

THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE
EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

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by
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Preface

The various eschatological debates of our day have awakened a new interest in what the historic belief of the Christian Church has been concerning this subject. Various contradictory systems of eschatological belief have claimed the Church Fathers as supporters of their particular system. It is out of this context, that the interest in the subject of this paper was first aroused. Instead of accepting what others had said about the Church Fathers, it was decided to examine the writings of these early Christians and allow them to speak for themselves. Thus, it is not the opinion of one some nineteen centuries removed from these men, but the views of the men themselves, illustrated by excerpts from their own writings.

It is quite likely that no one of the present day eschatological systems will be completely satisfied by the conclusions of this paper. This is due in part to the fact that no attempt was made to make the Church Fathers fit into a particular eschatological system. Although the author is a pre-tribulationist - premillennialist, he attempted as much as possible to limit the subjective and tried to be as objective as possible. He will leave to others the judging of how well he succeeded. Nevertheless, a real conscious effort was made to portray the actual views of the Church Fathers and not to force them into an agreement with those of the writer.

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For what is commendable in this paper, the praise belongs to the Lord. For what is not praiseworthy, the responsibility rests with the author.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface.....	iii
Chapter	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Fathers From 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.....	5
Clement of Rome.....	5
Polycarp.....	6
Ignatius.....	6
Papias.....	8
Aristides.....	8
The Epistle to Diognetus.....	9
The Didache.....	10
An Ancient Homily.....	10
The Epistle of Barnabas.....	10
The Shephard of Hermas.....	11
The Fathers From 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.....	12
Justin Martyr.....	13
Tatian.....	14
Athenagoras.....	15
Theophilus of Antioch.....	15
Irenaeus.....	16
Clement of Alexandria.....	17
The Fathers From 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.....	18
Hippolytus.....	19
Tertullian.....	20
Cyprian.....	21
Origen.....	22
II THE GREAT TRIBULATION.....	25
The Fathers From 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.....	26
The Time of the Tribulation.....	26
The Duration of the Tribulation.....	29
The People in the Tribulation.....	29
The Conditions in the Tribulation.....	30
The End of the Tribulation.....	31
The Fathers From 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.....	33
The Time of the Tribulation.....	33
The Duration of the Tribulation.....	35
The People in the Tribulation.....	35
The Conditions in the Tribulation.....	37
The End of the Tribulation.....	39
The Fathers From 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.....	40
The Time of the Tribulation.....	41
The Duration of the Tribulation.....	44
The People in the Tribulation.....	45
The Conditions in the Tribulation.....	49

The End of the Tribulation.....	54
Conclusion.....	54
The Time of the Tribulation.....	55
The Duration of the Tribulation.....	55
The People in the Tribulation.....	56
The Conditions in the Tribulation.....	56
The End of the Tribulation.....	57
III THE ANTICHRIST.....	58
The Fathers From 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.....	59
The Origin and Rise of the Antichrist.....	60
The Identification of the Antichrist.....	61
The Work of the Antichrist.....	62
The Overthrow of the Antichrist.....	62
The Fathers From 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.....	63
The Origin and Rise of the Antichrist.....	63
The Identification of the Antichrist.....	66
The Work of the Antichrist.....	68
The Overthrow of the Antichrist.....	74
The Fathers From 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.....	76
The Origin and Rise of the Antichrist.....	76
The Identification of the Antichrist.....	82
The Work of the Antichrist.....	83
The Overthrow of the Antichrist.....	91
Conclusion.....	93
The Origin and Rise of the Antichrist.....	93
The Identification of the Antichrist.....	94
The Work of the Antichrist.....	94
The Overthrow of the Antichrist.....	95
IV THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST.....	96
The Fathers From 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.....	98
The Advent in Scripture.....	98
The Time of the Advent.....	98
The Participants in the Advent.....	101
The Events connected with the Advent.....	102
The Fathers From 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.....	103
The Advent in Scripture.....	104
The Time of the Advent.....	106
The Participants in the Advent.....	109
The Events connected with the Advent.....	109
The Fathers From 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.....	113
The Advent in Scripture.....	113
The Time of the Advent.....	115
The Participants in the Advent.....	120
The Events connected with the Advent.....	121
Conclusion.....	127
The Advent in Scripture.....	127
The Time of the Advent.....	128
The Participants in the Advent.....	129
The Events connected with the Advent.....	129

V	THE RESURRECTION.....	131
	The Fathers From 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.....	132
	The Fact of the Resurrection.....	132
	The Persons involved in the Resurrection.....	134
	The Nature of the Resurrection.....	135
	Illustrations of the Resurrection.....	137
	The Fathers From 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.....	138
	The Fact of the Resurrection.....	139
	The Persons involved in the Resurrection.....	146
	The Nature of the Resurrection.....	149
	Illustrations of the Resurrection.....	155
	The Fathers From 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.....	156
	The Fact of the Resurrection.....	157
	The Persons involved in the Resurrection.....	166
	The Nature of the Resurrection.....	168
	Illustrations of the Resurrection.....	176
	Conclusion.....	178
	The Fact of the Resurrection.....	178
	The Person involved in the Resurrection.....	179
	The Nature of the Resurrection.....	180
	Illustrations of the Resurrection.....	181
VI	THE KINGDOM.....	182
	The Fathers From 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.....	185
	The Time of the Kingdom.....	185
	The Nature of the Kingdom.....	190
	The Blessings of the Kingdom.....	194
	The Ruler of the Kingdom.....	196
	The Fathers From 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.....	197
	The Time of the Kingdom.....	197
	The Nature of the Kingdom.....	200
	The Blessings of the Kingdom.....	205
	The Ruler of the Kingdom.....	212
	The Fathers From 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.....	212
	The Time of the Kingdom.....	213
	The Nature of the Kingdom.....	217
	The Blessings of the Kingdom.....	223
	The Ruler of the Kingdom.....	227
	Conclusion.....	227
	The Time of the Kingdom.....	228
	The Nature of the Kingdom.....	228
	The Blessings of the Kingdom.....	230
VII	CONCLUSION.....	231
	The Great Tribulation.....	232
	The Antichrist.....	235
	The Second Advent.....	239
	The Resurrection.....	242
	The Kingdom.....	247
	Summary.....	251
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	252

Chapter I

Introduction

In the last one hundred years the study of eschatology has gained considerable prominence in the field of theology. It has come from the position of a neglected stepson to a position of a full-fledged member of the family. Not since the days of the early church has the study of eschatology played such an important part in the life of the Church as it does at the present time. Although it still has not reached the general popularity it had in the first three centuries of the Christian Era it still has seen a great revival of interest. This revival of interest has been so great that the subject of eschatology was made the main topic at a recent ecumenical church council. However, the greatest interest in this subject has been generated among those who still hold the Bible to be the inspired Word of God in propositional form. It is among this group that the interest in eschatology started and spread throughout the rest of Christendom.

Out of this renewed interest in eschatology there has arisen a theological debate as to what the Bible actually teaches concerning this subject. Many different viewpoints have been expounded reflecting the whole theological spectrum. Among conservative theologians the amillennial, premillennial and postmillennial views are defended. The postmillennial view also has its supporters among the more liberal school of theologians.

Also at the present time there are the views of Barth, Brunner, Schweitzer, Bultmann and Cullmann as to what the Bible teaches in this field. In many cases the viewpoint held by different men is determined by their attitude toward the Bible and whether or not they accept it as a propositional revelation from God. To those who accept the inspiration of the Bible, their viewpoint is generally the outcome of the hermeneutical principles which they apply to the various eschatological sections of the Bible. It is very unfortunate that this theological debate has degenerated into a theological war with each side degrading the mentality of other viewpoints and in general, exhibiting anything but a spirit of Christian love. In this writer's opinion, one never enhances one's own position by degrading any person's intellect or honesty. A Christian theologian should learn to point out fallacies of logic and interpretation and to ignore personalities.

Out of this theological debate has arisen the effort to use every possible support to add weight to the particular position which is held. In this respect, the Church Fathers have suffered a great deal with many contradictory viewpoints claiming support from these early Christian writers. It is out of this context that the interest in the aim of this paper arose. The author of this paper had heard so many different viewpoints claim that the early Church Fathers supported their particular view, that he decided to make a fresh study for himself of the writings of the Church Fathers. It is to be pointed out here, that what the

Church Fathers believed has no binding claim on what the believer today should believe in this field. The value of the Church Fathers is more historical than doctrinal. Doctrine is determined by what the Bible teaches, not by what any particular man or group of men thought the Bible taught. However, at the same time, it must be admitted that the interpretations of the past can be used as a help towards a correct interpretation. Moreover, it would be of the utmost interest to know what the men closest to the apostles and the writing of the New Testament Scriptures thought concerning this field of theology.

This paper will attempt to discover what, if any, teaching the various writers of the first three centuries held in the field of eschatology. It will not attempt to classify the writers as premillennialists or amillennialists but will seek to discover if certain doctrines were taught by these men such as a millennial kingdom. An attempt will be made to see if one can agree with Harnack who states:

The belief in the duplex adventus Christi formed one of the most important articles of Church belief in contradistinction to Judaism and Gnosticism...But the belief in the return of Christ to this world necessarily involved the hope of a kingdom of glory under Christ upon earth, and without this, hope is merely a rhetorical flourish.¹

¹ Adolph Harnack, Vol. II of History of Dogma, trans. Neil Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1903), pp.295-96.

Dorner essentially agrees with Harnack but perhaps goes a step further when he says:

The pre-Christian age expected the Messiah, but...the Christian Church in its eschatology hoped for the return of no other than Him who had already come. The Christian hope of the Coming One grew entirely out of faith in Him who had come. It may as well be said that it was the Christian principle which by an inner necessity sketched out for itself an eschatology that spontaneously concurred in its essential lines with the Messianic representations of the Old Testament, as it may be asserted that the purer representations of Messianic eschatology were of necessity transferred to Him who was recognized and believed in as Saviour of the world. The absolute reconciliation with God, the completion of Religion, is made known by Christianity as come in Christ; and therein also the completion of the world or the kingdom of God as certainly to come, through the second coming of Him who has already come.²

The method of this paper will be to take a subject such as the Great Tribulation and to trace the teaching of the early Church Fathers concerning it. It will be shown whether or not there was a development in the teaching or if the teaching faded out of the picture. To show what development if any there is in the teaching of the Fathers, they have been divided into three groups. The first group consists of those writing in the period 96 to 150 A.D. The second group is composed of those writing from 150 to 200 A.D., while the third group includes those that wrote from 200 to 250 A.D. In all these groups, only the writings that have been generally held to be genuine have been included. This is probably the best place to discuss the authors included in the different periods and their writings which have been examined.

² I.A. Dorner, Vol. I of The Person of Christ, trans. W.L. Alexander (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1861), p. 145.

The Fathers from 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.

These are the earliest of the Church Fathers. They are commonly grouped under the title of The Apostolic Fathers which is in reality a misnomer. It is hard to select a suitable title for them but they are Sub-Apostolic at best. The writers of the period did not treat eschatology as such. They never took pen in hand and systematically set down their beliefs in this field. In fact, they never presented in a systematic way any of their beliefs. It is only in the treatment of other subjects that one comes across their beliefs in eschatology, as if by accident. Their writings consist mainly of exhortation with some simple statements and hints as to their actual beliefs on the subject. They are not formal treatises but simply letters to various individuals or groups. One is impressed by the great inferiority of these documents to the writings of Scripture. When compared, the great superiority of the Scriptures is clearly seen.

1. Clement of Rome. This is the first Church Father of whom there is an extant writing. He lived during the first century and his writing is usually dated about 95 A.D. or 96 A.D. At one time, many writings were credited to him, but today only one is considered his and that is the Epistle to the Corinthians. Very little is known concerning the life of Clement. At the time of the letter, he held, as far as can be determined, no official position in the

Church at Rome, but wrote the letter for the church. Many have thought he is the same person as mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:3, but modern scholars tend to shy away from this view.

The letter itself is a letter from one church to another admonishing the Corinthian church to return to the spiritual condition which once was hers. In a brief letter of this sort, it is quite natural that the subject of eschatology, if touched upon at all, is not developed and leaves much to be desired from the viewpoint of the investigator. Nevertheless, certain beliefs concerning the future are mentioned in the letter.

2. Polycarp. It is unfortunate, that, as in the case of Clement of Rome there is also only one extant writing of Polycarp. How interesting and informative it would be if this disciple of John would have left to Christianity the results of his conversations with John. The one work of Polycarp that is known today is his Epistle to the Philippians. This is a short pastoral letter to the Philippian Church for the purpose of exhorting them to live a full Christian life in keeping with their knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. Thus, once again, one can not expect to find any detailed teaching on the subject of eschatology. Nevertheless, in his exhortation to the Philippians, he does mention certain things which come under this classification.

The date of this epistle cannot be determined exactly but it is generally considered to be written around 135 A.D.

3. Ignatius. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, is most noted

for his passion for martyrdom and the effect his writings have had on the development of church government. It is beyond the purpose of this paper to treat these points and the reader will find them ably discussed in many other volumes. On his way to Rome where he met martyrdom, he wrote letters to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Romans, the Philadelphians, the Smyrnaeans and to Polycarp. Needless to say, he was a contemporary of Polycarp.

The exact dates of his writings are uncertain but they had to be written before 117 A.D., since the date of his martyrdom is put at December 20, 116 A.D. These letters were written on the way to Rome from Antioch and so were written shortly before 116 A.D.

The letters of Ignatius exist in three forms. The first is called the Longer Greek Recension which is made up of fifteen letters. These letters are today considered to be frauds. The second is called the Shorter Recension. This consists of the seven letters mentioned above and is today considered to be the genuine letters of Ignatius. In 1845 there was discovered a Syriac version of his letters to Polycarp, the Romans and the Ephesians. It was at once thought that these might be the only original letters of Ignatius but Zahn and Lightfoot have shown that the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the Shorter Recension.³ Thus, these will be the letters used in this paper.

³ Theod. Zahn, Ignatius von Antiochien (Gotho, 1873, J.B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers (London: 1885)).

Again, like most of the writings of this period, these are only letters and no systematic teaching can be expected to be found.

4. Papias. Very little is known about Papias. The only two sources that give us any information at all are Irenaeus and Eusebius. Eusebius states that he was bishop of Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia.⁴ He lived in the second quarter of the second century and perhaps wrote around 140 A.D. Outside of this there is nothing that is known about him.

One wishes that the writings of Papias would have been preserved for us. He is said to have written a book entitled An Exposition of the Lord's Sayings. All that is extant today are a few fragments from his writings. They touched upon the millennium, the resurrection and the gospels. Students of the canon as well as those of eschatology would welcome the discovery of his writings. The few fragments that are extant are just enough to whet the appetite for more.

5. Aristides. There is in this period an Apology written by one Marcianus Aristides. This is one of the earliest apologies made to a Roman Emperor on behalf of the early Christians. J. Rendel Harris states, "the writer is more of a child than a philosopher, a child well-trained in creed and well-practiced in ethics, rather than a dogmatist defending a new system or an iconoclast

⁴ Eusebius Hist. Eccl. iii 36.

destroying an old one."⁵ He also states that it deserves a place beside the best Christian writings of its time.

It was addressed to both Emperor Hadrian and to Antoninus Pius although it is doubtful if it was ever presented to Hadrian at all. The author calls himself Marcianus Aristides, philosopher of Athens. The simplicity of the writing favors an early date for its composition. It was probably written sometime during the years 133-138 A.D.

6. The Epistle to Diognetus. Among the writings of this period are some of which the authors are unknown. These also will be considered. The Epistle to Diognetus is a brief personal letter from one individual to another and may be the earliest Christian apology that is now extant. It gives a short defense of Christianity in comparison with the pagan and Jewish religions. For many years it was considered one of the apologies of Justin Martyr but this view is no longer held. Generally, it is thought to have been written before the time of Justin. Kruger favors an early date for the writing and holds that it had to be written before 135 A.D.⁶ This is another very brief letter and consequently not much is found dealing with the doctrine of eschatology.

⁵ J. Rendel Harris, The Apology of Aristides, Vol. I of Texts and Studies, ed. J.A. Robinson (9 vols. Cambridge: University Press, 1891), p.3.

⁶ Gustav Kruger, History of Early Church Literature, trans. C.R. Gillett (New York: Macmillan Company, 1897), p.137.

7. The Didache. The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles popularly known today as the Didache is an early Christian catechism. In the form in which it now exists it is very likely of composite origin, part of it being very early while other parts being somewhat later. Most scholars put the date somewhere between 120 and 150 A.D.

Since this writing was probably meant for the catechumen it cannot be expected to show a great degree of theological development. Yet it has some interesting things to say in the field of eschatology. In some ways it is more developed than any of the writings of this period.

8. An Ancient Homily. For many years this writing was thought to be a second letter from Clement of Rome to the Corinthian Church. Today, however, this view is not held and the writing is generally considered to be the work of an unknown author. The date given this writing usually falls between 120 and 140 A.D.

The ideas of this writing are not connected very well and the author jumps from one thought to another. It is full of exhortation and its theme is the duty of obeying the commandments of Christ. Greater detail is given to the subjects of judgment and rewards than to any other.

9. The Epistle of Barnabas. This letter is to unknown Christians showing them the great superiority of Christianity

over Judaism. In it the author attempts to show how the Jews misinterpreted the Old Testament and how everything in the Old Testament pointed to or was typical of the Christian Faith. The letter shows glaring inaccuracies concerning the Old Testament books themselves and misconceptions of what the Jewish teachers taught. Along with this, the writer applies a severe allegorizing to the whole Old Testament.

Because of the title of this letter, the early Fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius) seem to hold that the apostle Barnabas was the author. The internal evidence, however, make it seem almost impossible for such a one to have written it. The apostle Barnabas, as a Levite, would know the Levitical system thoroughly and would not be guilty of the serious errors that are made in this letter. The author, then, is some unknown person whose name may or may not have been Barnabas.

The purpose of the letter was to perfect the knowledge of the persons to whom it was written. The date of this writing is usually placed somewhere in the first quarter of the second century.

10. The Shepherd of Hermas. This writing is much like the modern day Pilgrim's Progress in many ways. Some critics have even undertaken to compare the two as they consider them very similar. It is an allegory set around one man and the visions and instructions given to him by angels. Because of sin in his

life, he can only return to a right relationship to God by daily teaching the Word of God. Many of the believers of his day were straying from the strait and narrow way and the purpose of this writing is to call them back to repentance. The writing had great influence in the early church and at one time came close to being considered canonical.

Nothing is known about the author. If his name actually was Hermas there is a slight possibility that a few things may be learned about him but even these things may not be true. Earliest tradition says it was written by a contemporary of the Apostle Paul, the Hermas found in the book of Romans. Others say it was written by a Hermas who was a brother of Pius II. It is probably best to admit that the author cannot be known. It is certain that the writing itself gives no clue as to its author. The dates usually given to this writing by modern scholars eliminate the first theory mentioned.

The date of this writing is also very uncertain. It varies between 110 and 160 A.D. Most scholars assign this letter to a time near the end of the first half of the second century. Of all the early writings, this is one of the most difficult in which to determine the eschatological beliefs of the writer.

The Fathers From 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.

This section will include the fathers down to 200 A.D. This division is not a hard and fast one as there is some over-

lapping. Justin Martyr wrote a few years before 150 A.D. and Clement of Alexandria, with whom this chapter closes, probably wrote some of his writings after 200 A.D. But the majority of the writings were done during the fifty years between the two dates.

In this period, the writings change from those of the earlier period. They become more complex, longer and more specific in purpose. Still there is no attempt to produce any type of a systematic theology although at times a fairly complete idea is given as to a belief in a certain area. Unfortunately, here as in the last period, many writings are lost and of others mere fragments are extant. However, of some of the writers, especially Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, there is enough to give the reader a good idea of their belief in certain areas. Even here, though, one wishes that more information were available.

1. Justin Martyr. Justin the Martyr is probably one of the best known of all the early Church Fathers. He was born in Flavia Neapolis a city of Samaria and was of Gentile origin. Nothing is known of his early life and what else is known of him comes from his own writings. The trustworthiness of other outside information is doubtful. The fact that he became a martyr for the cause of Christ is well attested by Tertullian, Hippolytus and Eusebius.

Justin was one of the most outstanding men of his time. One scholar states that his writings "are to us the most important which we possess for the elucidation of the history of Christianity in its contests with heathenism and Judaism in the middle of the second century."⁷ It is true that Justin made many mistakes in his thinking but this is true of all the men of his time. One must judge him in the light of his contemporaries and not in the light of the knowledge of the twentieth century.

The main purpose of Justin was to defend Christians from the attacks leveled at them by the heathen on one side and the Jews on the other. His great plea was that the Christians should not be condemned without being heard. The writings considered in this paper are the three undisputed writings of Justin. These are his two apologies and his Dialogue with Trypho. Since there is disagreement as to the authenticity of the other writings attributed to him they have not been included.

2. Tatian. Tatian was born into a heathen family and studied all types of heathen literature with special emphasis on philosophy. However, he soon became disgusted with what Greek philosophy had to offer. In this frame of mind he came in contact with the Christian Scriptures which satisfied his need. He became a student of Justin Martyr but after the death of Justin he

⁷ James Donaldson, Vol. II of A Critical History of Christian Literature and Doctrine (London: Macmillan and Co., 1866), p. 147.

went into the errors of Gnosticism and asceticism.

The two extant writings of Tatian are his Diatessaron or Harmony of the Four Gospels and an Address to the Greeks. This first writing is the first known attempt to produce a harmony of the gospels and is important in that it shows that the four gospels were considered authoritative at this time.

3. Athenagoras. Little is known concerning this writer. For some reason he is not mentioned by Eusebius. In fact, his name is found only twice in all the writings known to us. It is remarkable that writings of this character were allowed to fade away into obscurity. Athenagoras was a philosopher in the city of Athens who came to embrace Christianity. Two of his writings are now extant. The Embassy, an apology, was written around 177 to 180 A.D. His second work The Resurrection of the Dead was probably written after this time. It is said that these two writings "display a practiced pen and a richly cultured mind. He is by far the most elegant, and certainly at the same time one of the ablest, of the early Christian Apologists."⁸

4. Theophilus of Antioch. Once again very little is known concerning this author. Evidently, he was born a pagan and was converted to Christianity by a careful reading and study of the Scriptures. According to Eusebius, he was the sixth bishop of

⁸ B.P. Pratten, The Writings of Athenagoras, Vol. II of The Ante-Nicene Fathers. eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson. (American Edition ed. A.D. Coxe. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1951), p. 127.

