *praeparatio evangelica* theme shaped much Patristic apologetic work and did a great deal to "legitimise" synthesis between pagan and Christian thought.

²²¹ Eusebius. *Preparation for the Gospel 12.52*. E H Gifford, vol. 2, p. 691.

²²² B J van der Walt. "Eisegesis-exegesis, paradox and nature-grace: methods of synthesis in Mediaeval philosophy." In: **The idea of a Christian philosophy**, pp. 191-211.

certain part of the indivisible and immutable Cause, and a part of the divisible nature belonging to bodies.²²³

Eusebius also criticised Plato for following “vulgar” opinions when he says that the souls of animals were also immortal.²²⁴ He states that some of his wrong opinions come from sources other than the Old Testament: “In these discourses concerning the soul it is evident that Plato is following the Egyptian doctrines: for his statement is not that of the Hebrews, since it is not in accordance with truth.”²²⁵ Nevertheless he cites other passages where he claims Plato followed the views of the Old Testament.

Nemesius claims that the soul can be proved immortal because it is not corporeal, and thus not liable to decay and corruption, nor is it any other thing which can cease to exist. It is therefore immortal, and considers that the Scriptures prove the immortality of the soul to his satisfaction. He states further:

There are numerous proofs of the soul’s immortality offered by Plato and others, but they are difficult and full of obscurities, and can scarcely be understood by those who have been brought up to such studies. But for us the sufficient demonstration of the soul’s immortality is the teaching of Holy Scripture, which is self-authenticating because inspired by God.²²⁶

After stating this view, however, he asserts that for those who do not accept the Scriptures, “it is enough to point out that the soul is not any of the things that are subject to destruction. And if it is not one of these it is indestructible.”²²⁷

Perhaps partly because of continuing debates concerning the immortality of the soul, this subject continued to feature in Christian thought throughout the Patristic period and beyond. While the Patristic writers also continued to provide arguments for the possibility of the resurrection of the body,²²⁸ this is not surprising since the resurrection was always controverted by pagans and philosophers. However, it is somewhat surprising that arguments for the immortality of the soul continued to be advanced, as this was the prevailing opinion of the times. This indicates either that the subject had become a traditional one for authors although there was no real debate about the subject; or else, that in spite of the arguments advanced in previous centuries for the immortality of the soul, it was still not universally accepted.

²²³ Eusebius. *Preparation for the Gospel* 13.16. E H Gifford, vol. 2, p. 751.

²²⁴ Eusebius. *On the Theophania* 2.44. Samuel Lee, p. 105.

²²⁵ Eusebius. *Preparation for the Gospel* 13.16. E H Gifford, vol. 2, p. 754.

²²⁶ Nemesius. *On the nature of man* 2.19. LCC 4, p. 292.

²²⁷ Nemesius. *On the nature of man* 2.19. LCC 4, p. 292.

²²⁸ For instance, Theodoret argued from the commonplaces current since the time of the Apostolic fathers: the power of God is shown in the greater difficulty in creating from nothing than recreating what once existed; illustrations in nature such as the seed that sprouts, the twigs planted that grow into new plants. *On Divine Providence* 9.34-39. ACW 49, pp. 130-132.

Cassiodorus, a statesman in the Gothic government of Italy who was later “converted” to the religious life, wrote after this conversion a treatise *On the Soul* (ca. 535 AD), in which “the soul is defined as a spiritual substance which in no way perishes” along with the body.²²⁹ This work was influenced by Augustine and the *De statu animae* of Claudianus Mamertus.²³⁰ The longest section of his book on the soul is dedicated to proving its immortality.²³¹ Similarly, John of Damascus, in the eighth century, felt obliged to offer a defence of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.²³²

5.5 Conclusion

The instrumentalist anthropological model is correlated with an anti-bodily attitude, expressed in terms of preference for asceticism, repudiation of sexuality and marriage, and aspiring to be freed from the body in order to attain to heavenly life. The rewards for martyrdom were transferred to asceticism, which was seen as spiritual martyrdom, and this lifestyle was held up as the goal for all Christians to attain to.

The body was seen as a source, or at least the occasion for sin, irrational in nature and teeming with untamed passions and desires, and thus had to be kept in check by the rational soul. The body was considered to be in conflict with the soul, and only by asceticism could it be controlled. Extreme views of the body differed little from Gnostic heresies which considered the body as something disgusting, made by an inferior creator.

The nature of the soul as an immortal substance was held to be authentic Christian teaching, although little exegetical support for this view could be found in Scripture. The main basis for holding the soul to be immortal was philosophical argument, based to a considerable extent on pagan Greek ontology. As a result, Scriptural themes such as the “image of God” were distorted through being understood in terms of such ontologies which incorporated speculation as to the nature of God, which the soul was compared to in terms of the “imaging.” All these views had significance for the development of eschatological themes, with a focus on the independent life of the soul after death, the intermediate state and the immediate judgement and recompense for the soul. These will be examined in the next chapter.

The controversy over the views of Jovinian, who held that all the saints and all the wicked share the same rewards and punishments, was combatted by those who held that the virtues of asceticism warranted greater rewards than those given to ordinary believers. The tendency to distinguish different grades of reward and punishment provides one basis on which Psalm 1:5 would be used to distinguish different groups at the judgement.

²²⁹ Cassiodorus. *De Anima* 3.34-36. Cited in: J J O’Donnell. **Cassiodorus**, pp. 121-122.

²³⁰ L W Jones. **An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings, by Cassiodorus Senator**, p. 19.

²³¹ J J O’Donnell. **Cassiodorus**, p. 123.

²³² John of Damascus. *Philosophical Chapters* 68. FC 37, p. 108.

Ascetic virginity was considered the equivalent of the life of the angels, who are not married or given in marriage [Matthew 22:30] and thus asceticism was called the “angelic life.”

© 1993, 2008 Chris Gousmett.

Prepared for the Web in January 2008 by the author.

<http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/>