Syrian Antioch.⁹ The time of his death is put somewhere between 181 and 188 A.D.

Unfortunately, only one of his writings remains extant today. This is his writing To Autolycus. He mentions in this writing another one of his writings called The History. This, apparently, was the first history attempted by the Church Fathers. He is also said to have written a work against Marcion and commentaries on the Gospels and the book of Proverbs. To Autolycus is usually dated sometime before 180 A.D.

5. Irenaeus. This writer was born sometime between 120 and 140 A.D. and died around 202 A.D. He was probably a native of Smyrna and in his early youth became acquainted with Polycarp who was bishop of that city. Later he went to Lyons, France, to work with Pothinus who was a fellow student with him under Polycarp. Upon the death of Pothinus about 177 A.D. he became bishop of Lyons. Outside of this, very little is known of his life.

Irenaeus made it his task to learn about all the heresies that were threatening the Church and then to write a refutation of them. Out of this came his great work Against Heresies. In this work he states and refutes the heresies of his time and then proceeds to give an exposition and defense of the true Christian faith. Thus it can be seen that this work is the

⁹ Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. IV. 20.

fullest development of Christian doctrine met as yet in this study. As can be expected it has more to say in the realm of eschatology than any of the previous documents. The work is generally held to have been written sometime between 182 and 188 A.D.

Another work now ascribed to Irenaeus is the In Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching. This work is thought to have been written between 188 A.D. and the time of his death. Irenaeus is said to have written other writings but unfortunately none of them is now extant.

6. Clement of Alexandria. This second period of the Church Fathers closes with Clement of Alexandria. The date of his birth is unknown and there is a question as to whether he was born in Alexandria or in Athens. Many later scholars favor Athens. He was born of pagan parents and was originally a pagan philosopher. Upon his acceptance of Christianity, he traveled far and wide to sit under the best teachers that Christianity could offer. In his opinion, the best was Pantaenus, head of the catechetical school at Alexandria. It was under Clement that Origen received his instruction and the Alexandrian school became so influential in the life of the church.

His three greatest extant writings are The Exhortation to the Heathen; The Instructor or Paedagogus, and The Miscellanies or Stromata. All of these were probably written before the year 202 A.D. and this is the reason Clement is included in this

period. The Exhortation was probably written around the years 189-194 A.D., the Paedagogus around 190-194 A.D. and the Stromata from 194-202 A.D. There is also another of his writings extant called What Rich Man Can be Saved?

The Exhortation has as its object the converting of the pagan to the Christian faith. It completely exposes the worthlessness of paganism and contrasts it with the truth of Christianity. The Paedagogus is addressed to new converts and is a guide for the development of Christian character and living. The Stromata is a collection of writings on miscellaneous subjects dealing with a Christian philosophy in opposition to Gnosticism. It was the first real attempt at a Christian philosophy. The true Christian gnosis as taken from the Scripture is contrasted to that of the pagan.

The Fathers From 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.

In the fathers examined in this period, significant change is seen in the theological picture. The cause of this is the rise of the Alexandrian school of theology. Headed by the brilliant Origen its influence was wide spread throughout the church and grew greater as the years rolled by. Here is found, for the first time, the start of an opposing system of eschatology than that developed in the first two periods of this study. It will be seen that Origen is the one responsible, to a great extent, for this development.

More writings are available to the investigator in this period than in any of the two previous periods. Still one wishes that more were available. The full commentary on Daniel by Hippolytus and the chronology by Julius Africanus, for example, would be very helpful in the study of this period. Enough is available, however, to give a fairly accurate picture of what was believed in the field of eschatology during this period in the life of the Christian church.

1. Hippolytus. As is true of the majority of the men considered in this paper, little is known concerning the life of Hippolytus. It is generally thought that he was a bishop and that he spent the greater part of his life in Rome or in the general vicinity of Rome. Some think he was bishop of Portus, a harbor of Rome at the northern mouth of the Tiber, but not all are agreed on this fact. It is certain, however, that he was a bishop in the west and in the vicinity of Rome. He became a martyr for the Christian faith and experienced death by being thrown into a canal and drowning. The place of his death is uncertain but it took place somewhere between the years 235 and 239 A.D.

It is very unfortunate that all the writings of Hippolytus are not extant. What little fragments that are extant of such writings as his commentary on Daniel makes one wish for more. In the field of eschatology Hippolytus is one of the most detailed of all the Church Fathers. He follows closely the line of thought

which is found in Irenaeus who was his teacher. His writings which will be examined in this paper are The Refutation of all Heresies, Christ and Antichrist, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, and various fragments of his commentaries on the books of Genesis, Psalms, Proverbs and Daniel.

In his writing Christ and Antichrist, Hippolytus states that it is most correct to go to the Scriptures themselves to find out the things which will happen in the future. This is the procedure that he, himself, tried to follow.

2. Tertullian. The dates found in connection with the life of Tertullian are uncertain and few of them can be used with complete confidence. He was born sometime between 145 and 150 A.D. Jerome states that he was a native of the city of Carthage of the province of Africa and that his father was a proconsular centurion. He was born into a non-Christian family, educated in Rome and entered the legal profession. He was converted around the years 185 and 190 A.D. Jerome states that he was a presbyter although he does not name definitely the Church in which Tertullian served. The choice is between Rome and Carthage with most scholars favoring Rome. Unfortunately, about 200 A.D. Tertullian lapsed into Montanism and left the church. This was a reaction from the corruption of the Roman Church and the treatment given to him by the leaders of the church at Rome. Yet even after he left the church, he was still very highly regarded. Cyprian read him often and is said to have called him

"the master". His death is placed somewhere around the year 220 A.D.

Tertullian wrote very extensively and was one of the important developers of the Latin branch of the Christian church. The first book of his writing Against Marcion was published in 207 A.D. and the rest of his writings followed this date. Many of them were affected more or less by his Montanism but the one least affected is his Against Marcion. The following is a list of his writings which were examined to determine his beliefs in the field of eschatology: Against Marcion, Apology, Testimony of the Soul, To Scapula, The Prescriptions Against the Heretics, On Idolatry, On the Prayer, On the Flesh of Christ, and On the Resurrection of the Flesh.

3. Cyprian. Cyprian's date of birth is not known although it is thought to be around 200 A.D. He was converted to the Christian faith in 246 A.D. being saved through the witness of a Cathaginian presbyter by the name of Caecilius. Only two years after his conversion he was made a bishop. This was done by popular demand although he, himself, was not at all anxious for the position and opposition to his appointment was expressed by older church officials who found themselves being eclipsed by this new convert. He, as did so many other of the early Christians, sealed his testimony to the Christian faith with his life and was martyred for the cause of Christ in 258 A.D.

Cyprian followed in the line and thought of Tertullian.

In general he may be said to be a spiritual son and pupil of Tertullian. It is said of him that not a day passed without his reading of something from the works of Tertullian. In the short span of from eight to ten years he did a great amount of writing. His letters to the bishops of Rome, along with his work The Unity of the Catholic Church, are very informative as to the position which the Roman church held in his day. His writings illustrate very graphically the social and religious feelings and usages which were found in the Christian community for his day. He is another example that illustrates the fact that the founders or developers of Latin Christianity were not from the Roman church but from the African church. The writings of Cyprian examined in this paper are On the Vanity of Idols, Testimonies Against the Jews, On the Dress of Virgins, Unity of the Catholic Church, On the Lapsed, On the Lord's Prayer, On Mortality, An Address to Demetrianus, Exhortation to Martyrdom, On Works and Alms, On the Advantage of Patience, and his letters.

4. Origen. This great scholar of the early church was born in Alexandria about 185 A.D. His parents were Christians with his father being a teacher of grammar. He not only educated Origen in the secular field but had him memorize great portions of Scripture. Origen was not always satisfied with the plain meaning of Scripture and often sought a deeper meaning, a habit which often brought a rebuke from his father. In 202 A.D. when Origen was about 17, his father was killed in a persecution which

engulfed Alexandria. Origen wished to follow his father's steps but was prevented from doing so by his mother who hid his clothes. At 18 he was made head of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Here he continued to spend a great amount of time in the study of Scripture and led a very ascetic way of life. To better prepare himself for his work he studied Hebrew and Philosophy. His life had its troubled moments mainly due to causes over which he had no control. He was excommunicated from the Alexandrian Church in 231 and went to Caesarea where he spent the rest of his life. It was here that he did his exegetical studies on the books of the Bible. He died in 254 A.D.

Origen was a voluminous writer but of his many writings only a small part exist today. For example, out of 574 known homilies only 21 exist in Greek and 388 no longer exist even in a Latin translation. Perhaps his greatest work was his Hexapla or six-columned Bible. This was an attempt to revise the text of the Septuagint and showed the great learning of the man. His two greatest writings are no doubt his De Principiis and Against Celsus. De Principiis contains Origen's views on systematic theology. In this writing he develops most fully his system of theology. Also in this writing is found Origen's principles of interpretation in which he holds to a three-fold method of interpretation. In this method he holds the literal meaning to be the least important and the hidden or mystical meaning the most important. It is unfortunate that this remains a blot on

the record of this most brilliant of all the early church fathers. Down through the ages this method of interpretation has done more to hide the meaning of Scripture than to explain it. Against Celsus is a defense of Christianity against a Greek philosopher by the name of Celsus who had attacked Christianity in a writing called The True Word. This was written in later years of Origen's life and is completely orthodox in doctrine. It omits many of the things found in De Principiis. Other writings of Origen used in this paper are: Exhortation to Martyrdom, Dialogue with Heraclides, commentaries on John, Matthew and Song of Solomon, and On Prayer.

With this great scholar, this paper ends its search, for after this time the eschatological picture starts to change until at the time of Augustine it becomes almost the reverse of what it was in the earlier and purer years of the church.

Chapter II

The Great Tribulation

The first subject to be considered in this discussion of the eschatology of the Church Fathers is that of the last days. By the last days is meant that period of time at the end of this present age immediately preceding the second coming of Christ himself and is identical with the seventieth week of Daniel (Matthew 24:29-35; Mark 13; Daniel 9). Christ identified the abomination of desolation found in Daniel 9:27 with this period immediately preceding his return to the earth (Matthew 24:15,21,29-30). This period of time starts after the rapture of the Church and will begin with the great world political leader of the end time, the Antichrist, making a covenant with the Jewish people which he will break after three and a half years. The last part of this period will be known as "the tribulation - the great one" and out of it will be saved a great multitude from all nations, kindreds, people and tongues (Revelation 7:14). It will be a time of trouble so great that no period of history past, present or future, will ever equal it. Christ said concerning this time, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). He goes on to say that if these days were not shortened there would be no flesh left upon the earth but that for the sake of the elect, these days will be shortened. In the Scripture, this period of

time is referred to as the time of Jacob's trouble, a time of judgment upon a Messiah-rejecting Israel (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:15). At the same time this will also be a period of judgment upon the Gentile or non-Jewish nations for their sin and rejection of Christ (Isaiah 26:20-21; 34:1-2; Revelation 6:15-17). The last days will be brought to a close by the second coming of Christ to the earth.

It is hoped that this brief glimpse at the teaching of Scripture concerning the last days will serve as an introductory guide to the reader as he examines the beliefs of the Church Fathers in this area. It must be remembered that these men knew nothing of the long period of time which would elapse between the first and second comings of Christ. To them the end of the age was at hand and they expected the return of Christ at any time. This could not help but influence their beliefs in this area.

All material concerning the Antichrist and his work will be reserved for the next chapter which deals specifically with that subject. The object of this chapter is to examine the teachings of these men on the subject of the time and duration of the tribulation, the persons and conditions in it and the means of deliverance from it. An attempt will also be made to trace the development of thought during this period of history.

The Fathers from 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.

1. The time of the tribulation. In this, the earliest

of the periods studied, one writer believed that the time of the end of this present age could definitely be determined. This is the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas. His chronology is very interesting concerning this subject and he states that the Lord will bring this present age to a close at the end of six thousand years in keeping with the six days of creation.

Note, children, what 'He ended in six days' means. It means this: that the Lord will make an end of everything in six thousand years, for a day with Him means a thousand years. And He Himself is my witness saying: 'Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years.' So, then, children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, everything will be ended.¹

This period of time, the author thought was about ended for he believed he was living in the last days. For this reason he exhorted his readers to be alert and to resist temptation. He calls the time in which he lived "this present lawless period" perhaps a reflection of the language of Paul in his epistles.

So let us be on the watch in the last days, for the whole time in which we believe will profit us nothing, unless in this present lawless period, in the temptations to come, we resist as becomes children of God.²

¹ The Letter of Barnabas 15.4. E.J. Goodspeed, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1950).

² The Letter of Barnabas 1.7. Ludwig Schopp, The Apostolic Fathers, Vol. I of The Fathers of the Church, ed. Ludwig Schopp (New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1947).

Two other writers of this period consider the subject of the last days and both of them put this time somewhere in the future. Thus there seems to be a difference of opinion between the writers who treat this subject. One believed he was living in the last days while two writers considered the last days still future. These last two are the writers of the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas.

The Didache has only a brief statement in which is treated the whole subject of the last days. Almost the whole quotation deals with the extent of persecution at this time and it will be quoted in that section. However, it can be seen that it was a time period still in the future by the author's use of the future tense.

The writer of the Shepherd of Hermas treats this subject in one of his visions. To quote the whole vision would take up too much space so a summary of it will be given. The writer sees a terrible beast with four colors upon its head. They are black, fiery and bloody, gold and white. He wonders about the meaning of these colors and is given the significance of each. The black stands for the world in which the believer lives. The fiery and bloody shows that this world must perish through blood and fire. The gold stands for the believer, who like gold, is tested by fire that the dross may be burned away. The white stands for the age which is to come. After the writer gives the vision and the explanation

of it, he sums up the whole teaching of the vision by stating that the vision "is the type of the great tribulation that is to come."³

2. The duration of the tribulation. In none of the writings of this period is there any information as to the length of the tribulation period. The only information that is given concerning the duration of the tribulation is not about its actual length but that its length will be shortened. This view is held by the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas.

The final stumbling block is at hand, concerning which it is written. As Enoch says: 'For to this purpose the Lord has shortened the seasons and the days, that His beloved should hasten and come to His inheritance.'⁴

3. The people in the tribulation. One of the most controversial questions of present day eschatology is whether or not the church will pass through the tribulation period or be raptured before its start. For the writer's view the introduction to this chapter can be consulted. The writings of this period are not too specific but several positive deductions can be made.

The writer of the Shepherd of Hermas evidently believed

³ Shepherd of Hermas Vision iv. 3. L. Schopp, op. cit.

⁴ The Letter of Barnabas 4.3. L. Schopp, Op. cit.

that the believers of this age would go through the tribulation period. Referring once again to the vision concerning the tribulation it is seen by the writer's own interpretation that the believers are to go through the tribulation. For according to the writer, the gold of this vision represents the believer who, like gold, is tested by fire that the dross may be burned away.⁵

It is also quite evident that the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas believed that the Church would pass through the tribulation period since he held that he was already living in that period of time.

It is more difficult to determine the exact position of the Didache. However, the writer does give one clue which would seem to indicate that he too believed that the Church would be in the tribulation. In his discussion of conditions found in this period he ends it with a statement concerning the way of salvation from the curse of this period. The ones who will be saved are "those who persevere in their faith."⁶ There is no indication that this faith is anything but that of the believer in this present age. In the absence of anything to the contrary this should be taken as the meaning of the words.

4. The conditions in the tribulation. Of the three

⁵ Shepherd of Hermas Vision v.

⁶ The Didache 16.5. L. Schopp, op. cit.

writings, the Didache is the most helpful in relating the conditions of this period. It is to be a time of the rise of false prophets and lawlessness. It will be the time of the appearance of the Antichrist who will do many wondrous works.

For in the last days, false prophets and seducers will increase, and sheep will be turned into wolves, and charity will be changed into hate. For, as lawlessness grows, men will hate one another and persecute one another, and betray one another, and then will appear the Deceiver of the world, as though he were the Son of God, and will work signs and wonders; and the world will be delivered into his hands, and he will do horrible things, which have not been done since the beginning of the world.⁷

The Shepherd of Hermas has nothing to say specifically concerning the conditions in the tribulation. However, the fact that the believer is tried by fire would show that the writer believed that this would be a time of extreme persecution for the believer.

Likewise, the Epistle of Barnabas does not go into detail concerning the conditions of this period. All he does is to characterize generally the period as one of lawlessness and temptation.⁸

5. The end of the tribulation. Once again the Didache gives the most complete picture concerning the subject. The

⁷ Ibid. 16. 3-5.

⁸ The Letter of Barnabas 1.7. L. Schopp op. cit.

last days will end with the second coming of Christ. Certain signs will appear to herald the end. These are three in number.

And then will appear the signs of the Truth: first, the sign of confusion⁹ in the heaven; second, the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and third, the resurrection of the dead - not the resurrection of all men, but as it was said: 'The Lord will come and all His saints with Him.' Then shall the world see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.¹⁰

The end of the last days are also seen as a time of judgment by the same writer.

Then shall all created men come to the fire of judgment, and 'many will be scandalized' and perish; but those who persevere in their faith will be saved from the curse itself.¹¹

The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas held that the end of the present age would come at the end of six thousand years. Reference to this scheme of chronology has already been made. At the end of six thousand years, a new period, the seventh day will begin. To start this new period, Christ will come and put down the Antichrist, judge the wicked and change nature.

'And he rested on the seventh day.' This means: When His Son will come and destroy the time of the lawless one and judge the godless and change the sun and

⁹ Some translate this "opening", "unrolling" or "outspreading." It is the Greek work ἐκπύρωσις. See Vol. 7 of The Ante-Nicene Fathers (American edition reprinted by W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1951), p. 382.

¹⁰ The Didache 16. 6-8.

¹¹ Ibid., 16.5.

the moon and the stars - then He shall indeed rest on the seventh day.¹²

The writer of the Shepherd of Hermas has nothing directly to say about the end of the tribulation period. He does hold that there is an age to come and it is possible that this puts an end to the tribulation period. However, he gives us no details concerning this subject.

The Fathers from 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.

In the period to be considered in this section a greater number of writings are available than in the first period. This is particularly true of Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. Of these three, Irenaeus and Justin give the most complete treatment of the field of eschatology. Both of these men mention the tribulation period, with Irenaeus being the more specific of the two. Justin mentions this time period almost accidentally as he considers the subject of the Antichrist. Irenaeus considers the tribulation period first and then proceeds to a discussion of the Antichrist.

1. The time of the tribulation. Both of the writers who deal with this subject held that the time of the tribulation was still future. Justin felt that although it was still future, it was to be in the very near future. This is seen in his discussion of the Antichrist when he states: "He whom Daniel foretold would

¹² The Letter of Barnabas 15.4. Goodspeed, op. cit.

reign for a time, times, and a half, is now at the doors."¹³ Outside of this statement Justin says nothing about the tribulation period itself. He is more specific in connection with the Antichrist who will come to power in this period but this will be reserved until the next chapter.

Irenaeus holds to a scheme determining the time of the end that is the same as that held by the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas. This seemed to be a rather popular way of determining the end of the age in the early church. He uses the analogy of the days of creation and concludes that the end of the age is to come at the close of 6,000 years.

For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded...This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.¹⁴

By this and other teaching "does the Word of God always preserve the outlines, as it were, of things to come, and points out to men the various forms (species), as it were, of the dispensations of the Father, teaching us the things pertaining to God."¹⁵ To

¹³ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 32. T.B. Falls, Writings of Justin Martyr Vol. 6 of The Fathers of the Church. ed. L. Schopp (New York: Christian Heritage Inc. 1948).

¹⁴ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v.28.3. A. Roberts & W.H. Rambant, The Writings of Irenaeus. 2 vols. Vol. 5 and 9 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868).

¹⁵ Ibid., iv.20.11.

Irenaeus, the tribulation period was the time immediately preceeding the end of the age.

2. The duration of the tribulation. None of the writers of this period tell exactly how long this time of tribulation will last. They give the event that will close the tribulation period but give no clue as to the time lapse between its beginning and end.

As noted in the above quotation from Justin, he states that the reign of the Antichrist will be for a "time, times and a half." Unfortunately, he does not give the number of years which this time period represented.

Irenaeus is a little more help as it seems that he believed that the tribulation period lasted for seven years. In the middle of the tribulation period, the Scripture states that the Antichrist will take over complete world dominion. From this time to the end of the tribulation, Irenaeus states, is three and a half years.

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months.¹⁶

Thus, it will seem that Irenaeus considered the length of the tribulation period as being seven years.

3. The people in the tribulation. Justin is silent con-

¹⁶ Ibid., v.39.4.

cerning the possibility that those of the church might escape the tribulation period. He states that the Antichrist will be able to overcome the saints of God for a season and makes no attempt to distinguish the saints of the tribulation period from his general use of the word saints which refers to the members of the church of this present dispensation. This is no hint even, that the church is to be exempt from this time of trouble.

There is one point in the teaching of Irenaeus that might tend to imply that the church will not go through the tribulation. In one place, he speaks of the translation of the just. The only difficulty is that he does not tell when this event will take place.

For Enoch, when he pleased God, was translated in the same body in which he pleased Him, thus pointing out by anticipation the translation of the just.¹⁷

One other teaching of Irenaeus, however, will seem to oppose any attempt to put this translation before the beginning of the tribulation period. In his discussion of the second coming of Christ, Irenaeus makes this doctrine the basis of his exhortation to the believer that they should live a righteous life in view of the fact that they do not know the time of his coming. But if the believer is to be on earth at the time of the second advent of Christ, he must of necessity go through the tribulation. How-

¹⁷ Ibid., v.5.1.

ever, no place in his discussion concerning the tribulation does he mention that the church does go through the tribulation. He does not mention the worship of Christ or salvation through Christ in this period but always states that the true worship is a worship of God. Thus, it seems that with our present knowledge of the teaching of Ireneaus it must remain somewhat an open question as to whether or not he held that the church would go through the tribulation period.

4. The conditions in the tribulation. Justin states nothing directly concerning the conditions found in the tribulation period. However, in his discussion on the Antichrist he does state the saints of God will be severely persecuted. This will be developed in greater detail in the next chapter but it can be stated here that Justin thought that this persecution would be so great that the Antichrist would, for a limited time, have the power to overcome the saints of God.¹⁸

Ireneaus, once again, is more specific in his description of the conditions found during the tribulation. It is a period of extreme suffering and persecution. The Antichrist will be in the temple at Jerusalem "endeavoring to show himself as Christ." Those who are in Judea are to "flee into the mountains" and the one on the housetop is "not to come down to take anything out of his house." For at this time there shall "be great hardship, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor

¹⁸ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho, 31.

ever shall be."¹⁹

Not only are the saints of God going to be persecuted but this will also be a time of judgment upon the nations of the world. Ireneaus states that the nation Egypt is an example of what God will do to the nations at the end time. This is seen by comparing the plagues of Egypt in the Old Testament and the judgment of God upon the nations in the book of Revelation.

And if anyone will devote a close attention to those things which are stated by the prophets with regard to the [time of the] end, and those which John the disciple of the Lord saw in the Apocalypse, he will find that the nations receive the same plagues universally, as Egypt then did particularly.²⁰

Ireneaus also teaches that at this time, Israel will experience salvation. How this is to take place does not concern us at the present but he does agree with Paul that "all Israel shall be saved."²¹ However, Irenaeus makes one exception to this and it concerns the tribe of Dan. Because the Antichrist comes from this tribe, it is judged by God and is not included among the Jews that are to be saved.

And Jeremiah...even indicates the tribe from which he [the Antichrist] shall come, where he says, "We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from

¹⁹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 25.2.

²⁰ Ibid. iv. 30.4.

²¹ Ibid. v. 30.2.

Dan;...This, too, is the reason that this tribe is not reckoned in the Apocalypse along with those which are saved.²²

5. The end of the tribulation. Justin ends the tribulation period with the second advent of Christ. It is this event that puts an end to the power of the Antichrist and his followers and results in their judgment by Christ.

The books were opened and the judgment was set. I beheld then the voice of the great words which the horn speaks; and the beast was tortured, and the body thereof was destroyed, and given to the fire to be burnt. And the power of the beasts were taken away.²³

As was seen in the section on the duration of the tribulation, Irenaeus puts a seven year limit on the tribulation. Also, this period is the closing period of this age which according to Irenaeus is to end at the close of 6,000 years. He goes to the books of Daniel and Revelation for the details as to the end of the tribulation. Christ will come in great power and overthrow the power of the Antichrist and set up the kingdom which starts the seventh day.

The Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous, the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day.²⁴

²² Ibid., v. 30.2.

²³ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho, 31.

²⁴ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, v. 30.4.

He also appeals to the teaching of Daniel concerning the great image. The stone cut without hands represents the kingdom of God which shall break in pieces and shatter all other kingdoms of the earth represented by the image.²⁵ At this time, the Antichrist will be made subject to man, the one over whom he once had control.

And...the lion, that is, Antichrist, rampant against mankind in the latter days, shall be trampled down by Him [Christ] ; and that He should bind "the dragon, that old serpent," and subject him to the power of man, who had been conquered so that all his might should be trodden down.²⁶

Just what the relation is between the putting of the Antichrist under the control of man and his being judged and placed in the lake of fire Irenaeus does not state.

The Fathers from 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.

Each of the four writers examined in this section, treat the subject of the last days. Thus, at least in treatment, there is a progression in the different time periods with the subject getting a more universal treatment in the later period than in the first. Of course, since the writings which are available to the investigator are so few, it is possible that the subject was extensively treated in all three periods. However, the best that

²⁵ Ibid., v. 26.1.

²⁶ Ibid., iii. 23.7.

can be said in our present state of knowledge is that it is more extensively treated in the period 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.

1. The time of the tribulation. Among the writers of this time, Hippolytus gives the most detailed treatment of eschatology. He believed that it was possible to determine when the end of this present world system would come. He used the method of computing the time of the end as did the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas and Irenaeus. However, Hippolytus goes into a little more detail and definitely states that five hundred years after the birth of Christ the end of the age would come.

For as the times are noted from the foundation of the world, and reckoned from Adam, they set clearly before us the matter with which our inquiry deals. For the first appearance of our Lord in the flesh took place in Bethlehem, under Augustus, in the year fifty-five hundred, and He suffered in the thirty-third year. And six thousand years must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day "on which God rested from all his works." For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they "shall reign with Christ," when He comes from Heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse; for "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that six thousands must be fulfilled. And they are not yet fulfilled as John says: "five are fallen; one is," that is the sixth, "the other is not yet come."

In mentioning the "other", moreover, he specifies the seventh, in which there is rest.

.....

From the birth of Christ, then, we must reckon the five hundred years that remain to make up the six

thousand, and thus the end shall be.²⁷

When the time of the end of the age drew near, Hippolytus expected a time of persecution to fall upon the church. This time of tribulation was to last seven years. During the last half of this seven year period, the Church will undergo extreme persecution. This will be discussed later but it is important to note that Hippolytus held that the tribulation would take place seven years before the end of the age. He cautions the Christians of his day against being deceived into believing that this period of time had already begun. To show that this is impossible he quotes from the book of Thessalonians.

And the blessed Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says: "Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together at it, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letters, as from us, as that the day of the Lord is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for (that day shall not come) except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed... For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth (will let), until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be revealed."²⁸

²⁷ Hippolytus, Daniel 2 and 7. J.H. MacMahon & S.D.F. Salmond, Vol. I of Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome, Vol. 6 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1868).

²⁸ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist, 63. S.D.F. Salmond, The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, Vol. V of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (American Edition ed. A.C. Coxe. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1951).

Tertullian also taught that there was to be a time of great persecution before the second coming of Christ. However, he is not very specific as to the time this tribulation will take place. He believed that the only thing preventing the coming of the tribulation period was the hindering force spoken of by Paul in II Thessalonians 2:7. He believed that this hindering force was the Roman Empire and thus, he was very anxious that the empire should stay in existence.

We realize that the tremendous force which is hanging over the whole world, and the very end of the world with its threat of dreadful affliction, is arrested for a time by the continued existence of the Roman Empire. This event we have no desire to experience, and, in praying that it may be deferred, we favor the continuance of Rome.²⁹

This is not the only reason why the last days are still future. Tertullian gives a list of events that have not as yet taken place which show, therefore, that the last days must be in the future.

Up to the present moment they [the Jews] have not, tribe by tribe, smitten their breast, looking on Him whom they pierced. No one has as yet fallen in with Elias; no one has as yet escaped from Antichrist; no one has yet had to bewail the downfall of Babylon.³⁰

²⁹ Tertullian, Apology 32.1. R. Arbesmann, E.J. Daly and E.A. Quain, Tertullian Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix Octavius, Vol. X of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Fathers of the Church Inc. 1950).

³⁰ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 22. Peter Holmes, On the Resurrection of the Flesh Vol. iii of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (American Edition A.C. Coxe, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. reprinted 1951).

Cyprian is of no help as to the time of the tribulation period although he considered it very close to his own time. It was still in the future but the portents of the time were already present. This was a truth that the believer could know for certain.

For you ought to know and to believe, and hold it for certain, that the day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and the time of Antichrist to draw near.³¹

He also states that this time will come as a thief in the night and at a time when all people of the world are convinced that there is peace and safety. To show that this is the teaching of Scripture, he appeals to I Thessalonians 5:2-3 and Acts 1:7.³²

Origen has nothing directly to say about a time of tribulation. While he does talk about the end of the present age he mainly deals with the salvation of men during this period. Thus, he teaches nothing that properly belongs under the present heading.

2. The duration of the tribulation. The only writer of this period who gives any specific details as to the duration of the tribulation period is Hippolytus. Even this is given in a

³¹ Cyprian, Epistle 25.13. Ernest Wallis, The Writings of Cyprian Vol. V. of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, American edition, op. cit.

³² Cyprian, Testimonies Against the Jews, 111.89. Wallis. op. cit.

rather indirect way. In talking about the last half of the tribulation period he gives its length. Thus, by an easy mathematical multiplying, the total length of the period is determined. This information is given in his commentary on Revelation 12:1-6. He mentions the period "time and times and half a time" and then gives the following explanation.

That refers to the thousand, two hundred and three score days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church.³³

Since half of the period is 1,260 days then the whole period is 2,520 days or seven years. No other writer of this period gives any clue to the length of the tribulation period.

3. The people in the tribulation. That all the writers of this period held that the church would pass through the tribulation is a very safe statement to make. Generally they are very clear in their statements concerning this point and leave little, if any, room for doubt.

Hippolytus in his discussion of Revelation 12 makes the woman of this chapter represent the Church.

By the "woman then clothed with the sun," he meant most manifestly the Church, endued with the Father's word whose brightness is above the sun and by "the moon under her feet" he referred to her being adorned, like the moon, with heavenly glory. And the words "upon her head a crown of twelve stars," refer

³³ Christ and Antichrist, 61.

to the twelve apostles by whom the church was founded.³⁴ Reference has already been made in the discussion of the duration of the tribulation to the fact that the Antichrist will persecute the Church. For this to be possible, the Church must needs go through the tribulation.

Although Tertullian nowhere states specifically that the Church will go through the tribulation he apparently assumes that such is true whenever he discusses the subject. When he treats the subject of the second coming of Christ to the earth and of the signs which will appear in the tribulation period showing that this coming is very near he has this to say.

...previous to Christ's coming, our prayers are directed toward the end of the world, to the passing away thereof at the great day of the Lord-of His wrath and vengeance..."For" says He [Christ], "the powers of heaven shall be shaken;...and when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."³⁵

Cyprian, also like Tertullian does not state "the Church will go through the tribulation" but he strongly implies it in his discussion of this period. In his discussion concerning those who will be able to come through this time of tribulation and escape the judgment of God he states the following.

The Lord prophesies that the aliens shall be burnt up and consumed; that is, aliens from the divine race, and the profane, those who

³⁴ Ibid., 60.

³⁵ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 22.

are not spiritually new-born, nor made children of God. For that those only can escape who have been new-born and signed with the sign of Christ alone shall escape.³⁶

In another place when he talks about the persecutions which will take place during the tribulation he states:

...the Lord before predicted that these things would happen in the last times, and has instructed us for the warfare by the teaching and exhortation of His words.³⁷

The question might be asked, Why teach the Church how to act in the tribulation if they were not to go through it? It seems clear by this last quotation that Cyprian believed the Church would go through the tribulation.

There is one statement by Origen which might, by itself, make it seem possible that he held that the Church was not on the earth through the end of the age. In this statement he talks about the translation of the Church.

But "when that which is perfect is come", and she [the church] has been translated from earth to heaven...then she will see all His [Christ's] wisdom.³⁸

³⁶ Cyprian, Address to Demetrianus, 22, Wallis, op. cit.

³⁷ Cyprian, Epistle, 55. 1-2. Wallis, op. cit.

³⁸ Origen, The Song of Songs 11. 1. R.P. Lawson, Origen: The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies, Vol. 26 of Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quasten and J.C. Plumpe (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1957).

It seems however, that the phrase "when that which is perfect is come" would relate this to the second advent of Christ.

It is quite easy to demonstrate that Origen equates all the Old Testament promises to the Jews with the Church. Thus when he states that the believer is on earth at the time of Christ's second coming he means the Church. Concerning Old Testament prophecy in general he had this to say.

Moreover, there are many prophecies which predict regarding Israel and Judah what is about to befall them. And do not such promises as are written concerning them, in respect of their being mean in expression, and manifesting no elevation (of thought) nor anything worthy of the promises of God, need a mystical interpretation.³⁹

He then applies this method of interpretation to the city of Jerusalem and other nations mentioned in the Old Testament.

Whatever, therefore, is predicted of Jerusalem, and spoken of it, if we listen to the words of Paul as those of God, and of one who utters wisdom, we must understand the Scriptures as speaking of the Heavenly city... If, therefore, the prophecies relating to Judea, and Jerusalem, and Israel, and Judah, and Jacob not being understood by us in a "carnal" sense, indicate some such mysteries...it will follow also that the predictions concerning Egypt and the Egyptians, Babylon and the Babylonians, Tyre and the Tyrians, Sidon and the Sidonians, or the other nations are spoken...of their "spiritual" (counterparts).⁴⁰

The clearest example of the fact that Origen believed that the Church would remain on the earth until the second coming of Christ

³⁹ Origen, *De Principiis* iv, 1.21. Frederick Crombie, *Origen De Principiis*, Vol. IV of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, American Edition, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, iv. 1.22.

is seen in his treatment of the 144,000 of Revelation 7:2-5 and 14:1-5.

Now this is said in John with reference to those who have believed in Christ, for they also even if their bodily descent cannot be traced to the seed of the Patriarchs, are yet gathered out of the tribes... It is clear, therefore, that the hundred and forty-four thousand who have not defiled themselves with women must be made up of those who have come to the divine word out of the Gentile world.⁴¹

4. The conditions in the tribulation. Generally, the writers of this period hold that the tribulation is going to be a time of great persecution for the believer. Hippolytus who makes the woman of Revelation 12 represent the Church states that she will undergo persecution from the Antichrist the last half of the tribulation period.

"And the dragon", He says, "saw and persecuted the woman...and to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time from the face of the serpent." That refers to the thousand, two hundred and three score days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church, which flees from city to city and seeks concealment in the wilderness among the mountains, possessed of no other defense, than the two wings of the great eagle, that is to say, the faith of Jesus Christ.⁴²

⁴¹ Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John, x.26. Allen Menzies, Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John, Vol. X of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, American edition, op. cit.

⁴² Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist, 60-61.

The start of this persecution is signaled by the abomination of desolation. To support this and the fact that these days will be shortened he quotes Matthew 25:15-19, 21-22.⁴³

Hippolytus believed that during this time the prophesied judgments upon Babylon will take place. These judgments will be executed by tyrants who will arise at that time. To show this he quotes all of Revelation 17 and 18 and then states:

With respect, then, to the particular judgment in the torments that are to come upon it in the last times by the hands of tyrants who shall arise then, the clearest statement has been given in the passages.⁴⁴

The two forerunners of the second coming of Christ will also appear at this time in fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi. They will have great power and will preach concerning the coming return of Christ. They will minister 1,260 days and then, when their mission is completed, they will be killed by the Antichrist.

Thus also two forerunners were indicated. The first was John the son of Zacharias, who appeared in all things a forerunner and herald of our Saviour... He [God] says by Malachi and the angel, "I will send to you Elias the Tishbite before the day of the Lord, the great and notable day, comes; and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, lest I come and smite the earth utterly." These, then, shall come and

⁴³ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 36-43.

proclaim the manifestation of Christ that is to be from heaven: and they shall also perform signs and wonders, in order that men may be put to shame and turned to repentance for their surpassing wickedness and impiety.

.....
 For John says, "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophecy a thousand, two hundred and three score days, clothed in sack-cloth." That is half of the week whereof Daniel spoke. "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters, to turn them to the blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will and when they shall have finished their course and their testimony." what saith the prophet? "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them," because they will not give glory to the Antichrist.⁴⁵

The other writers of this period agree with Hippolytus as to the conditions of the tribulation period. Tertullian calls it a time of "dreadful afflictions."⁴⁶ Cyprian sees this period as a time of great judgment by God upon the world.

But the day of judgment is still future which the Holy Scriptures denounces, saying, "howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand, and destruction from God shall come; for, lo, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel with wrath and anger, to lay the earth desolate, and to destroy the sinners out of it." And again: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, burning as an oven; and all the aliens and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord."

The Lord prophesies that the aliens shall be burnt up and consumed; that is, aliens from the divine

⁴⁵ Ibid., 44, 47.

⁴⁶ Tertullian, Apology, 32.1.

race, and the profane, those who are not spiritually new-born, nor made children of God. For...God says in another place, when, sending forth His angels to the destruction of the world and the death of the human race, He threatens more terribly in the last time saying, "Go ye, and smite, and let not your eye spare. Have no pity upon old or young, and slay the virgins and the little ones and the women, that they must be utterly destroyed. But touch not any man upon whom is written the mark."⁴⁷

Origen has nothing to say about persecution during this time but he does state that God would send one of his angels who would preach the gospel to every nation.

For at the end an exalted and flying angel, having the gospel, will preach it to every nation, for the good Father has not entirely deserted those who have fallen away from Him. John, son of Zebedee, says in the Apocalypse: "And I saw an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the Eternal Gospel, to preach it to those who dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people, saying, with a loud voice, Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of his judgment hath come, and worship him that made the heaven, and the earth, and the sun, and the foundations of waters."⁴⁸

This salvation will even extend to the Jews. Although Origen held that the Jews will not be restored as a nation because they crucified Christ, he does speak of a future time when they will be saved. This will take place after the time of the fullness of the Gentiles is completed.

For the Church was called between the two callings of Israel; that is to say, first Israel was called,

⁴⁷ Origen, Address to Demetrianus, 22.

⁴⁸ Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John, 1.14.

and afterwards when Israel had stumbled and fallen, the Church of the Gentiles was called. But when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then will all Israel, having been called again, be saved.⁴⁹

Origen definitely believed that eventually Christianity would be the only religion on the earth.

One day it [Christian Worship] will be the only one to prevail, since the word is continually gaining possession of more souls.⁵⁰

Origen also has a very interesting interpretation of Matthew 24:17. While the other writers take this passage to refer to the fleeing of the believer from the persecution of the tribulation, he applies it to the believer who lives on a higher spiritual plain than others. In his discussion of this passage he starts with a quotation from Jeremiah 16:16. Then he states:

I think myself that this prophecy is to find its fulfillment rather in the future, at the consummation of the age; so that when, according to the Gospel parable, the angels have been set forth at harvest time to separate the wheat from the tares, he who has lived on a higher plane and followed a more lofty way of life may be found on the mountains or hills, and not in the low-lying places, nor in the localities where he might be confused with the tares. Rather, he will be situated in the region of higher understanding and the loftiness of faith, ever cleaving to the Word of God, who leaps on the mountains and springs forth on the hills. And this is also stated with the same meaning, by another parable in the Gospel: "If any is on the housetops, let him not come

⁴⁹ Origen, The Song of Songs 111.1.

⁵⁰ Origen, Contra Celsum viii. 68. Henry Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum (Cambridge: University Press, 1953).

down to take anything out of the house."⁵¹

5. The end of the tribulation. The writers of this period end the tribulation period with the second coming of Christ to the earth. As this overlaps somewhat with the second coming of Christ which will be considered in another chapter it will be only briefly stated here.

Hippolytus taught that when the believer saw the events of the tribulation period take place he was to look for the return of the Lord from Heaven. For to him, the next event in the plan of God was the second coming of Christ.

These things, then, being come to pass, beloved, and the one week being divided into two parts, and the abomination of desolation being manifested then, and the two prophets and fore-runners of the Lord having finished their course, and the whole world finally approaching the consummation, what remains but the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope?⁵²

Conclusion

In this concluding section it is the purpose of the writer to sum up the general teaching of the Church Fathers and to determine if any progression or significant change can be seen from one period to the next.

⁵¹ Origen, The Song of Songs iii. 11.

⁵² Hippolytus, Christ and the Antichrist, 64.

1. The time of the tribulation. Generally, the writers considered in this chapter held that the tribulation was still in the future from their standpoint. They held, however, that it was to be in the near future and that they, themselves, were living close to the last days. In the earliest period, one writer, that of the Epistle of Barnabas thought that he was living in the last days. In each period there was one writer who believed it was possible to determine the end of the age by using the six days of creation. This method was used in Epistle of Barnabas, by Irenaeus and by Hippolytus. Hippolytus is the most exact of the three and states that the end will come five hundred years after the birth of Christ. Hippolytus taught that this period can not begin until that which restrains sin be taken out of the way. To Tertullian, this hindering influence was the Roman Empire. This time will come suddenly as a thief in the night.

It can be seen that the same views were held throughout the periods on this subject. There was however, a slight progression in thought with the later writers, especially Hippolytus, being a little more specific.

2. The duration of the tribulation. It is not until the second group of writers that this subject is considered. The only mention of the subject in the first period is made in the Epistle of Barnabas which states that the length of the tribulation will

be shortened. Justin states that the length of the reign of Antichrist will be a "time, times, and a half" but does not say how long this is. Irenaeus is the first to give a definite length of the tribulation. He divides the week in half with each half consisting of three and a half years. This is the same length as that given by Hippolytus. While this subject is not discussed by many writers in any of the periods, the second and third periods give the greatest detail.

3. The people in the tribulation. Although a progression is noted in the clearness in which this subject is treated, the belief is the same throughout all three periods. These men were sure that the church would go through the tribulation. This has been shown by both inference and direct statement. Origen even made the 144,000 of Revelation seven Gentile believers.

4. The conditions in the tribulation. Here again, the only difference in teaching is in the greater detail given by the later writers. It will be a time of false prophets and the rise of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will even be given for a short time the power to overcome the saints of God. The greatest persecution in the history of the world will arise and the judgment of God will be poured out on the earth. Israel will be saved with Irenaeus making the one exception of the tribe of Dan. The great object of persecution in the tribulation will be the Church and its members will be forced to flee for their lives. Hippolytus

gives the added fact that at this time the two forerunners of the second coming of Christ will appear, perform their ministry and then be killed by the Antichrist. Origen is the only writer not to mention judgment or persecution in connection with the last days and he is also the only one who states that some day Christianity will be the only religion of the world.

5. The end of the tribulation. All the writers bring the present age and thus the tribulation to a close with the second coming of Christ. This is the event that brings to an end the old and begins the new. During the tribulation the signs of Christ's coming would begin to appear. As Hippolytus stated: "what remains but the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven."

Chapter III

The Antichrist

This chapter will consider the subject of the Antichrist as treated by the Church Fathers. Because of the extended treatment given to the Antichrist by many of the writers it was thought best to devote a separate chapter to the subject. It needs only to be mentioned that the Church Fathers held that this person would arise during the Tribulation considered in the preceding chapter. The following is a summary of the Biblical teaching concerning this personage which will serve as an introduction to the subject.

The Antichrist will arise from among the ten world kingdoms that are in existence immediately preceding the Lord's return to the earth. He, himself, will arise from the bottomless pit and will be energized by Satan. He is called the Antichrist, the lawless one, the son of perdition and his number is the number of man-666 (Revelation 13:1-18; II Thessalonians 2:3,8). In character he is proud and arrogant with the spirit of lawlessness. He will disregard the God of his fathers and set himself up as God, speaking blasphemous things against God and all that is called God in the process (Daniel 7:20-25). He will be revealed when that which "hinders" is removed and will be given absolute authority and power over the world for the last half of the Tribulation or three and a half years (II Thessalonians 2:6-8). He will overthrow three of the last ten kingdoms of the world on his way to power.

He will make a covenant with the nation Israel to cover the Tribulation but in the middle of the Tribulation he will break it (Daniel 7:7-8; 9:27). He will then enter the land of Palestine, set up the abomination of desolation, persecute the saints and kill the two witnesses. Among many other things, he will seek to change the times and laws, he will honor the god of force and he will oppose the Lamb of God (Daniel 7:20-25; 11:36-39; Matthew 24:15; Revelation 11:7). With the help of the other powers he will destroy the great harlot, Mystery Babylon, that had such great influence over the kings of the earth (Revelation 17:8-17). Immediately preceding the second coming of Christ, he will gather together the forces of the earth to do battle with the forces of Christ. His destruction will take place at the second coming of Christ when he and his false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire (Mark 13:24-27; Revelation 17:17-21).¹

This main subject will be divided into four sections, the origin and rise of the Antichrist, the identification of the Antichrist, the work of the Antichrist and the overthrow of the Antichrist.

The Fathers from 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.

In this first period only two of the writers examined have anything to say concerning the Antichrist. Still the basic teaching concerning the Antichrist is present. These two writings are

¹ These are a few of the many Scriptures that could be cited.

the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas.

1. The origin and rise of the Antichrist. The Didache has very little to say about the Antichrist and is content with just one brief statement which sums up his whole career. As for his origin and rise this writing tells the inquirer nothing except that it takes place "in the last days."²

The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas is more detailed in discussing this point. The Antichrist is to rise out of the ten kingdoms spoken of by Daniel. To support his belief the writer appeals to the seventh chapter of Daniel.

And the prophet also speaks thus: 'Ten kingdoms shall reign on the earth, and after them shall rise up a little king, who shall humble three of the kings under one.'

Likewise Daniel speaks of the same thing: 'And I beheld the fourth beast, evil and powerful and fiercer than all the beasts of the sea, and how ten horns sprang from it, and from them a small horn, a mere excrescence³ and that it subdued three of the great horns under one.'⁴

Here Rome is identified as the fourth beast of Daniel. The ten kings are evidently ten of the Roman emperors or Caesars, with the little horn or Antichrist being the last of the Caesars in the reckoning of the writer. It must be remembered that this writer believed that he was living in the tribulation period and

² The Didache 16.3. L. Schopp, The Apostolic Fathers, Vol. I of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1947).

³ παραφύαδιον - "a little offshoot".

⁴ The Letter of Barnabas 4.4-5 L. Schopp, op. cit.

it is easy to understand how, when the Church was being persecuted by the Roman Empire, this view would develop.

2. The identification of the Antichrist. The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas makes a very general identification of the Antichrist as was seen above. However, he does not tell what Roman ruler he thought might be identified as this personage. Many attempts have been made to identify the Roman ruler that fits into this chronologically and many different rulers have been suggested. Among them are Vespasian, Domitian, and Nero. Lightfoot suggests Nero as the one meant here for the Antichrist.⁵ However, at best, these are only suggestions and since the writer is general in his identification, that is as far as the investigator can go with any great degree of certainty. This attempt to identify the Antichrist fits the writer's belief that he was living in the last days and therefore, the Antichrist was one of the rulers of his time.

3. The work of the Antichrist. Of the two writings, the Didache gives the most detail on this subject but even this is very brief and general. The Antichrist will set himself up as though he was Christ and do great works and gain control over all the world. This control will be given to him by God and will

⁵ For an informative and interesting discussion of the subject, this work is recommended. J.B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers. Part I, Vol. II (London: Macmillen and Co., 1890), p. 506 ff.

result in terrible events taking place on earth.

...then, will appear the Deceiver of the world, as though he were the Son of God, and will work signs and wonders; and the world will be delivered into his hands, and he will do horrible things which have not been done since the beginning of the world.⁶

The only thing that the Epistle of Barnabas mentions about the work of the Antichrist is the fact that he will conquer three of the ten kings arising in the last days. This fact is mentioned twice by the writer in connection with two different quotations from Scripture. One states that the Antichrist will "humble three of the kings" while the other speaks of him subduing "three of the great horns."⁷

4. The overthrow of the Antichrist. Only one writer of this period makes any mention of the final overthrow of the Antichrist. This is found in the Epistle of Barnabas. In the author's discussion of the end of the age he states that to end the present age Christ will come and destroy the Antichrist and then shall come a time of rest.

'And he rested on the seventh day! This means:... His Son will come and destroy the time of the lawless one.'⁸

Outside of this one brief and general statement the writers

⁶ The Didache 16.4.

⁷ The Letter of Barnabas 4.4-5.

⁸ Ibid., 15.5.

of this period do not treat this subject.

It is readily seen that only the briefest and most general statements are found in the writings of the earliest Church Fathers on the subject of the Antichrist. As history progresses, the amount of detail found on this subject greatly increases.

The Fathers from 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.

As Justin Martyr and Irenaeus were the two writers who discussed the subject of the Tribulation so they were the ones in this second period of the fathers who dealt with the subject of the Antichrist. Here greater detail is found than in the first period with Irenaeus giving the fullest treatment to the subject.

1. The origin and rise of the Antichrist. Almost all of what Justin has to say about the Antichrist is found in one long quotation from the book of Daniel. To show what he believed concerning the Antichrist, Justin quotes Daniel 7:9-28. He believed that the Antichrist would rise up out of the fourth world empire which was Rome. More specifically, he was to arise out of the ten horns of this empire. To prove this he quotes the following from Daniel seven:

After this I would diligently learn concerning the fourth beast, which destroyed all the others, and was exceedingly terrible;...and I was instructed concerning the ten horns that he had on his head; and concerning the other that came up, before which three horns fell...And it was told me concerning the fourth beast, that it should be the fourth kingdom upon the earth, which shall be greater than all the kingdoms...And the

ten horns are ten kings that shall arise; and one shall arise after them, and he shall surpass the first kings in wickedness, and he shall bring down three kings.⁹

The time of the appearance of the Antichrist was very close as "He whom Daniel foretold would reign for a time, times and a half, is now at the doors."¹⁰

Irenaeus also goes back to the book of Daniel to prove that the Antichrist rises out of the Roman Empire and out of its ten king state. He also appeals to the teaching of the apostle John in the book of Revelation.

He [John] teaches what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel, telling us that thus it had been said to him: "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but shall receive power as if kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and give their strength and power to the beast"...It is manifest, therefore, that of these, he who is to come shall slay three, and subject the remainder to his power, and that he shall be the eighth among them.¹¹

Again in another place he makes it quite plain as to what he thinks Daniel is saying.

⁹ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 31. T.B. Falls, Writings of Saint Justin Martyr, Vol. VI of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948).

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹¹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v.26.1. A. Roberts and W.H. Rambant, The Writings of Irenaeus, Vols. 5 and 9 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library. ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1868).

Daniel too, looking forward to the end of the last kingdom, i.e. the ten last kings, amongst whom the kingdom of those men shall be partitioned, and upon whom the son of perdition shall come, declares that ten horns shall spring from the beast, and that another little horn shall arise in the midst of them, and that three of the former shall be rooted up before his face.¹²

He then quotes from Daniel 7:9-28 to back up this statement. According to Irenaeus, Daniel and John were in perfect agreement on this point.

Irenaeus definitely believed that the Antichrist would be a Jew and that he would be a member of the tribe of Dan. Because of this, the whole tribe would be punished by God. To prove this he quotes from the book of Jeremiah.

And Jeremiah...even indicates the tribe from which he shall come, where he says, "We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from Dan; the whole earth shall be moved by the voice of the neighing of his galloping horses"...This, too, is the reason that this tribe is not reckoned in the Apocalypse along with those which are saved.¹³

Irenaeus also believed that in a general way, the time of the rise of the Antichrist could be determined. First of all the ten kings had to be in power. Then three of them would be overthrown. Finally, there would be a false sense of security. When all these things had taken place, then the time of the Antichrist had come.

¹² Ibid., v.25.3.

¹³ Ibid., v.30.2.

In the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom,...that he shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking [the three kings], having a name containing the aforesaid number [666], is truly the abomination of desolation. This too, the apostle affirms: "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them."¹⁴

2. The identification of the Antichrist. Justin has nothing to say concerning the identification of the Antichrist and makes no attempt to do so himself. However, Irenaeus has a very interesting discussion of the subject.

Evidently there were some men that claimed that the number of the Antichrist was 616 and not 666. To Irenaeus this was a great error and he was very violent in his denunciation of those who held this view. He thought that they were in great danger of becoming false prophets.

These men, therefore, ought to learn [what really is the state of the case], and go back to the true number of the name, that they be not reckoned among false prophets...knowing the sure number declared by scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six.¹⁵

This number according to Irenaeus was the "summing up of the whole of that apostasy which has taken place during six thousand years."¹⁶

The early church suffered intense persecution and because

¹⁴ Ibid.,

¹⁵ Ibid., v.28.2.

¹⁶ Ibid., v.30.2.

of it they considered themselves near the last days. This led many of them to try to identify certain contemporary figures as the Antichrist. This was done by finding a name whose letters added up to the sum of 666. Irenaeus looked upon this with a certain amount of disfavor.

It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned [666]; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved. For if there are many names found possessing this number, it will be asked which among them shall the coming one bear. It is not through a want of names containing the number of that name that I say this, but on account of the fear of God and zeal for the truth.¹⁷

However, after saying all this, Irenaeus then proceeds to a discussion of possible names of the Antichrist. He suggests three, Evanthas, Lateinos and Teitan or Titan with the last of these being favored by himself. He is not dogmatic about this point because if the identity of the Antichrist was to be made known the Apostle John would have done so.

The name Evanthas contains the required number but I make no allegation regarding it. Then also Lateinos has the number six hundred and sixty six; and it is a very probable [solution], this being the name of the last kingdom [of the four seen by Daniel]. For the Latins are they who at present bear rule: I will not, however, make any boast over this [coincidence]. Teithan, too, ... among all the names

¹⁷ Ibid., v.30.3.

which are found among us, is rather worthy of credit. For it has in itself the predicted number, and is composed of six letters, each syllable containing three letters; and [the word itself] is ancient, and removed from ordinary use; for among our kings we find none bearing this name Titan, nor have any of the idols which are worshipped in public among the Greeks and barbarians this appellation. Among many persons, too, this name is accounted divine, so that even the sun is termed "Titan" by those who do now possess [the rule]. This word, too, contains a certain outward appearance of vengeance, and of one inflicting merited punishment because he (Antichrist) pretends that he vindicates the oppressed. And besides this, it is an ancient name, one worthy of credit, of royal dignity and still further, a name belonging to a tyrant. Inasmuch, then, as this name "Titan" has so much to recommend it, there is a strong degree of probability, that...perchance he who is to come shall be called "Titan". We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.¹⁸

3. The work of the Antichrist. Justin believed that the Antichrist would have great power and that he would control the earth. The Antichrist would show his hatred of God by persecuting the saints and by speaking against God. He would even attempt to change the times and seasons. To prove this he turns once again to the seventh chapter of Daniel from which he quotes.

And I was instructed...concerning the other [the Antichrist] that came up, before which three horns fell; and that horn had eyes, and a mouth speaking great things, and its countenance excelled the rest. I beheld the horn

¹⁸ Ibid., v. 30.3.

waging war against the saints, and prevailing over them...he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall crush the saints of the Most High, and he shall think himself able to change the times and the seasons, and they shall be delivered into his hands until a time, and times and half a time.¹⁹

Irenaeus agrees with Justin about the work of the Antichrist but he goes into greater detail concerning this point.

The Antichrist is one "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders."²⁰ Irenaeus goes to the book of Revelation for a description of the Antichrist.

...whose coming John has thus described in the Apocalypse: "And the beast which I had seen was like unto a leopard, and his feet as of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon conferred his own power upon him, and his throne, and great might. And one of his heads was as it were slain unto death; and his deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the beast."²¹

Irenaeus is also very definite concerning the unrighteous character of the reign of the Antichrist.

For he being endued with all the power of the devil, shall come, not as a righteous king, nor as a legitimate king, [one] in subjection to God, but an impious, unjust, and lawless one; as an apostate, iniquitous and murderous; as a robber, concentrating in himself [all] satanic apostasy.²²

¹⁹ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 31.

²⁰ Irenaeus, Against Heresies iii 7.2.

²¹ Ibid., v.28.2.

²² Ibid., v.25.1.

The Antichrist will conquer completely the whole earth and in time will devastate "all things in this world".²³ To prove this, Irenaeus quotes from the book of Revelation and shows that here it is prophesied that "power was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation."²⁴

The Antichrist will also exalt himself above all others and even try to set himself up as God.

And again, speaking of Antichrist, he says "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." ...For the Father of all is called God, and is so; and Antichrist shall be lifted up, not above Him, but above those which are indeed called gods, but are not.²⁵

This is not to be a surprise to the believer, for Christ spoke of those who would reject Him but receive this one in place of Himself.

The Lord also spoke as follows to those who did not believe in Him: "I have come in my Father's name, and ye have not received me: when another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive," calling Antichrist "the other" because he is alienated from the Lord. This is also the unjust judge, whom the Lord mentioned as one "who feared not God, neither regarded man," to whom the widow fled in her forgetfulness of God, -that is, the earthly Jerusalem, -to be avenged of her adversary. Which also he [the Antichrist] should do in the time of his kingdom: he shall remove his kingdom into that [city], and shall sit in the temple

²³ Ibid., v.30.4.

²⁴ Ibid., v.28.2.

²⁵ Ibid., iii.6.5.

of God, leading astray those who worship him, as if he were Christ.²⁶

Actually the people of the earth will be worshipping Satan through the Antichrist. In order to exalt himself, the Antichrist will put down all other idols but himself.

Setting aside idols to persuade [men] that he himself is God, raising up himself as the only idol, having in himself the multifarious errors of the other idols. This he does, in order that they who do [now] worship the devil by means of many abominations, may serve himself by this one idol, of whom the apostle thus speaks in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians.²⁷

Not only is this supported by Paul but the apostle John also bears this out in the book of Revelation. Here is seen the extent of the success reached by the beast in having the world worship him as God.

And they worshipped the dragon because he gave power to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto this beast, and who is able to make war with him?...And all who dwell upon the earth worshipped him, [every one] whose name was not written in the book of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.²⁸

The prophet Daniel is another one who tells of this future event.

To this purpose Daniel says again: "And he shall

²⁶ Ibid., v.25.4.

²⁷ Ibid., v.25.1.

²⁸ Ibid., v.28.2.

desolate the holy place; and sin has been given for a sacrifice, and righteousness been cast away in the earth...he shall also ruin many by deceit, and lead many to perdition, bruising them in his hand like eggs."²⁹

It is also in the book of Daniel that the time when this event will take place is given and how long a time it will last.

And then he [Daniel] points out the time that his tyranny shall last,...["]And in the midst of the week," he says, ["]the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and the abomination of desolation [shall be brought] into the temple; even unto the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete."["] Now three years and six months constitute the half-week.³⁰

The Antichrist is not alone in his work of deluding the people of the earth. He has a false prophet who is his assistant in the work.

After this he [John in Revelation] likewise describes his armour-bearer, whom he also terms a false prophet: ["]He spake as a dragon, and exercised all the power of the first beast in his sight, and caused the whole earth, and those that dwell therein, to adore the first beast whose deadly wound was healed."³¹

This false prophet will have the power to ["]perform great wonders["] even to the calling down of fire from heaven and by this power he will lead the people of the earth astray. He will also have an

²⁹ Ibid., v.25.4.

³⁰ Ibid.,

³¹ Ibid., v.28.2.

image of the Antichrist made and is the one who causes the mark of the beast to be put upon all the people of the earth. His power however, does not come from God but from Satan.

Let no one imagine that he performs these wonders by divine power, but by the working of magic. And we must not be surprised if, since the demons and apostate spirits are at his service, he though their means performs wonders, by which he leads the inhabitants of the earth astray. John says further: "And he shall order an image of the beast to be made, and he shall give breath to the image, so that the image shall speak; And he shall cause those to be slain who will not adore it."³² He says also: "And he will cause a mark [to be put] in the forehead and in the right hand, that no one may be able to buy or sell, unless he who has the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name; and the number is six hundred and sixty six," that is, six times a hundred, six times ten, and six units.³²

The Antichrist will surpass all other men in the evil deeds which he will do. He will speak words against the most high God and will try to change the times and the seasons. Besides setting himself up as God in the temple at Jerusalem he will desolate the holy place and cast righteousness away from the earth. He will be an absolute tyrant and his great power will be unleashed against those who worship the one true God. The saints will be put to flight and will be slain because they do not worship him nor do they have the mark of the beast. He shall wear out and prevail against the saints of God until he is destroyed by God. Also, he and his allies shall destroy Babylon.³³

³² Ibid.,

³³ Ibid., v.25.1,3,4; 28.2; 26.1.

The reason that the Antichrist will meet with such success is found in the providence of God. Because men have rejected the truth of God, God will judge them by leaving them to the working of error which is manifested in the Antichrist.

Speaking of Antichrist, too, he [Paul] says clearly in the second to the Thessalonians: "And for this cause God shall send them the working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who believe not the truth, but consented to iniquity."³⁴

4. The overthrow of the Antichrist. Once again Justin and Irenaeus agree as to the overthrow of the Antichrist. Justin does not state clearly when or how this overthrow is to take place but he does state that the kingdom of the Antichrist is to be taken from him and given to the people of God. This will take place after the Antichrist has reigned for "a time, and times and half a time."³⁵

And the judgement sat, and they shall take away his power, to break into pieces and destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom, and the power, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, were given to the holy people of the Most High, that they may reign in an everlasting kingdom; and all powers shall serve and obey Him [God].³⁵

Irenaeus is much clearer as to the means of the overthrow of the Antichrist and as to the time when it will take place.

³⁴ Ibid., iv.29.1.

³⁵ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 31.

After reigning for three and a half years, the Antichrist will be overthrown by Christ at his second coming. This will involve the judging of the Antichrist and the establishment of the kingdom for the righteous.

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that "many coming from the east and the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."³⁶

In another place Irenaeus speaks of this as the binding of Satan and the trampling down of the Antichrist by Christ.

...and that the lion, that is, Antichrist, rampant against mankind in the latter days, should be trampled down by Him [Christ]; and that He should bind "the dragon, that old serpent," and subject him to the power of man, who had been conquered, so that all his might should be trodden down.³⁷

Here Christ is seen by Irenaeus as a representative of mankind who overthrows the Antichrist who had power over mankind.

This overthrow of the Antichrist by Christ is mentioned many times and in many different ways by Irenaeus. He appeals often to

³⁶ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v.30.4.

³⁷ Ibid., iii.23.7.

the book of Daniel for proof of this belief. He makes mention of the Ancient of days who will come and give "judgment to the saints of the most high God." He shows how the Antichrist and his allies will make war with the Lamb and how "the Lamb shall overcome them, because He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings." He also makes use of the image vision of Daniel where the stone cut without hands destroys the final world power.³⁸

The Fathers from 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.

In this period more writers mention the Antichrist than in the other two periods. Four writers, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen deal with this personage in their writings. Also, this is the first time that a complete writing has been devoted to an eschatological subject. There is found in this period Hippolytus' writing Christ and Antichrist. As far as detail is concerned, this period is about identical with the last period. Hippolytus does name the nations which will be connected with the Antichrist which the other writers up to this time had not done. Of all the writers of this period, Hippolytus is by far the most detailed.

1. The origin and rise of the Antichrist. Hippolytus believed that every believer should know what the Bible teaches about the Antichrist and his work. This would keep them from

³⁸ Ibid., v.25.3; v.26.1.

being led astray by false teaching.

But having the mystery of God in our hearts, we ought in fear to keep faithfully what has been told us by the blessed prophets, in order that when those things come to pass, we may be prepared for them, and not deceived.³⁹

Hippolytus like Irenaeus in the last period, believed that the Antichrist would come from the nation Israel and be a member of the tribe of Dan. To show that this is correct he appeals to Genesis 49:16 and Jeremiah 8:16.

"Dan," he [Moses] says, "is a lion's whelp;" and in naming the tribe of Dan, he declared clearly the tribe from which Antichrist is destined to spring ...Antichrist is to spring from the tribe of Dan.... That it is in reality out of the tribe of Dan, then, that that tyrant and king, that dread judge, that son of the devil, is destined to spring and arise, the prophet testifies when he says, "Dan shall judge his people, as (he is) also one tribe in Israel." But some one may say that this refers to Samson, who sprang from the tribe of Dan, and judged the people twenty years. Well, the prophecy had its partial fulfillment in Samson, but its complete fulfillment is reserved for Antichrist. For Jeremiah also speaks to this effect: From Dan we are to hear the sound of the swiftness of his horses: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing, of the driving of his horses.⁴⁰

Hippolytus thought that the Antichrist would come on the scene during the tribulation period.

³⁹ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 50. S.D.F. Salmond, The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, Vol. V of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (American Edition, ed. A.C. Cox. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1951).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

the times being then accomplished, there will remain only one week, the last,...and in the midst of it the abomination of desolation will be manifested, viz. Antichrist, announcing desolation to the world.⁴¹

By studying the book of Daniel, Hippolytus traces the rise of the Antichrist. He goes to the vision of the beasts in Daniel seven and shows how this traces the history of the Antichrist.

He [Daniel] said, that a "lioness came up from the sea," and by that he meant the kingdom of the Babylonians in the world, which also was the head of gold on the image...Then, after the lioness, he sees a "second beast like a bear," and that denoted the Persians. ...Then (there was) "the third beast, a leopard," which meant the Greeks. ...And in saying that it had "four wings of a fowl," he taught us most clearly how the kingdom of Alexander was partitioned. ...Then he says: "A fourth beast, dreadful and terrible; it had iron teeth and claws of brass." And who are these but the Romans? which (kingdom) is meant by the iron-the kingdom which is now established;...And after this, what remains, beloved, but the toes of the feet of the image, in which part is iron and part clay, mixed together? And mystically by the toes of the feet he meant the kings who are to arise from among them; as Daniel also says..."I considered the beast, and lo there were ten horns behind it, among which shall rise another (horn), an offshoot, and shall pluck up by the roots the three (that were) before it." And under this was signified none other than Antichrist, who is also himself to raise the kingdom of the Jews. He says that three horns are plucked up by the root by him, viz., the three kings of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia, whom he cuts off in the array of battle.⁴²

⁴¹ Hippolytus, Daniel 2 and 7. J.H. MacMahon and S.D.F. Salmon, Vol. I of Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome, Vol. VI of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1868).

⁴² Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 23-25.

Almost the same words are used concerning this vision in his commentary on Daniel. It is most unfortunate that only fragments of this work are extant today.

It is very interesting to note Hippolytus' identification of the ten toes and ten horns of the visions of Daniel. Two times in his writings he identifies them with future democracies. He states that the "toes of the image turn out to be democracies" and "the ten toes of the image are equivalent to (so many) democracies."⁴³ He is the first and only one of the early Church Fathers to make this identification. It is a very interesting observation when examined in the light of the events of the twentieth century.

After establishing the kingdom of the Jews and conquering Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia, the Antichrist takes the next step toward his goal of complete domination of the world. He then subjects the remaining horns to his power. After this he will proceed against Tyre, Berytus and the surrounding territory. The purpose of this last maneuver will be to strike terror into the hearts of the people so that they might come under his control without the necessity of war.⁴⁴

Tertullian is very vague as to the exact time and rise of the Antichrist and treats the subject in a very general way. The

⁴³ Ibid., 27; Daniel 2 and 7.

⁴⁴ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 52.

Antichrist is "the man of sin, the son of perdition, who must first be revealed before the Lord comes."⁴⁵ The only thing in his opinion that stands in the way of the rise of the Antichrist is the Roman Empire. It must first be divided into ten kingdoms. For proof of this belief he appeals to the teaching of the apostle Paul.

"For that day shall not come, unless indeed there first come a falling away," he [Paul] means indeed of this present empire," and that man of sin be revealed," that is to say Antichrist,... "and now ye know what detaineth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hinders must hinder, until he be taken out of the way." What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist upon (its own ruins)?⁴⁶

After this he quotes II Thessalonians 2:8-10 which states that after the hindering force is taken away, then the Antichrist appears.

Cyprian also believed in a personal Antichrist but has very little to say about his origin and rise. He states that the "Antichrist is at hand"⁴⁷ and he saw in the decline of good and the spread of evil the signs of the soon appearing of the Antichrist.

⁴⁵ Tertullian, Against Marcion v.16. Peter Holmes, The Five Books of Quintus Sept. Flor. Tertullianus Against Marcion, Vol. VII of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh T. & T. Clark, 1870).

⁴⁶ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 24. Peter Holmes, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Vol. III of Ante-Nicene Fathers. ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, American Edition, op.cit.

⁴⁷ Cyprian, Epistle 54.13. Ernest Wallis, The Writings of Cyprian. Vol. V of The Ante-Nicene Fathers. American Edition, op.cit.

These things have been foretold as about to happen in the end of the world; and it was predicted by the voice of the Lord, and by the testimony of the apostles, that now that the world is failing, and the Antichrist is drawing near, everything good shall fail, but evil and adverse things shall prosper.⁴⁸

Origen puts forth the teaching of Daniel and the Apostle Paul to prove his beliefs concerning the Antichrist. He quotes II Thessalonians 2:1-12 and states that "Paul speaks of this person called Antichrist in his teaching when he shows, in rather guarded language, how he will come to the human race, and when and why."⁴⁹ Then going into a little more detail but still being rather general Origen appeals to the prophecies of Daniel.

There is also the prophecy about him in Daniel, which is able to persuade an intelligent and honest reader to admire the words as truly inspired and prophetic, in the passage where he prophesies about the future kingdoms, beginning from the time of Daniel down to the destruction of the world. Although anyone interested can read it, nevertheless I quote the passage about the Antichrist which is as follows: "And at the end of their reign, when the number of their sins is fulfilled, a king of shameless face shall arise who understands problems;..."

I have thought it reasonable to quote these out of several passages in order that the hearer may understand a little, at least, of the meaning of the divine words which teach about the devil and the Antichrist.⁵⁰

The only thing that holds back the coming of the Antichrist is the

⁴⁸ Cyprian, Epistle 67.7.

⁴⁹ Origen, Contra Celsum vi.45-46. Henry Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum (Cambridge: University Press, 1953).

⁵⁰ Ibid., vi.46.

restraining one spoken of by the Apostle Paul in the book of Thessalonians.⁵¹ Unfortunately, Origen does not identify this restraining force.

2. The identification of the Antichrist. Of the writers in this period, Hippolytus is the only one who attempts to arrive at the name of the Antichrist. As was the case in the last period, all possible names hinge upon the number of the Antichrist which is 666. He considers the same three possibilities as did Irenaeus and while he thinks that the names Titan and Evanthes have merit, the one that finds the most favor in his mind is the name Latinus. However, he realizes that one cannot be too dogmatic on this subject but at the same time he feels that the subject should not be overlooked. At the proper time, the name will be made known to the saints by Christ.

For the prophet and apostle says: "Here is wisdom, Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred threescore and six."^m With regard to his name, it is not in our power to explain it exactly, as the blessed John understood it and was instructed about it, but only to give a conjectural account of it; for when he appears, the blessed one will show what we seek to know. Yet as far as our doubtful apprehension of the matter goes, we may speak. Many names indeed we find, the letters of which are the equivalent of this number; such as, for instance, the word Titan, an ancient and notable name; or Evanthes, for it too makes up the same number

⁵¹ Ibid., 11.50.

and many others which might be found. But, as we have already said, the wound of the first beast was healed, and he (the second beast) was to make the image speak, that is to say, he would be powerful; and it is manifest to all that those who at present still hold the power are Latins. If, then we take the name as the name of a single man, it becomes Latinus. Wherefore we ought neither to give it out as if this were certainly his name, nor again ignore the fact that he may not be otherwise designated.⁵²

3. The work of the Antichrist. All the writers of this period treat the work of the Antichrist with Hippolytus as usual giving the more detailed account.

Hippolytus applied many passages of the Old Testament to the Antichrist. The passage in Isaiah 10:12-17 dealing with the king of Assyria is applied to the Antichrist along with Isaiah 14:12-21 and Ezekiel 28:2-10 which deal with Lucifer, the son of the morning and the king of Tyre respectively.⁵³

The Antichrist will be a great deceiver and will try to imitate Christ in every respect.

For the deceiver seeks to liken himself in all things to the Son of God. Christ is a lion, so Antichrist is also a lion; Christ is a king, so Antichrist is also a king. The Saviour was manifested as a lamb; so he too, in like manner, will appear as a lamb, though within he is a wolf. The Saviour came into the world in the circumcision [as a Jew], and he will come in the same manner. The Lord sent apostles among all the nations, and he in like manner will send false apostles. The Saviour gathered together the

⁵² Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 50.

⁵³ Ibid., 16-18.

sheep that were scattered abroad, and he in like manner will bring together a people that is scattered abroad. The Lord gave a seal to those who believe on Him, and he will give one in like manner. The Saviour appeared in the form of man, and he too will come in the form of a man. The Saviour raised up and showed His holy flesh like a temple, and he will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem.⁵⁴

One of the first acts of the Antichrist will be to regather the Jews and restore them to their land. He does this in order that he might be worshipped as God.

...let us look also at his action. For he will call together all the people to himself, out of every country of the dispersion, making them his own, as though they were his own children, and promising to restore their country, and establish again their kingdom and nation, in order that he may be worshipped by them as God, as the prophet says: "He will collect his whole kingdom, from the rising of the sun, even to its setting: they whom he summons, and they whom he does not summon shall march with him."⁵⁵

The Antichrist and his false prophet will have great power and rule according to Roman Law which they will make to exalt the Antichrist. The extent of their power is seen in the self-exaltation of the Antichrist and the fact that no one can buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast. For proof of this Hippolytus quotes Revelation 13:11-18 and then comments:

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 54.

By the beast, then, coming up out of the earth, he [John] means the kingdom of Antichrist; and by the two horns he means him and the false prophet after him. ...And the words, "he exercised all the power of the first beast before him, and caused the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed," signify that, after the manner of the law of Augustus, by whom the empire of Rome was established, he too will rule and govern, sanctioning everything by it, and taking greater glory to himself. For this is the fourth beast, whose head was wounded and healed again, in its being broken up or even dishonoured, and partitioned into four crowns; and he then (Antichrist) shall with knavish skill heal it, as it were, and restore it. For this is what is meant by the prophet when he says, "He will give life unto the image, and the image of the beast will speak." For he will act with vigour again, and prove strong by reason of the laws established by him; and he will cause all those who will not worship the image of the beast to be put to death. Here the faith and the patience of the saints will appear, for he says: "And he will cause all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their forehead; that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name." For being full of guile and exalting himself against the servants of God, with the wish to afflict them and persecute them out of the world, because they give not glory to him, he will order incense-pans to be set up by all everywhere, that no man among the saints may be able to buy or sell without first sacrificing; for this is what is meant by the mark received upon the right hand. And the word-"in their forehead"-indicates that all are crowned, and put on a crown of fire, and not of life but of death.⁵⁶

Perhaps his interpretation of the mark of the beast was influenced by the practice of the Roman Emperors towards Christianity. At least this would seem to be the case. This power of the Antichrist

⁵⁶ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 48-49.

will be a "terrible power over all" which will result in the stirring up of "tribulation and persecution against men."⁵⁷ His strength is so great and implements of warfare so numerous that all who oppose him are doomed to defeat.

"He shall gather together all his strength, from the east even to the west....He shall make the sea white with sails of his ships, and the plain black with the shields of his armaments. And whosoever shall oppose him in war shall fall by the sword."⁵⁸

The Antichrist will also try to pass himself off as God. The prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah testify to this fact.

He will begin to show himself as God, as Ezekiel has said aforetime: "Because thy heart has been lifted up, and thou hast said, I am God." And to the like effect Isaiah says: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of heaven: I will be like the Most High."⁵⁹

The Antichrist while glorifying "himself as God" will also be guilty of "blaspheming Christ."⁶⁰

A natural result of the Antichrist's setting himself up as God will be the persecution of the saints. These will be the ones who refuse to accept him as God and as a result will feel

⁵⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 47.

the hot anger of his wrath. This truth is seen in the parable of the Lord found in Luke 18:2-8.

He [Antichrist] then, having gathered to himself the unbelieving everywhere throughout the world, comes at their call to persecute the saints, their enemies and antagonists as the apostle and evangelist says: [then he quotes Luke 18:2-8]...By the unrighteous judge, who fears not God, neither regards man, he means without doubt Antichrist, as he is a son of the devil and a vessel of Satan. For when he has the power, he will begin to exalt himself against God, neither in truth fearing God, nor regarding the Son of God, who is the Judge of all. And in saying that there was a widow in the city, he refers to Jerusalem itself, which is a widow indeed, forsaken of her perfect, heavenly spouse, God. She calls Him her adversary, and not her Saviour; for she does not understand that which was said by the prophet Jeremiah: "Because they obeyed not the truth, a spirit of error shall speak then to this people as the people refuseth to drink the water of Siloam that goeth softly, but chooseth to have Rasin and Romeliah's son as king over you: therefore, lo, the Lord bringeth up upon you the water of the river, strong and full, even the king of Assyria."⁶¹ By the king he means metaphorically Antichrist.⁶¹

Hippolytus then quotes Deuteronomy 32:34-35. This is a prediction by Moses that vengeance on those who afflict them belongs to the Jews. But they are allying themselves with the wrong person and avenging themselves on the wrong people because of their unbelief. After he quotes these verses he completes this discussion of the passage by stating:

...for, rousing themselves against the servants

⁶¹ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 56-57.

of God, they [Jews] will seek to obtain vengeance by the hand of a mortal man. And he [Antichrist] being puffed up with pride by their subserviency, will begin to dispatch missives against the saints, commanding to cut them all off everywhere, on the ground of their refusal to reverence and worship him as God.⁶²

Thus both the Jews and the Antichrist unite in the persecution of the saints.

Hippolytus likens the church during this time to a ship on a sea during a storm. She is battered and tossed about but never destroyed. The reason for this is the construction of the ship and her pilot. Christ is the pilot of the ship which carries as a trophy the cross of Christ. The tillers of the ship are the Old and New Testaments and the ropes around her are the love of Christ. The anchors of iron are the holy commandments of Christ and her top sails are the great company of prophets, martyrs and apostles who have already entered into their rest in the kingdom of Christ. Beside all of this, she is defended by the holy angels.⁶³

Hippolytus also believed that Babylon would be judged by the Antichrist and his forces. After quoting Revelation 17 and 18 he comments: "With respect, then, to the particular judgment in the torments that are to come upon it in the last time by the hand of the tyrants who shall arise then, the clearest statement

⁶² Ibid., 58.

⁶³ Ibid., 59.

has been given in these passages."⁶⁴

The other writers of this period agree with Hippolytus as to the work of the Antichrist although none of them even approach him in the amount of detail given about that work.

Tertullian held that the Antichrist would oppose and exalt "himself above all that is called God or religion" and that he would sit "in the temple of God, affirming that he is God."⁶⁵ Along with this he and his false prophet will "urge war on the Church of God" and Babylon "the city of fornication" will receive "its deserved doom."⁶⁶ The reason why the Antichrist has come upon the world is because the world has rejected the truth of God.

"Because," he [Paul] says, "they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for which cause God shall send them an instinct of delusion [to believe a lie], that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."⁶⁷

Cyprian believed that in Antiochus Epiphanes the "Antichrist was set forth."⁶⁸ Antichrist is the one who is spoken of by the prophet Isaiah in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah as "the man who arouseth the earth, who disturbeth kings, who maketh the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 36-42.

⁶⁵ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 24.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁷ Tertullian, Against Marcion v.16.

⁶⁸ Cyprian, Exhortation to Martyrdom 11. Wallis, op. cit.

whole earth a desert."⁶⁹ "The Christians" are the ones "whom Antichrist attacks"⁷⁰ but the Christian will not yield in spite of his threats.

For even Antichrist, when he shall begin to come, shall not enter into the Church because he threatens; neither shall we yield to his arms and violence, because he declares that he will destroy us if we resist.⁷¹

The Christian is not to act fearful as if he has no fortification against this attack by the Antichrist. For if the Antichrist is powerful, Christ has greater power and will come and avenge his suffering and deliver him.

Nor let any one of you, beloved brethren, be so terrified by the fear of future persecution, or the coming of the threatening Antichrist, as not to be found armed for all things by the evangelical exhortations and precepts, and by the heavenly warnings. Antichrist is coming, but above him comes Christ also. The enemy goeth about and rageth, but immediately the Lord follows to avenge our sufferings and our wounds. The adversary is enraged and threatens, but there is One who can deliver us from his hands.⁷²

Origen thought that the Antichrist would "imitate signs and powers." He will be "manifested to them that are perishing,

⁶⁹ Cyprian, Testimonies Against the Jews 111.118. Wallis op. cit.

⁷⁰ Cyprian, Epistle 56.3.

⁷¹ Cyprian, Epistle 54.19.

⁷² Cyprian, Epistle 55.7.

imitating all kinds of wonders, to wit, those of truth."⁷³ This one "opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God and is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." His coming "is according to the working of Satan."⁷⁴ "His power shall be mighty and he shall destroy wonderful things and shall prosper and succeed and destroy mighty men and a holy people. And the yoke of his collar shall prosper; craft shall be in his hand and he shall magnify himself in his heart and destroy many by craft; and he shall stand for the destruction of many and shall crush them as eggs in his hand."⁷⁵ Origen gives the same reason for God allowing the Antichrist to come into the world as did Cyprian. It was because the people of the world rejected the truth. As a result, God will send them a working of error.⁷⁶

4. The overthrow of the Antichrist. All the writers agree as to the overthrow of the Antichrist with Hippolytus again giving the most detail. The Antichrist is overthrown by the second coming of Christ to the earth.

Hippolytus limits the reign of the Antichrist to the seventieth week of Daniel. Daniel states that he will be in power one

⁷³ Origen, Commentary on Matthew xii.2. John Patrick, Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Vol. X of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, op. cit.

⁷⁴ Origen, Contra Celsum 11.50.

⁷⁵ Ibid., v.46.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.50.

week and "by one week, therefore, he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the whole world; of which...half [is]... 1,260 days."⁷⁷ Thus the whole reign of the Antichrist will be seven years. The Antichrist is the one "whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."⁷⁸ Hippolytus also refers to the stone of Daniel's image vision.

After a little space the stone will come from heaven which smites the image and breaks it in pieces, and subverts all the kingdoms, and gives the kingdom to the saints of the Most High. This is the stone which becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth.⁷⁹

At this time Antichrist will be slain and will perish with his body "given to be burned."⁸⁰ This one who claimed to be God will "be brought down to Hell, to the foundations of the earth."⁸¹

Tertullian likens the second coming of Christ to overthrow the Antichrist to "that very stone in Daniel, cut out of the mountain, which was to smite and crush the image of the secular kingdoms."⁸²

The hint that Cyprian gives as to the overthrow of the Anti-

⁷⁷ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 43.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 63.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁸¹ Ibid., 53.

⁸² Tertullian, Against Marcion iii.7.

christ is found when he exhorts the believer not to be afraid of the coming persecution under the Antichrist. For if the Antichrist goes and starts his persecution then "immediately the Lord follows to avenge our sufferings and wounds."⁸³ Outside of this one statement he has nothing to say on the subject.

Conclusion

It can be easily seen by the discussion of this chapter that the early Church Fathers believed in a personal Antichrist who was to appear during the tribulation period. This belief is present in every period studied. Although in the earliest period only a brief outline concerning this personage is given, the last two periods see a detailed development of the topic. A progress in detail of the doctrine occurs from the first period to the second but the second and third periods are for all practical purposes identical. The following is a brief outline of the teaching of the Church Fathers on the subject of the Antichrist.

1. The origin and rise of the Antichrist. The Antichrist was to arise during the seventieth week of Daniel which is the last week before the second coming of Christ to the earth. He is

⁸³ Cyprian, Epistle 55.7.

⁸⁴ Origen, Contra Celsum 11.50.

an Israelite from the tribe of Dan. He arises out of the fourth beast, the Roman Empire, and out of the ten horn stage of that empire. One writer, Hippolytus, held that these ten horns represented democracies which would arise at the time of the end. The Antichrist will uproot three of these horns and Hippolytus states that they are Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia. Hippolytus also believed that after the Antichrist overthrew these three he would proceed against Tyre, Berytus and the surrounding territory.

2. The identification of the Antichrist. In the first period of the Church Fathers the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas identifies the Antichrist as one of the Roman Emperors. He very discreetly refrains from definitely naming him and the one most probably meant is Nero.

In the other two periods the attempt is made to determine what the name of the future Antichrist will be. In both of these periods three names are put forth. They are Titan, Evanthas and Latinus. The names Latinus and Titan are the ones which find the greatest favor. The sum of the letters of the name must add up to the number of the beast which is 666.

3. The work of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will be a deceiver and will try to imitate Christ so as to convince the world that he is the Christ. He will regather the Jewish nation and restore them to their land in order that they might worship him as God. The Antichrist and the false prophet will have great power and will control the whole earth. The proof of the power

of the Antichrist is seen in the fact that no one can buy or sell except he have the mark of the Antichrist. All this power will be used in the self-exaltation of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will set himself up as God and will sit in the temple at Jerusalem. He will also be guilty of blaspheming Christ. He will violently persecute the saints of God because they refuse to worship and Hippolytus believed that he would be joined in this persecution by the Jews. However, the Antichrist never completely overcomes the saints. The Antichrist along with the other rulers of this period will destroy Mystery Babylon.

4. The overthrow of the Antichrist. The reign of the Antichrist is limited to the seventieth week of Daniel and his real power to the last half of that week which is 1,260 days. He will be overthrown by the second coming of Christ to the earth. His kingdoms are then taken away from him and made the kingdom of Christ and of the saints of the Most High.

Chapter IV

The Second Advent of Christ

This chapter considers one of the greatest events that will take place in the future. By the second advent of Christ is meant that personal and visible return of Christ to the earth in all his glory. This truth is very clearly revealed in the Scriptures. In fact, the teaching of Christ alone is clear that the coming cannot be understood in any way but as a literal coming. Truth concerning this coming is given by Christ (Matthew 24:29-30), angels (Acts 1:11), the Apostle Paul (II Thessalonians 2:8, II Timothy 4:1), the Apostle Peter (II Peter 3) and the writer of the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 9:28).¹

Although the second advent will take place at the end of the Great Tribulation the actual time of this event is unknown. The only one who knows the time of the second advent is God the Father (Matthew 24:29-30; Mark 13:32). However, if the exact time of this event is unknown to men, there are signs that will be present to show that this advent is near. Before this event can take place there must first of all be a great apostasy from the true Christian faith and the revelation of the man of sin or the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2:2-3; II Peter 3:3-4). There will be trouble and wars throughout the earth and signs of disturbances in nature (Mark 13:7-8, 24-25; Luke 21:25-28). All these things

¹ These are just a few of the many passages which could be cited.

will show that the second advent is very close. This advent will be in great contrast to Christ's first advent. Now He will come in great splendor, power and glory, being seen by all even as lightning shines from the east and west (Matthew 16:27; 24:27). At this advent Christ will be accompanied by the raptured saints of God and the angels (Matthew 25:31; I Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 14). Many other events are connected with the second advent of Christ which are part of the results of the second advent. He comes to reveal himself and the raptured saints and to judge the Antichrist, the false prophet (II Thessalonians 1:10; 2:8). He will also judge the nations of the earth and bind Satan for a period of one thousand years (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:1-2). Israel as a nation will be saved at this time and Christ will proceed to set up his kingdom on earth (Acts 15:16; Romans 11:25-26; Revelation 20:4). Also at this time, creation will be delivered from its state of bondage and a period of peace will be brought about upon the earth (Romans 8:19-22; Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3-4).

Under each group of the Church Fathers this subject will be divided into four sections. The first section will deal with the use of the Scriptures to prove that Christ is coming again. The second section will discuss the time of the advent while the third and fourth sections will deal with the participants in the advent and the events connected with the advent.

The Fathers from 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.

The second advent of Christ plays an important part in most of the writings in this period. There is more material in the writings of the fathers of this period on the second advent than any of the other subjects considered so far.

1. The advent in the Scriptures. Only one writer in this period quotes Scripture to reinforce his teaching concerning the second advent. This was Clement of Rome who uses a combination of Isaiah 14:1 and Malachi 3:1 and then applies it to the second coming of Christ. This quotation will be given in the next section. The other writers have phrases which they no doubt took from Scripture but they do not appeal to Scripture for proof of this belief in the second advent.

2. The time of the advent. Like most of the early church fathers, Clement of Rome expected the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was one of the main factors in his exhortation to the Christians at Corinth. Not only did he expect the soon return of Christ, but this return was to be sudden and quick.

Of a truth quickly and suddenly shall his will be accomplished, the scripture also bearing witness to it, saying; "He shall come quickly and shall not tarry and the Lord shall come suddenly into His Temple,

even the Holy One, whom ye expect."²

As was stated above, this is a combination of Isaiah 14:1 and Malachi 3:1.

The writer of the Didache believed that towards the end of the Great Tribulation certain signs would appear heralding the coming of Christ. Three things happen before the world sees Christ coming back to earth.

And then will appear the signs of the Truth: first, the sign of confusion³ in the heaven; second, the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and third the resurrection of the dead-not the resurrection of all men, but as it was said: "The Lord will come and all His saints with Him." Then shall the world see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.⁴

Although these signs will precede the second advent of Christ the exact hour of Christ's coming is unknown and it may take place at any moment. Evidently the three signs listed above happen consecutively and very rapidly. For this reason the believer is to be constantly on his guard. Unless he is found perfect at this time, he will receive no profit from his lifetime of Christian faith. It may be that the writer has something in mind similar to the teaching of Paul concerning the judging

² Epistle to the Corinthians 23:5. Ludwig Schopp, The Apostolic Fathers, Vol. I of The Fathers of The Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York; Cima Publishing Co., 1947).

³ Some translate this "opening", "unrolling" or "outspreading." It is the Greek word ἐκτετασμός.

⁴ The Didache 16.6-8. Schopp, op. cit.

of the works of the believer (I Corinthians 3:12-15).

Be vigilant over your life; let your lamps not be extinguished, or your loins be ungirded, but be prepared for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come, Come together frequently, and seek what pertains to your souls; for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, unless in the last hour you shall be found perfect.⁵

In the Epistle of Barnabas the writer has, as has been noted in a previous chapter, a developed chronological system of future events. As far as he is concerned the second advent of Christ will take place in six thousand years in keeping with the days of creation. At that time, Christ will bring the present state of things to an end.

Note, children, what 'He ended in six days' means. It means this: that the Lord will make an end of everything in six thousand years, for a day with Him means a thousand years. And He Himself is my witness, saying: 'Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years.' So, then, children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, everything will be ended.⁶

The Shepherd of Hermas also teaches the second advent of Christ. However, he does not give any definite time for this coming but speaks of it in a very general way. In an explanation of the parable of vineyard found in the gospels he states that "the master's absence from home is the time that remains until

⁵ Ibid., 16.2-3.

⁶ The Letter of Barnabas 15.4. E.J. Goodspeed, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950).

his coming."⁷ In its context this is an obvious reference to the second advent of Christ. The time before the second advent will be used for the completion of the building of the church. The consummation of this is still in the future but the writer believed that "the end will come quickly."⁸ Thus, he too seemed to believe that the advent could take place at almost any time.

In the letter to Diognetus the second advent of Christ is taught but with little on the subject of the time of this advent. All that the writer states is that it will be "later on."⁹ This puts it sometime in the future but in every other respect leaves the matter rather indefinite.

3. The participants in the advent. Only one writer in this period has any comment to make as to those participating in the advent with Christ. This is the writer of the Didache. This also raises an interesting problem as to the meaning and reconciliation of some of the teaching of this writing. As quoted above, the writer states that "The Lord will come and all His saints with Him." The resurrection is also to be one of the signs that precede the second advent.¹⁰ Yet at the same time the Church is on the earth at the time of the second advent for he states that "the whole time of your faith will not profit you,

⁷ Shepherd of Hermas, Parable v.5. Goodspeed, op. cit.

⁸ Ibid., Vision iii.8-9. L. Schopp, op. cit.

⁹ Letter to Diognetus 7.6. L. Schopp, op. cit.

¹⁰ The Didache 16.6-8.

unless in the last hour you shall be found perfect."¹¹ It seems rather difficult for all the saints of God to come with Christ at the second advent and yet have the Church on earth at the second advent. The difficulty may never have occurred to the writer or he might have held that the Church met Christ in the air and then came with Him to the earth. Another possibility is that it is all the resurrected saints that come with Christ to meet those that are still living upon the earth.

4. The events connected with the advent. The writers of this earliest period have little to say concerning events that might be connected with the second advent. The first thing mentioned is that this will be the time when Christ will redeem the believer and also reward him according to the life that the believer lived on earth. In discussing this one writer states that "By this He Christ means the day of His appearing, when He will come and redeem us, each according to his works."¹²

The unsaved will also see Christ in all his glory for the first time and their attitude will be one of wonder. "And the unbelievers shall see his glory and might and shall be astounded."¹³ The people of the world will recognize Christ as the One who was crucified and despised at the first advent.

¹¹ Ibid., 16.2-3.

¹² Second Epistle to the Corinthians 9.1. L. Schopp, op.cit.

¹³ Ibid.

Because then, on that day, they will see him with the scarlet robe about his body, reaching to his feet, and they will say, "Is not this he whom we once crucified, setting him at naught and piercing him and spitting upon him? It was certainly this man who said then that he was the Son of God."¹⁴

This will be a time of judgment for the Antichrist and all those who have rejected God. Two writers mention this aspect of the second advent. One states: "His God's Son will come and destroy the time of the lawless one and judge the godless"¹⁵ while the other also shows how Christ is the judge of God the Father. "Later on, indeed, He God will send Him as a Judge; and then who will be able to withstand His coming?"¹⁶

The writer of the Letter of Barnabas also has Christ accomplishing one other thing at the time of the second advent. At this time Christ will "change the sun and the moon and the stars."¹⁷ Just what this involves the writer does not say. Perhaps since the glory of Christ is present there is no longer any need for these bodies of light.

The Fathers from 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.

As has been true in the other subjects discussed up to this

¹⁴ Letter of Barnabas 7.9. Goodspeed, op. cit.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15.5. L. Schopp, op. cit.

¹⁶ Letter to Diognetus 7.6.

¹⁷ Letter of Barnabas, Loc. cit.

point, more detail is found in the writings of this period than in the first. Of the writers of this period, Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria wrote concerning the second advent of Christ. Of the three, Justin and Irenaeus give the greater detail.

1. The advent in Scripture. Justin clearly believed that the Scriptures taught two separate physical advents of Christ to the earth. The first coming was in lowliness but the second will be in great glory.

The Prophets have foretold two comings of Christ; the one, which already took place, was that of a dishonored and suffering man; the other coming will take place, as it is predicted, when He shall gloriously come from Heaven with His angelic army.¹⁸

For Scripture's proof of this fact, Justin appeals to the book of Daniel which to him describes this glorious second advent.

Just think how great shall be His power at His glorious Advent! For as Daniel foretold, He shall come on the clouds as the Son of Man, accompanied by His angels. Here are the exact words of Daniel: "I beheld till the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days sat, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like clean wool. His throne was like the flames of fire, His wheels like a burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him. Thousands of thousands ministered to Him...I beheld therefore in the vision of the night,

¹⁸ Justin, First Apology 52. T.B. Falls, Writings of Saint Justin Martyr, Vol. VI of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948).

and lo, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of days, and stood before Him and they who stood by brought Him near and He gave Him power and a glorious kingdom, and all the peoples of the earth by their families, and glory, serve Him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away; and His kingdom shall not be destroyed."¹⁹

Irenaeus also believed that the Scripture taught the second advent of Christ. The second advent was even taught in the Old Testament but the Jews were unwilling to understand it as such. As Irenaeus put it: "nor are the Jews willing to understand that all the prophets announced His two advents."²⁰ Then he precedes to show how both the Old and New Testament teaches the second advent.

Others [Old Testament prophets] beheld Him coming on the clouds as the Son of Man; and those who declared regarding Him, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced," indicated His [second] advent, concerning which He Himself says, "Thinkest thou that when the Son of man cometh, He shall find faith on the earth?" Paul also refers to this event when he says, "If, however, it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you that are troubled rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with His mighty angels, and in a flame of fire."²¹

¹⁹ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 31. Falls, op. cit.

²⁰ Irenaeus, Against Heresies iv.33.1. A. Roberts & W.H. Rambant, The Writings of Irenaeus Vols. 5 & 9 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868).

²¹ Ibid., 33.11.

It is at this advent that Christ "shall also come in the same flesh in which He suffered, revealing the glory of the Father."²²

Clement of Alexandria, although he talks about the second advent does not appeal to Scripture to prove that it is taught. He assumes that his readers believe that such an event is going to take place and uses it as an appeal for watchfulness.

2. The time of the advent. While no definite time is given for the second advent there are things that will take place to show that the advent is near. Justin believed that Elijah would be the forerunner of the second advent.

If, therefore, Scripture forces you to admit that it was predicted that there would be two Advents of Christ...as had been proved by the many previously quoted passages from Scripture--must we not conclude that the word of God has foretold that Elias will be the forerunner of the great and terrible day, namely, of His second Advent?...And we know that this will take place when our Lord Jesus Christ will be about to come from Heaven in glory.²³

Irenaeus believed that the actual time of the second advent was unknown and could come at anytime. However, it would take place at a time when the world was in the condition that existed during the life of Noah and Lot. To substantiate this belief he appeals to Scripture.

²² Ibid., 111.16.8.

²³ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 49.

"Take heed to yourselves, and watch continually upon every occasion, lest at anytime your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day shall come upon you un-awares;"... "For as it was in the days of Noe, they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they married and were given in marriage, and they knew not, until Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all; as also it was in the days of Lot, they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they planted and builded, until the time that Lot went out of Sodom; it rained fire from heaven, and destroyed them all: so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." "Watch ye therefore, for ye know not in what day your Lord shall come."²⁴

To further prove the suddenness of the second advent, Ireaneus appeals to the parable of the evil servant in Matthew 24:48 ff. The one who is not living in expectation of the second advent of Christ is like the evil servant of the parable. In a day when the servant does not look for him and in an hour that will catch him quite unawares, Christ will come.²⁵ Irenaeus also pictures Christ as a bridegroom coming for his bride. The one who does not have his lamp trimmed and burning brightly will be excluded.

And when the Bridegroom comes, he who has his lamp untrimmed, and not burning with the brightness of a steady light, is classed among those who obscure the interpretation of the parables, forsaking Him who by His plain announcements freely imparts gifts to all

²⁴ Irenaeus, Against Heresies iv.36.3.

²⁵ Ibid., iv. 26.3.

who come to Him, and is excluded from the marriage-chamber.²⁶

Clement of Alexandria agreed with the other writers of this period that the second advent of Christ would take place suddenly and therefore, the believer should always be prepared for it.

We must therefore sleep so as to be easily awaked. For it is said, "Let your loins be girt about, and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like to men that watch for their lord, that when he returns from the marriage, and comes and knocks, they may straightway open to him. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh, shall find watching." ...For blessed are they who watch for Him, and so make themselves like the angels, whom we call "watchers."²⁷

Those who are ashamed of the Lord in this world will find that "of him shall the Son of man also be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with His angels."²⁸ Once again is seen the fact that among the early writers, Christian eschatology was never divorced from Christian ethics.

Justin has one idea that is not found in any other writer of this period. He believed that before the second advent took place, people of all the nations of the earth will be looking for

²⁶ Ibid., 11.27.2.

²⁷ Clement, The Instructor 11.9. W. Wilson, The Writings of Clement of Alexandria, Vols. 4 & 12 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872).

²⁸ Clement, Stromata 1v.9. Wilson, op. cit.

the coming of the one who was crucified upon a cross in Judea.

But the prophecy, He shall be the desire of nations, meant that people from all nations would look for His second coming...for men of every nation look for Him who was crucified in Judea.²⁹

3. The participants in the advent. The writers of this period have little to say concerning the participants in the advent. The only beings they mention who will accompany Christ to the earth are the angels. Outside of these, no one else is mentioned as coming with Christ. The believer, unbeliever and the Jews that are on the earth will be affected by the advent but these will be considered in the next section.

4. The events connected with the advent. Both the elements of blessing and judgment are seen connected with the second advent by the writers of this period. First of all the second advent is the time when Christ will judge the Antichrist. Justin goes to the Scripture to show that this is true.

"The books were opened and the judgment set. I beheld then the voice of the great words which the horn speaks; and the beast was tortured, and the body thereof was destroyed, and given to the fire to be burnt. And the power of the other beasts were taken away."³⁰

²⁹ Justin, First Apology 32.

³⁰ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 31.

It is not certain whether the major importance of the second advent was the union of the believer with Christ or the judgment of Christ upon the earth. Both of these themes are given great emphasis in the writings of this period. It will be a time of severe judgment upon those who have rejected Christ.

But, if He was so brilliant and powerful at His first Advent (when, without honor or comeliness, He was scorned)...shall He not at His coming in glory completely destroy all who hated Him and maliciously turned their backs on Him...?³¹

To this teaching of Justin, Irenaeus agrees and even states it in stronger language.

But in the second [advent] in which He will come on the clouds, bringing on the day which burns as a furnace, and smiting the earth with the word of His mouth, and slaying the impious with the breath of His lips, and having a fan in His hands, and cleansing His floor, and gathering the wheat indeed into His barn but burning the chaff with unquenchable fire.³²

It might appear from the above statement that these writers believed in annihilation, but they did not. Irenaeus quotes from Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians to prove that those who "obey not the gospel" will be the recipients of an everlasting punishment. This will consist in part in being separated "from the

³¹ Ibid., 121.

³² Irenaeus, Against Heresies iv.33.1.

presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."³³

While the second advent results in the judgment of the unbeliever and the Antichrist, it will be a time of blessing for the believer. The ones faithful to Christ will now be rewarded.

Shall He not at His coming in glory...
bestow upon His faithful followers rest and every
other blessing they expected?³⁴

It is at this time that death will lose its power over the believer. Justin states that this is one of the accomplishments of Christ and that it will be realized at the second advent.

...that He might thwart death and bring it
to an end, so that, at the second advent of Christ,
it would no longer have any power over those who
believe in Him and live according to His principles.³⁵

At the same time, however, the Lord will require an accounting from the believer. Following the parable found in Matthew 25: 14-27, Irenaeus taught that each believer will have to give an account of his stewardship and return all that the Lord has given him back to the Lord with interest. The believer must show the Lord that he had wisely used the gift given to him.

But the Son shall come in the glory of the
Father requiring from His stewards and dispensers

³³ Ibid., 1v.27.4.

³⁴ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 121.

³⁵ Ibid., 45.

the money which He had entrusted to them, with usury; and from those to whom He had given most shall He demand most.³⁶

Justin also links the Jews with the second advent of Christ. It will be at this time that Christ will regather the nation Israel and the Jews shall look on him and repent tribe by tribe.

What the tribes of the Jews will say and do when they see Him coming in glory has been thus foretold by Zackarias the Prophet: I will order the four winds to collect together the scattered children; I will command the north wind to carry them, and the south wind not to strike against them. And then there shall be great lamentation in Jerusalem, not the lamentation of mouths as of lips, but the lamentation of the heart; and they shall tear not their clothing but their thoughts; they shall lament tribe by tribe, and then they shall look upon the One whom they pierced, and they shall exclaim: "Why, O Lord, have you made us wander from your way? The glory which our fathers blessed has for us become a shame."³⁷

In connection with the regathering of the Jews, Christ will also distribute the land of Palestine to them as did Joshua in the Old Testament times. In some ways, the manner of distribution by Christ will be different from the one under Joshua, but what the difference is Justin does not say.

And just as he [Joshua], not Moses, conducted the people into the Holy Land and distributed it by lot among those who entered, so also will Jesus the Christ gather together the dispersed people and dis-

³⁶ Irenaeus, Against Heresies iv. 27.2.

³⁷ Justin, First Apology 52.

tribute the good land to each, though not in the same manner.³⁸

Those writers also taught that Christ's kingdom on earth would be established at the second advent but this subject will be considered in a later chapter.

The Fathers from 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.

As has been true in the preceding chapters, there is more material on the second advent in this period than in the other two. This naturally follows from the fact that more writings are available from this period than of the others. Each of the writers examined treated this subject.

1. The advent in Scripture. All the writers of this period appeal to the Scriptures for proof of the second advent. While they don't always quote Scripture they all state that Scripture clearly teaches two advents of Christ. Hippolytus emphasizes the contrast which is taught concerning the two advents.

For as two advents of our Lord and Saviour are indicated in the Scriptures, the one being His first advent in the flesh, which took place without honor ...But His second advent is announced as glorious, when He shall come from heaven with the hosts of angels,

³⁸ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 113.

and the glory of His Father.³⁹

Tertullian thought that although the Old Testament taught two advents of Christ, the Jews had completely misunderstood this teaching.

For His two comings have been made known: the first has already been fulfilled, when He came in the lowliness of human nature; the second is to come at the end of the world in the manifestation of the majesty of His Godhead. The Jews did not understand the first; the second, which was more clearly prophesied and for which they hope, they considered the only one.⁴⁰

Cyprian agreed with Tertullian that the Jews misunderstood the teaching of the Old Testament on this subject. He held the cause of this misunderstanding was sin which ultimately led to the rejection of Christ.

And the Jews knew that Christ was to come, for He was always being announced to them by the warnings of prophets. But His advent being signified to them a twofold--the one which discharged the office and example of a man, the other which should avow Him as God--they did not understand the first advent which preceded, as being hidden in His passion, but believe in the one only which will be manifest in power. But that the people of the Jews could not understand this, was the desert of their sins. They were so punished by their blindness of wisdom and intelligence that they who were unworthy of

³⁹ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 44. S.D.F. Salmond, The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, Vol. V of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (American Edition, ed. A.C. Cox, Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1951).

⁴⁰ Tertullian, Apology 21.15. R. Arbusmann, E.J. Daly & E.A. Quain, Tertullian Apologetical Works and Felix Octavius, Vol. X of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1950).

life, had life before their eyes, and saw it not.⁴¹

Origen not only included the Jews but also other of his opponents as being among those who did not understand the teaching of Scripture concerning the two advents of Christ.

Celsus and his Jews, and all who have not believed in Jesus, have failed to notice that the prophecies speak of two advents of Christ. In the first he is subject to human passions and deeper humiliation...In the second he is coming in glory and divinity alone.⁴²

He then quotes Psalms 94:3-8 which asks the question "How long" in regard to those who disbelieve God and persecute the righteous. God through Christ will someday put an end to the offenses of the wicked.

2. The time of the advent. The writers of this period set no definite date for the second advent but they do give certain characteristics of the time immediately preceding the second advent. When these appear then the second advent is imminent.

Hippolytus believed that the first event heralding the second advent was the appearance of two men who would be forerunners of the second advent. They shall appear during the Great Tribulation.

⁴¹ Cyprian, On the Vanity of Idols 12. E. Wallis, The Writings of Cyprian. Vol. X of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, op. cit.

⁴² Origen, Contra Celsum 1.56. Henry Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum (Cambridge: University Press, 1953).

Thus also two forerunners were indicated. The first was John the son of Zacharias...He [God] says by Malachi and the angel, "I will send to you Elias the Tishbite before the day of the Lord, the great and notable day comes." ...These, then, shall come and proclaim the manifestation of Christ that is to be from heaven.⁴³

When the believer sees the events of the Great Tribulation take place, then they are to turn their eyes toward heaven for the next event is the second advent.

These things, then, being come to pass, beloved,...the two prophets and forerunners of the Lord having finished their course, and the whole world finally approaching the consummation, what remains but the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope?⁴⁴

In his commentary on Daniel, Hippolytus emphasizes the same point.

When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), the Antichrist will appear among them. When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.⁴⁵

Tertullian stressed the fact that since the believer does not know the time of the second advent, he must be ready for it

⁴³ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 44.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁵ Hippolytus, Daniel 2 & 7. J.H. MacMahon & S.D.F. Salmon, Vol. I of Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome, Vol. VI of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

at any time. He has been warned by Christ that it will come as a thief in the night.

He [Christ] warns us "to be ready," for this reason, because "we know not the hour when the Son of man shall come"-not as if He were Himself the thief, but rather as being the judge of those who prepared not themselves and used no precaution against the thief.⁴⁶

The believer is not only to be watchful but he is also to free himself from everything in the world that might tend to decrease his readiness for the Lord's return.

We ought "to have our loins girded:" in other words, we are to be free from the embarrassments of a perplexed and much occupied life; "to have our lights burning," that is, our minds kindled by faith, and resplendent with the works of truth. And thus "to wait for our Lord," that is, Christ.⁴⁷

Cyprian had as his earnest desire the return of Christ to the earth. This he wanted to take place as soon as possible.

Whom [Christ] we day by day desire to come, whose advent we crave to be quickly manifested to us.⁴⁸

Cyprian felt that the second advent was close at hand.

⁴⁶ Against Marcion iv.29. P. Holmes, The Five Books of Quintus, Sept. Flor. Tertullianus Against Marcion, Vol. VII of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Cyprian, On the Lord's Prayer 13. Wallis, op. cit.

And because already His second coming draws near to us, His benign and liberal condescension is more and more illuminating our hearts with the light of truth.⁴⁹

Thus, he continued to "pray for the advent of Christ, which shall give us the grace of everlasting light."⁵⁰

Cyprian saw a type of the second advent of Christ in the return of Lucius, bishop of Rome, from his banishment.

At the joy of your [Lucius] coming the brotherhood there has begun to recognize what and how great a joy will follow when Christ shall come. For because His advent will quickly approach, a kind of representation has now gone before in you; that just as John, His forerunner and preparer of His way, came and preached that Christ had come, so, now that a bishop returns as a confessor of the Lord, and His priest, it appears that the Lord also is now returning.⁵¹

The exact time of the Lord's coming is unknown and may take place at anytime. For this reason, the believer must be always watching and ready for the coming of Christ.

Dearest brothers, let us rouse ourselves to the full, let us break off the slumber of our former sloth and awake to observe and fulfill the Lord's commands. Behave as he taught us to behave when he said; "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding;

⁴⁹ Cyprian, Epistle 62.18. Wallis, op. cit.

⁵⁰ Cyprian, On the Lord's Prayer 35.

⁵¹ Cyprian, Epistle 57.4.

that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."

We must gird ourselves, lest when the day of expedition comes, he finds us impeded and encumbered ...Let us await the sudden advent of the Lord with ever-watchful care, that when he knocks our faith may be found awake to receive of him the reward of vigilance. If we keep these commandments, if we hold by these precepts and monitions, we cannot be overtaken by the wiles of the devil. As watchful servants, we shall reign with Christ in his kingdom.⁵²

Origen in keeping with the other writers of this period taught a future coming of Christ in great glory. For those who said that one way or another this advent had already taken place he replied "Now, indeed, the Son of man has not come in His glory."⁵³

Although he was not positive about it, he believed it most probable that before the second advent a forerunner would arise. This forerunner would be either John the Baptist or Elijah.

It is likely, however, that before the second and diviner advent of Christ, John or Elias will come to bear witness about the Word, and offer also their testimony about wisdom.⁵⁴

⁵² Cyprian, Unity of the Catholic Church 27. S.L. Greenslade, Early Latin Theology, Vol. X of The Library of Christian Classics, J.T. McNeill & H.P. Van Dusen (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956).

⁵³ Origen, Commentary on Matthew xii.29. J. Patrick, Origens' Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Vol. X of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op. cit.

⁵⁴ Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John ii.30. A. Menzies, Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John, Vol. X of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op. cit.

He warns against believing those that say the second advent has taken place and Christ is to be found in a certain place. In this warning he uses the words of Christ as found in the gospels.

He [Christ] says in one place: 'At that time if any say to you, Lo there is Christ, or here, believe him not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, who will show you signs and great wonders, so as to lead you astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold he is in the wilderness, go not forth; Behold, he is in the inner chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning comes forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.'⁵⁵

Origen exhorts the believer never to refuse to stand for Christ or his teaching. For if this is done, then Christ will be ashamed of the believer at his second advent.

We must not, therefore, deny the Son of God or be ashamed of him or his servants or his words, but listen to the saying..."For whosoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of the Father with the holy angels."⁵⁶

3. The participants in the advent. With one exception, the writers of this period say that the Lord will be accompanied only by angels at his second advent. As is true in all the periods

⁵⁵ Origen, Contra Celsum 11.49.

⁵⁶ Origen, Exhortation to Martyrdom. 37.

studied, there is very little said on this subject. In fact, it is always mentioned in prepositional phrase connected with a description of some aspect of the second advent. A typical example is found in the writings of Hippolytus when he states that Christ "shall come from heaven with the hosts of angels, and the glory of His Father."⁵⁷

The only exception to this is found in the writings of Cyprian. In his writing On Mortality he rebukes those believers who sorrow over their dead friends in the same manner as the unbelievers who have no hope. This type of behavior is unbecoming to a follower of Christ who has victory over death. One of the reasons Cyprian gives to show that the believer should not sorrow as the heathen is contained in a quotation of I Thessalonians 4:14. The last part of the verse reads "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them which are asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."⁵⁸ This seems to indicate that Cyprian believed that at least the dead in Christ would accompany Christ at the second advent.

4. The events connected with the advent. In this period more events are thought to be connected with the second advent than in the previous periods. Before this time, the themes of reward, judgment and the kingdom are connected with the advent.

⁵⁷ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 44.

⁵⁸ Cyprian, On Mortality 21. Wallis, op. cit.

Now more detail is given and new subjects are introduced.

Hippolytus taught that at the second advent, Christ will gather all the elect from over the entire world.

For the Lord says, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." "And there shall not a hair of your head perish." "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"...And He says again, "Then shall the Son of man send His angels, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds of heaven."⁵⁹

This will also be a time of judgment upon those who have rejected Christ. This theme runs through all the writers of this period. With this judgment Hippolytus connects a conflagration of the world. Just how this is to take place he does not say but it is a judgment upon an unbelieving world.

Who [Christ] shall bring the conflagration and just judgment upon all who have refused to believe on Him...And David also, in announcing prophetically the judgment and coming of the Lord says, "His going forth is from the end of heaven; and there is no one hid from the heat thereof." By the heat he means the conflagration. And Esaias speaks thus: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chamber, (and) shut thy door: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation of the Lord be overpast." And Paul in like manner: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist, 64.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Those who in this life do not acknowledge Christ as being God manifest in the flesh and accept him as Savior will at this time be forced to acknowledge him as their judge.

Those, indeed, who do not acknowledge the incarnate Son of God now, shall have to acknowledge Him as Judge, when He who is now despised in His inglorious body, comes in His glory.⁶¹

Tertullian called this judgment the vengeance of God upon those who did not know nor obey God.

For as the apostle [Paul] declares that the Lord will come "to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel, who," he says, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."⁶²

Cyprian also has this theme in his writings and adds the judgment upon the devil to that of mankind.

[Christ] soon to come from heaven for the punishment of the devil and to the judgment of the human race, with the force of an avenger and with the power of a judge.⁶³

Origen seems to believe in a general judgment of both the believer and unbeliever at the second advent. While the other

⁶¹ Hippolytus, On Psalm 109. Theodoret in Second Dialogue on Psalm 109. MacMahon and Salmond, op. cit.

⁶² Tertullian, Against Marcion v.16.

⁶³ Cyprian, On the Vanity of Idols 14.

writers limit this judgment to an unbelieving world, Origen does not.

But we say these things not rejecting even the second coming of the Son of God understood in its simpler form. But when shall these things rewards and judgments happen? Shall it not be when the apostolic oracle is fulfilled which says, "For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad?" But if He will render to each according to his deed, not the good deed only, nor the evil apart from the good, it is manifest that He will render to each according to every evil, and according to every good deed. But I suppose...that in the case of him who is perfected, and has altogether laid aside wickedness, the sins are wiped out, but that, in the case of him who has altogether revolted from piety, if anything good was formerly done by him, it is not taken into account. But to us, who occupy a middle position between the perfect man and the apostate, when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, there is rendered what we have done, whether good or bad; for we have not been so pure that our evil deeds are not at all imputed unto us, nor have we fallen away to such an extent that our better actions are forgotten.⁶⁴

It is for this reason that the believer must not be ashamed of the Son of God or deny Him. For anyone who is ashamed of Christ or the word of God "of him shall the Son of man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of the Father."⁶⁵

The second advent will also be the time when Christ will

⁶⁴ Origen, Commentary on Matthew xii.30.

⁶⁵ Origen, Exhortation to Martyrdom 37.

establish his kingdom on the earth. This dominion of Christ over the earth will be everlasting.

As the prophet saith,... "I saw one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, and he came to the Ancient of days, and he was brought to Him. And there was given to Him dominion, and honour, and glory, and the kingdom; all tribes and languages shall serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away."⁶⁶

These words of Hippolytus are almost identical with those found in the writings of Tertullian. He, too, goes back to Daniel for the result of the second advent.

As of this advent the same prophet [Daniel] says: "Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and they brought Him before Him, and there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."⁶⁷

Cyprian also taught that this was the time when the believer "shall reign with Christ in his kingdom."⁶⁸

Tertullian also emphasizes the fact that Christ is now made the head of all things. He is no longer a stumbling stone but now is elevated to chief position. He is that stone which Daniel saw crushing all the secular kingdoms of the world.

⁶⁶ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 44.

⁶⁷ Tertullian, Against Marcion iii.7.

⁶⁸ Cyprian, Unity of the Catholic Church 27.

Now these signs of degradation quite suit His first coming, just as the tokens of His majesty do His second advent, when He shall no longer remain "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," but after His rejection become "the chief cornerstone," accepted and elevated to the top place of the temple, even His church, being that very stone in Daniel, cut out of the mountain, which was to smite and crush the image of the secular kingdoms.⁶⁹

He also held that the same Christ who died will come again and all who see him at the second advent will recognize him as the one who was crucified at Calvary.

The same will come from heaven as did suffer, the same will be evident to all as was raised up again, and that those who pierced him will look upon him and recognize him, without doubt the same flesh upon which they wrought their savagery.⁷⁰

Origen emphasizes two events connected with the second advent that the other writers pass over or assume. The first has to do with the union of the believer with Christ in glory.

For now "our life is hid with Christ; but when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."⁷¹

⁶⁹ Tertullian, Against Marcion iii.7.

⁷⁰ Tertullian, On the Flesh of Christ 24. E. Evans, Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation (London: S.P.C.K., 1956).

⁷¹ Origen, Dialogue with Heraclides 174. John E. Oulton and H. Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity, Vol. II of The Library of Christian Classics, op. cit. (Numbers are the page numbers of Scherer's edition of the Greek text.)

He also mentions the perfection which will be present at the time of the second advent. That which is just a shadow in this age will then be perfect.

So also by that (future) glorious advent will be fulfilled and brought to perfection the shadows of the present advent. For thus spoke the prophet regarding it: "The breath of our countenance, Christ the Lord, to whom we said, that under Thy shadow we shall live among the nations;" at the time, viz., when He will more worthily transfer all the saints from a temporal to an everlasting Gospel according to the designation, employed by John in the Apocalypse of "an everlasting gospel."⁷²

Conclusion

From the previous teaching given it is quite evident that the second coming of Christ had an important place in the thinking of the early church. Although some details were added in the later periods the essential doctrine is found throughout the periods. This was the next event in the program of God for the Church and it was expected to take place in the near future.

1. The advent in the Scripture. The use of Scripture to reinforce their teaching concerning the second advent increased from one period to the next. In the earliest period only one writer made use of Scripture. In the middle period Scripture was used in abundance by Justin and Irenaeus as both sought to show

⁷² Origen, De Principiis iv.1.25. Frederick Crombie, Origen De Principiis, Vol. IV of Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op. cit.

that the common teaching of the Scriptures was that of two advents of Christ. Every writer of the last period at least states that the Scripture teaches two advents of Christ even if they do not quote directly from Scripture. Most of the time the appeal is made to the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. The time of the advent. The teaching concerning this aspect of the second advent is consistent throughout the different periods. The return of Christ was in the near future and it could occur at any moment. It was to be sudden and quick. Because of this the believer was to live a life of good works, purity and watchfulness. Although some writers indicate signs that will show the approach of the second advent they still held that it would be soon and happen very quickly.

In the early period the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas in keeping with his chronological scheme puts the second advent at the end of six thousand years. He is the only one who attempts any date setting of any kind.

Justin held that before the second advent Elijah would appear and this is followed by Hippolytus who added to Elijah, John the Baptist. Origen believed that one of these two men would appear before the second advent.

Hippolytus also places the second advent at the time of the fulfillment of the ten toes of Daniel's vision.

All the writers place this event as future to their time and express their willingness for it to occur as soon as possible.

3. The participants in the advent. On this subject the earliest period is silent with the exception of one writing. The Didache speaks of the saints accompanying Christ on his return to the earth. Its actual meaning, however, is somewhat ambiguous as the Church is also said to be on earth at the second coming of Christ.

The second period is also silent on this particular aspect of the second advent. The only persons mentioned are the angels who will accompany Christ to earth. They have much to say as to how this event will affect different groups of people but nothing as to who, if anyone except angels, will participate in this event with Christ.

This is generally true also of the third period with the exception of Cyprian. It can be determined that he believed that at least the dead in Christ will accompany Christ on his return to the earth.

4. The events connected with the advent. This subject shows an increase in content from one period to another. At this time all the world will recognize Christ for who he truly is. It will be a time of reward for the believer and a time of judgment for the unbeliever. Included in this judgment is the judgment of the Antichrist.

The writer of the Letter of Barnabas has Christ changing the sun, moon and stars, but what this involves he does not say.

In the second period the judgment of the believer is taught. This is not a judgment for salvation but for reward. Also in this period, Justin puts the regathering of Israel as a nation and its conversion at the second advent. This includes a redistribution of the land to the different tribes.

These themes are all found in the third with the only difference being that at times more details are added. For the first time, the judgment of the Devil is specifically mentioned. Origen is the first writer that seems to hold to one general judgment of both believers and unbelievers.

Christ is now made the head of all things and will establish his kingdom. This is to be the time of the union of the believer with Christ and his perfection.

Chapter V

The Resurrection

Inseparably connected with Christianity from its very beginning was a belief in the resurrection of the body. The clearness with which this doctrine is taught in the Scriptures is reflected in the amount of space this theme occupied in the writings of the early Church Fathers.

Both the Old and New Testaments testify to a belief in the resurrection of the body. Actual cases of life being given to the dead are found (I Kings 17; II Kings 4:32-35; John 11). Job seems to have believed in the resurrection of the body (Job 19:25-27) and the belief is quite clear in the writings of David (Psalm 16, 17:15) and Isaiah (Isaiah 26:19). As both advents of Christ are sometimes considered together in the same verse so are the two types of resurrections. There is a resurrection to everlasting life and a resurrection unto everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2) or as Christ states it in the Gospel of John, a resurrection of life and a resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28, 29). The time order of the resurrection is given in the epistles. A general statement is found in I Corinthians 15:23-25 where the order is first Christ, then the saints of God, and finally the wicked dead. Such scholars as Godet and Zahn hold to this interpretation of the passage. In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul states that there is a resurrection connected with the rapture of the Church. At this point the dead in Christ are

resurrected. John states in Revelation 20:4-6 that there is a resurrection in conjunction with the second advent of Christ. This is a resurrection of those who are worthy to reign with Christ in his millennial kingdom. John also speaks of another resurrection which takes place after the millennial kingdom of Christ. This evidently is a resurrection of the wicked as the purpose of this resurrection is to enable the wicked dead to stand before God and be judged.

In this chapter the investigation will be divided into four sections. They are: the fact of the resurrection, the persons involved in the resurrection, the nature of the resurrection and illustrations used to explain the resurrection.

The Fathers from 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.

Of all the teaching considered thus far in this period, this is easily the most developed. Outside of the subject of rewards and judgment, there is no other subject that approaches it in the amount of space devoted to it. For example, Clement of Rome takes three chapters in his short letter to discuss the doctrine of the resurrection.

1. The fact of the resurrection. The belief in the resurrection was so general in this period that many writers evidently thought it unnecessary to touch upon this particular aspect of the resurrection. Thus, only a few deal directly with this problem.

Of course, the very fact that they assume that there is going to be a resurrection shows that they considered it a fact.

Polycarp is very strong in his denouncing of all those who say there is no resurrection. He calls such a one a child of Satan.

Whoever perverts the sayings of the Lord to his own desires and says there is neither a resurrection nor judgment, that one is the first-born of Satan.¹

In the mind of Ignatius this truth was something that was beyond all doubt. Because God the Father raised Christ from the dead he will raise the believer.

Christ was truly born,...both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth; who was also truly raised from the dead, when his Father raised him, and his Father in like manner will raise us also who believe in him, through Christ Jesus, without whom we can have no true life.²

Very little is extant of the writings of Papias and of that which is extant only one reference is made to the resurrection. It deals with what will take place after the resurrection occurs, but shows that he did believe in a resurrection.

The writer of the so called Second Epistle to the Corin-

¹ Epistle to the Philippians 7.1. Ludwig Schopp, Vol. I of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1947).

thians also warns against denying the fact of the resurrection. He does not say what judgment, if any, will be brought against those who deny the resurrection but merely states, "let not any one of you say that this flesh is not judged and does not rise again."³

According to the Letter of Barnabas the purpose of the incarnation of Christ was to show to man the fact of a future resurrection.

And he [Christ], in order to bring death to nought, and show the resurrection from the dead, because he had to be revealed in flesh, endured it.⁴

2. The persons involved in the resurrection. In this period the writers consider the resurrection of the believer only. It is very probable that they also believed in a resurrection of the unbeliever but no where is it directly stated. The following passage from Clement is representative of the way the writers of this period treated this aspect of the resurrection.

All the generations from Adam until this day have passed away, but those who by God's favor have

² To the Trallians 9.2. E.J. Goodspeed, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1950).

³ Second Epistle to the Corinthians 9.1. L. Schopp, op. cit.

⁴ The Letter of Barnabas 5.6. Goodspeed, op. cit.

been made perfect in love live in the abode of the godly, and they will be made manifest at the visitation of the kingdom of Christ. For it is written, "Go into your chambers for a little while, until my wrath and anger pass, and I will remember a good day, and will raise you up from your graves.⁵

Polycarp has the same emphasis upon the resurrection of the believer. However, he connects it with a life that is righteous before God. The believer to make sure his resurrection must do the will of God and abstain from evil.

Now He who raised him from the dead will also raise us; if we do His will and advance in His commandments and love what He loved, abstaining from all injustice, covetousness, love of money, slander, false witness, not rendering evil for evil, nor abuse for abuse, or blow for blow, or curse for curse.⁶

These two quotations are enough to give the general picture of the teaching during this period concerning the persons involved in the resurrection. Although from their discussions on the subject of the judgment to come a resurrection of the unbeliever is implied, there is no definite statement of this fact.

3. The nature of the resurrection. It is not stated as clearly in this period as it is in later periods but the resurrection of the physical body is plainly taught. Clement appeals

⁵ Epistle to the Corinthians 25. L. Schopp, op. cit.

⁶ Epistle to the Philipppians 2.2.

to the greatness of God for proof that this is possible. If God is the creator of the universe than he can surely bring about the resurrection of the physical body.

Do we think it something great and marvelous, then, if the Creator of the universe shall bring about a resurrection of those who served Him in holiness, in the confidence of a good faith,...For He says somewhere: 'And Thou shalt raise me up and I will praise Thee,' and, 'I lay down and slept; I rose up for Thou art with me.' And again, Job says: 'And Thou shalt raise up this flesh of mine which has endured all these things.'⁷

According to Ignatius the resurrection of the believer is to be like that of Christ. If Christ's physical body was raised from the grave then the bodies of those who trust in him will also be resurrected. Concerning the resurrection of Christ he states.

For I know and believe that even after the resurrection he [Christ] was in the flesh. And when he came to those who were with Peter, he said to them, "Take me and feel of me, and see that I am no incorporeal phantom." And they immediately touched him and believed...and after the resurrection he ate and drank with them, as a being of flesh and blood.⁸

Papias must have believed in the resurrection of the body. It is unfortunate that none of his works have been preserved so that his views could be ascertain with a greater degree of certainty. He is said to have believed that the resurrected

⁷ Epistle to the Corinthians 25.

⁸ To the Smyrneans 3.1-3. Goodspeed, op. cit.

believer would engage in such activities as eating which would necessitate a resurrected body.

For Papias himself, in the fourth book of his Discourses of the Lord, mentioned the pleasures that comes from eating in the resurrection.⁹

4. Illustrations of the resurrection. Clement, being the writer who gives the most space to the subject of the resurrection, is the most detailed in the illustrations used. Taking the phraseology from Paul's chapter on the resurrection in I Corinthians 15, he talks of Christ as the first fruits of the resurrection. He also uses day and night and the sowing of seed to illustrate the resurrection.

Let us consider beloved, how the Lord is continually revealing to us the resurrection that is to be. Of this He has constituted the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits, by raising Him from the dead. Let us look, beloved, at the resurrection in regard to the seasons. Day and night demonstrate a resurrection: the night sleeps and the day arises; the day departs and night returns. Let us take the crops, to see how and in what manner the planting takes place. The sower went forth and cast each of the seeds into the ground, and they falling on the ground dry and bare, decay. Then from their decay the greatness of the Lord's providence raises them up, and from one seed many grow up and bring forth fruit.¹⁰

⁹ Maximus Confessor, e.c. (Corder, I p. 522 de eccl. hierarch. c.7.). L. Schopp, op. cit.

¹⁰ Epistle to the Corinthians 24.

Next Clement uses an illustration that clearly shows the difference between the writings of the Church Fathers and the canonical writings of Scripture. He uses the story of the mythical Phoenix bird to illustrate the resurrection. He is not the only writer who uses this story in connection with the resurrection.

Let us observe the marvelous symbol that takes place in the east, that is, in the region of Arabia. For there is a bird that is called a phoenix. It is the only one of its kind, and lives five hundred years. And when it approaches its time to depart and die, it makes itself a nest of frankincense and myrrh and other spices, and when the time has come it gets into it and dies. As its flesh decays a kind of worm comes into being, which feeds upon the moisture of the dead creature and becomes full-fledged. Then when it is full grown it takes up the nest containing the bones of its parent and succeeds in carrying them from the country of Arabia all the way to Egypt, to the city called Heliopolis, and in broad daylight, in the sight of all, it lights upon the altar of the Sun and deposits them there and then starts back again...Do we then regard it as a great and marvelous thing for the Creator of all things to bring about the resurrection of those who have served him with holiness in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird he shows us the greatness of his promise?¹¹

Although one might not approve of the use of such illustrations, it clearly demonstrates that a belief in the physical resurrection of the body was held by the writers of this early period.

The Fathers from 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.

This period sees a great increase in the amount of space

¹¹ Ibid., 25.1-26.1. Goodspeed, op. cit.

given to the subject of the resurrection. Every writer of this period treats this subject and there is one entire writing devoted to this topic. A greater amount of detail, then, is to be expected in this period than could be found in the writings of the earlier church fathers.

1. The fact of the resurrection. As a writer representative of this period Justin very definitely believed in a resurrection of the physical body. This belief he based upon the omnipotence of God. A God with this attribute would not find the resurrection of the body a task too difficult.

We expect that our own bodies, even though they should be dead and buried in the earth, will be revived, for we claim that nothing is impossible with God.¹²

The fact that no one had seen a dead person resurrected was not to hinder one from believing in the resurrection. Just as human birth would partake of the same difficulty in acceptance if it were not so common, so the resurrection is easily rejected. But because the one is true, the other is possible.

In like manner, because you have never witnessed a dead person rise again to life, you refuse to believe. But as in the beginning you would not have believed it possible that from a little sperm such persons could be

¹² Justin, First Apology 18. F.B. Falls, Writings of Saint Justin Martyr, Vol. VI of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc. 1948).

produced and yet you actually see that they are, so now realize that it is not impossible that human bodies, after they are dead and disseminated in the earth like seeds, should at the appointed time, at God's command, arise and assume immortality.¹³

Tatian used much the same line of thought when he wrote concerning the resurrection. If God can perform the miracle of birth he can also perform the miracle of resurrection. This is connected with the sovereignty of God and there is nothing that can prevent the resurrection from taking place. He likens the period between death and the resurrection to the period before birth. He also states that the purpose of the resurrection is to enable God to pass judgment upon man.

And on this account we believe that there will be a resurrection of bodies after the consummation of all things;...a resurrection once for all, when our periods of existence are completed, and in consequence solely of the constitution of things under which men alone live, for the purpose of passing judgment upon them...For just as, not existing before I was born, I knew not who I was, and only existed in the potentiality (ὑπόστασις)¹⁴ of fleshly matter, but being born, after a former state of nothingness, I have obtained

¹³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴ This is an attempt by the translator to solve a difficult problem of translation. Moulton and Milligan state that "in all cases there is the same central idea of something that underlies visible conditions and guarantees a future possession." Potentiality is not a correct translation of the word but it is difficult to find a word which fits the meaning of the Greek word yet also fits the context. Perhaps a better translation would be "essence."

through my birth a certainty of my existence; in the same way, having been born, and through death existing no longer, and seen no longer, I shall exist again, just as before I was not, but was afterwards born. Even though fire destroy all traces of my flesh, the world receives the vaporized matter; and though dispersed through rivers and seas, or torn in pieces by wild beasts, I am laid up in the storehouses of a wealthy Lord. And, although the poor and the godless know not what is stored up, yet God the Sovereign, when He pleases, will restore the substance that is visible to Him alone to its pristine condition.¹⁵

Athenagoras is the writer in this period who has devoted an entire work to the subject of the resurrection. The work is appropriately titled The Resurrection of the Dead. He believed that it was a matter of practical necessity for the resurrection to take place. It must occur in order for the future uniting of the body and soul.

If now the end of man is that of the whole man, and for the reasons already given many times over this cannot be discovered in the life here below, nor yet when the soul comes to be separate ...then by strict necessity the end of man must be found in some other condition of the whole man, who yet remains the same man.

As this is a necessary consequence, there must certainly be a resurrection of bodies...and the same man as before must come to be again... Now the same soul cannot recover the same body in any other way than by resurrection. When this happens, the end befitting the nature of man is

¹⁵ Tatian, To the Greeks 6. B.P. Pratten, M. Dods & T. Smith, The Writings of Tatian and Theophilus: and the Clementine Recognitions, Vol. III of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867).

really achieved.¹⁶

God has created man to be a permanent being who would be able to be a witness to God's great majesty and wisdom. However, death interferes with this divine purpose for man in that it destroys man. Therefore, if man is to be permanent there must be a resurrection, as this is the only way man can be made permanent and still be man.

We are well aware that God would not have created such a living being and endowed him with all the gifts suited to permanence, if He did not want His creature to be permanent. If then, the creator of all made man to share in a conscious life and, when he had become the witness of His majesty and all-embracing wisdom, to abide for ever in the contemplation of these, according to the divine purpose and nature he had received, then the reason for his coming to be guarantees his permanence forever, and his permanence guarantees his resurrection, for without this he would not be permanent as man.¹⁷

Athenagoras believed that human nature consisted of an immortal soul and a physical body that were united. God has decreed that this is to be so and man will eternally abide in this condition. Of course for this to be true, a resurrection must take place in order to once again unite the body and soul.

¹⁶ Athenagoras, The Resurrection of the Dead 25. Joseph H. Crehan, Athenagoras, Vol. 23 of Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quasten & J.C. Plumpe (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1956).

¹⁷ Ibid., 13.

If, quite generally, every instance of human nature is constituted by an immortal soul and the body that is united with it at birth, and if God has decreed such an origin, such a life and existence, neither for the soul by itself nor the body in isolation, but for the men who are compounded of the two, intending that from the time that they are united and commence to live they should pass through life and come to one and the same appointed end,...Thus the constitution of men in self-identity shows that the resurrection of bodies that have died and have been dissolved must follow of necessity, for without it, the same parts would not be united to one another, nor would the same nature of man be reconstituted ...So man then, who is constituted of both body and soul must abide for ever. This he cannot do without a resurrection.¹⁸

Another proof which Athenagoras used for the resurrection was the future rewarding or judgment of man. As the whole man, and not just a certain part of him, is responsible for the deeds done in this life, it is only just that the whole man (body and soul) is punished or rewarded for these deeds. For this to be possible, however, means that there must be a resurrection of the body.

Now just judgments apportion justice for his deeds to the whole man, and the soul alone should not receive the wage for what it has done in the body's company - for the soul taken by itself is without engagement in the excesses that occur in bodily pleasure, in feeding, or in nature; nor should the body alone be rewarded - for the body by itself is outside the scope of reason and justice. The whole man, therefore, composed of body and soul, receives justice for each of his acts.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹ Ibid., 18.

Theophilus believed quite strongly in a future physical resurrection of the body. He held that those who now do not believe in it will at a future time be forced to believe it. The thing that will force them to change their minds will be the actual occurrence of the resurrection. They will also be judged for their unbelief.

But you do not believe that the dead are raised. When the resurrection shall take place, then you will believe, whether you will or no; and your faith shall be reckoned for unbelief, unless you believe now.²⁰

Irenaeus appeals to Scripture from both the Old and New Testaments to prove the resurrection of the body. One of the passages which he quotes from the Old Testament is Isaiah 26:19 which states "Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall live." In the New Testament he uses I Corinthians 15:13-21 which lists Paul's arguments for the resurrection.²¹ He also uses the same type of reasoning which Christ did when he discussed the question of the resurrection with the Sadducees. God is the God of the living and not of the dead so there must be a resurrection.

For if He be not the God of the dead, but of the living, yet was called the God of the fathers who

²⁰ Theophilus, To Antolycus i.8. Pratten, Dods & Smith, op. cit.

²¹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 15.1.; 13.4. Vol. I of The Writings of Irenaeus, Vol. V of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

were sleeping, they do indubitably live to God, and have not passed out of existence, since they are children of the resurrection. But our Lord is Himself the resurrection, as He does Himself declare, "I am the resurrection and the life."²²

To Irenaeus Christ himself was "the first-born from the dead" and he made possible the resurrection of all men.²³

Clement of Alexandria also believed in a bodily resurrection of the dead. He speaks of a book he intended to write entitled On The Resurrection but unfortunately it is not extant today and perhaps was never written. Because he does not treat the subject in detail anywhere in his writings, it is impossible to give anything but a sketchy outline of his belief in the resurrection.

For Biblical proof of the resurrection Clement appeals to John 6:40 where Christ states that the one who believes on Him will be raised up at the last day and have everlasting life.²⁴ Christ taught a resurrection of the body and all who were enabled by the Holy Spirit could plainly see this fact.

Wherefore also to those capable of perceiving

²² Ibid., iv.5.2.

²³ Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching 8. J.P. Smith, St. Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching, Vol. 16 of Ancient Christian Writers, op. cit.

²⁴ Clement, The Instructor 1.6. William Wilson, The Writings of Clement of Alexandria, Vol. 4 & 12 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

he showed resurrection, that of the life still in the flesh.²⁵

2. The persons involved in the resurrection. Generally the writers of this period consider only the resurrection of the believer. In most cases the resurrection of the unbeliever is ignored or assumed. Many of them seem to teach two resurrections, one of the believer and then a later resurrection of the unbeliever. Some of them are more definite in this than others.

Justin believed that all men would be resurrected and rewarded or punished as each case demanded.

He [God] shall also raise to life the bodies of all the men that ever were, shall cloak the worthy with immortality, and shall relegate the wicked, subject to sensible pain for all eternity, into the eternal fire together with the evil demons.²⁶

However, Justin separated the resurrection of the believer and the unbeliever by the thousand year period of the millennium. Concerning the resurrection of the believer Justin states:

But I and every other completely orthodox Christian feel certain that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, followed by a thousand years in the resurrection of the flesh, followed by a thousand years in the rebuilt, embellished and enlarged city of Jerusalem, as was announced by the Prophets Ezechiel, Isaias and the others.²⁷

²⁵ Clement, Stromata iv.16. Wilson, Op. cit.

²⁶ Justin, First Apology 40.

²⁷ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 80.

After describing what some of the prophets had to say about this millennial reign of Christ, he then preceeds to talk about the resurrection of the unbeliever and their judgment.

Moreover, a man among us named John, one of Christ's Apostles, received a revelation and foretold that the followers of Christ would dwell in Jerusalem for a thousand years, and that afterwards the universal and, in short, everlasting resurrection and judgment would take place.²⁸

Tatian also believed that all men would take part in the resurrection. He held that the purpose of the resurrection was to prepare man for the judgment of God. However, he says very little about the people involved and no distinction is made as to the resurrection of the believer and unbeliever. In fact, he says nothing whatever as to the time of either resurrection.

This same observation holds true for the other writers of this period with the exception of Irenaeus and possibly Clement of Alexandria.

Irenaeus holds the same position as Justin in regard to the resurrection of the believer and the unbeliever. They are separated by the millennial kingdom of Christ which will be established upon the earth. He puts the resurrection of the believer before the kingdom and that of the unbeliever after the kingdom. For support of this position, Irenaeus appeals to the

²⁸ Ibid., 81.

writing of John in the book of Revelation. In connection with the resurrection of the believer he states:

John, therefore, did distinctly foresee the first "resurrection of the just," and the inheritance in the kingdom of the earth.²⁹

After this kingdom period was completed, then the resurrection of the unbeliever and his judgment took place.

For after the times of the kingdom, he [John] says, "I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, from whose face the earth fled away, and the heaven; and there was no more place for them." And he sets forth, too, the things connected with the general resurrection and the judgment, mentioning "the dead, great and small." "The sea," he says, "gave up the dead which it had in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead that they contained; and the books were opened."³⁰

Because of the absence of Clement's writing on the resurrection it is impossible to make a dogmatic statement on his position as to the separate resurrection of the believer and unbeliever. In the writings that are available he speaks only of the resurrection of the believer. However, this in itself, may show that he did believe in their separate resurrections. But the evidence is much too meager to definitely favor either side of the question.

²⁹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v.36.3.

³⁰ Ibid., v.35.2.

3. The nature of the resurrection. It was generally held in this period that the resurrection was of the physical body although certain changes were present. The most important change is that of immortality.

Justin reassured his readers that if they had any physical defects in this life, they could rest in the hope of having a perfect body in the resurrection. Christ gave proof of this when he performed acts of healing while on earth.

But He [Christ] performed those deeds to convince His future followers, that if any one, even though his body were in any way maimed, should be faithful to His teaching, He would raise him up at His second coming entirely sound, and make him free forever from death, corruption and pain.³¹

This thought of being free from death, corruption and pain appears more than once in Justin's discussion concerning the resurrection.

Many writers emphasize the fact that despite what might happen to the body between death and the resurrection, God has the power to resurrect the same body that died. The one who states that the dissolving of the body into the earth or the eating of human flesh by animals is a hindrance to the resurrection has not considered the great power and wisdom of God.

Bodies then, they say, are thus done away and their proper portions and particles pass after decay

³¹ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 69.

into a multitude of animals and are by digestion united to the bodies that thus feed upon them, so that the separating out of these becomes impossible. Then there is a further and more awkward predicament. The animals that feed upon these human bodies - such at least as are fit for human consumption - pass through the stomachs of men and are incorporated into the bodies of the men who eat them; and so the parts of those men who are preyed upon by beasts must of strict necessity go into the bodies of other men, ... and from all this they prove - as they think - that resurrection is impossible for the reason that the same parts cannot rise again in two or more bodies; either the former bodies will not be able to achieve completeness, some of their parts now being in other bodies, or if these parts are given up to their first possessors, their later owners will be in want.

Such men seem to me not to realize the power and wisdom of Him who made and governs this universe ... He has not ordained that everything in nature shall enter into union and combination with every kind of body, neither is He at a loss to separate things once united.³²

Thus, did Athenagoras answer this objection against the resurrection. All of the various parts of the body will once again be united and will occupy the same positions as they did before death.

Thence will it be united once again in its own nature, part with part, whether fire has burnt it or water rotted it, whether wild beasts or others have preyed upon it, or whether it has become severed from the rest of the body and gone to destruction before the rest. When these parts are reunited with each other, they occupy the same positions in the bodily structure and constitution and they enjoy a resurrection to life from being dead and completely dissolved.³³

³² Athenagoras, The Resurrection of the Dead 4-5.

³³ Ibid., 8.

The same power that created the body in the first place will be used of God to make the resurrection of the body a reality.

What is more, the creation of each individual body, shows that His power is sufficient for the resurrection of these bodies...It would then be the work of the same power, the same wisdom, and the same God to separate off what has been decomposed by the action of a multitude of varied living creatures,...and thus returning to its original constituents by the natural way of resolution into these.³⁴

Irenaeus treats the same problem and also answers it by appealing to the omnipotence of God. Although he refers generally to the power of God he makes the resurrection the particular work of the Holy Spirit.

...the body receives once more the soul, and along with it, is raised by the power of the Holy Spirit and brought into the kingdom of God.³⁵

Those men, therefore,...do not take into consideration the power of Him who raises it up from the grave...And surely it is much more difficult and incredible, from nonexistent bones, and nerves, and veins, and the rest of men's organization, to bring it about that all this should be, and to make man an animated and rational creature, than to reintegrate again that which had been created and then afterwards decomposed into earth...having thus passed into those [elements] from which man, who had no previous existence, was formed. For He who in the beginning caused him to have being who as yet was not, just when He pleased, shall much more reinstate again those who had a former existence, when it is His will.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

³⁵ Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching 42.

³⁶ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 3.2.

Although this resurrection will be a resurrection of the physical body, there will be changes in this body that will make it different from the bodies men now have. Athenagoras mentions one way in which they are different. This is in relation to food and the mechanism of the body which handles it.

Bodies will not then require the nourishment they once required, for the use of what it fed on will be taken away along with the desire for food and its metabolism.³⁷

To this Clement of Alexandria agreed. He chides certain men of his day for believing that they had already attained the resurrected state and therefore rejecting marriage. He shows the inconsistency of this position and states that if they reject marriage they must also reject food and drink for all three are done away with in the resurrection.

If, as they say, they have already attained the state of resurrection, and on this account reject marriage let them neither eat nor drink. For the apostle Paul says that in the resurrection the belly and food shall be destroyed.³⁸

Clement held that those that rejected marriage were misinterpreting the words of Christ in Matthew 22:30. What Christ really meant was that there would not be sensual desires after the resurrection.

³⁷ Athenagoras, The Resurrection of the Dead 7.

³⁸ Clement, Stromata 111. 6.48.

But if anyone thinks carefully about this question concerning the resurrection of the dead and those who asked it, he will find that the Lord is not rejecting marriage, but ridding their minds of the expectation that in the resurrection there will be carnal desire.³⁹

Theophilus likens the nature of the resurrection to the work of a potter upon a vessel which has some defect. The potter takes the defective vessel and remoulds it in order to rid the vessel of the flaw. In this way, God corrects the flaws in the believer by death and the resurrection.

For just as a vessel, when on being fashioned it has some flaw, is remoulded or remade, that it may become new and entire; so also it happens to man by death. For somehow or other he is broken up, that he may rise in the resurrection whole; I mean spotless, and righteous, and immortal.⁴⁰

The mention of immortality brings to our attention the last consideration in connection with the nature of the resurrection. The individual is a tripartite being and all of these parts will be involved in the resurrection. As man is composed of body, soul and spirit in this life, so at the resurrection, these three parts of man will once again be reintegrated. This is why the Apostle Paul prayed that the body, soul and spirit might be preserved unto the coming of the Lord.

³⁹ Ibid., 12.87.

⁴⁰ Theophilus, To Antolycus 11. 26.

Now what was his [Paul's] object in praying that these three, - that is soul, body and spirit - might be preserved to the coming of the Lord, unless he was aware of the reintegration and union of the three, and [that they should be heirs of] one and the same salvation?⁴¹

In holding this, Irenaeus did not want anyone to think that he believed the soul or spirit died. It is only the body that dies and it is the body that at the time of the resurrection is made immortal and incorruptable.

For to die is to lose vital power, and to become henceforth breathless, inanimate, and devoid of motion, and to melt away into those [component parts] from which also it derived the commencement of [its] substance. But this event happens neither to the soul, for it is the breath of life; nor to the spirit, for the spirit is simple and not composite, so that it cannot be decomposed, and is itself the life of those who receive it. We must therefore conclude that it is in reference to the flesh that death is mentioned; which after the soul's departure, becomes breathless and inanimate, and is decomposed gradually into the earth from which it was taken. This, then, is what is mortal, and it is this of which he [Paul] also says, "He shall also quicken your mortal bodies." And therefore in reference to it he says in the first to the Corinthians: "So also in the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it rises in incorruption." For he declares, "That which thou sowest cannot be quickened, unless first it die."⁴²

In another place he states it more briefly when he says, "God, when He resuscitates our mortal bodies which preserved righteous-

⁴¹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 6.1.

⁴² Ibid., ii. 33.5.

ness, will render them incorruptible."⁴³

One belief is found in the writings of Tatian that is absent from the other fathers. While he agreed with Irenaeus that the soul of the believer did not die at death, he did not believe that the soul itself was immortal. Therefore, in the case of the unbeliever, the soul died with the body and takes part in the resurrection.

The soul is not in itself immortal, O Greeks, but mortal. Yet it is possible for it not to die. If, indeed, it knows not the truth, it dies, and is dissolved with the body, but rises again at the end of the world with the body, receiving death by punishment in immortality. But, again, if it acquires the knowledge of God, it dies not,...On this account, if it the [soul] continues solitary, it tends downward towards matter, and dies with the flesh; but, if it enters into union with the Divine Spirit, it is no longer helpless, but ascends to the regions whither the Spirit guides it: for the dwelling-place of the spirit is alone, but the origin of the soul is from beneath.⁴⁴

4. Illustrations of the resurrection. Although the subject of the resurrection is dealt with in great detail in this period, not too many of the writers use illustrations of the resurrection. Theophilus uses more illustrations than any other writer of this period. He uses the changing of the seasons, day and night, the nature of fruitbearing, the moon and even the body itself.

⁴³ Ibid., 11.29.2.

⁴⁴ Tatian, To the Greeks 13.

But, suppose I should show you a dead man raised and alive, even this you would disbelieve. God indeed exhibits to you many proofs that you may believe Him. For consider, if you please, the dying of seasons, and days, and nights, how these die and rise again. And what? Is there not a resurrection going on of seeds and fruits, and this, too for the use of men? A seed of wheat, for example, or of other grains, when it is cast into the earth, first dies and rots away, then it is raised, and becomes a stalk of corn. And the nature of trees and fruit-trees - is it not that according to the appointments of God they produce their fruits in their seasons out of what has been unseen and invisible? Moreover, sometimes a sparrow or some of the birds, when in drinking it has swallowed a seed of apple or fig, or something else, has come to some rocky hillock or tomb, and has left the seed in its droppings, and the seed which was once swallowed, and has passed through so great a heat, now striking root, a tree has grown up. And all these things does the wisdom of God effect, in order to manifest even by these things, that God is able to effect the general resurrection of all men. And if you would witness a more wonderful sight, which may prove a resurrection not only of earthly but of heavenly bodies, consider the resurrection of the moon, which occurs monthly; how it wanes, dies, and rises again. Hear further, O man, of the work of resurrection going on in yourself, even though you are unaware of it. For perhaps you have sometimes fallen sick, and lost flesh, and strength and beauty; but when you received again from God mercy and healing, you picked up again in flesh and appearance, and recovered also your strength. And as you do not know where your flesh went away and disappeared to, so neither do you know whence it grew or whence it came again.⁴⁵

The Fathers from 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.

Although the writings of this period are greater in number than the other two periods, it is about equal with the second period in the amount of material found concerning the

⁴⁵ Theophilus, To Antolycus 1. 13.

resurrection. There is only one writing devoted exclusively to the subject of the resurrection and it is Tertullian's On the Resurrection of the Flesh. However, the topic of the resurrection is found quite frequently in the writings of this period and the investigator is able to learn much from them. Once again it must be stated that not enough is learned to satisfy all questions as to their beliefs concerning the resurrection.

1. The fact of the resurrection. Hippolytus believed in the resurrection of man's physical body and at times assumed that his readers were well instructed in this subject. In one writing when considering the resurrection he states, "you have already been instructed concerning the resurrection of the flesh."⁴⁶ For Scriptural proof of the resurrection he appeals to Daniel, Isaiah, John and Christ.

Moreover, concerning the resurrection and the kingdom of the saint, Daniel says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall arise, some to everlasting life, (and some to shame and everlasting contempt)." Esaias says, "The dead man shall arise, and they that are in their tombs shall awake; for the dew from thee is healing to them." The Lord says, "Many in that day shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." And the prophet says, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And John says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath

⁴⁶ Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus 23.13. Burton S. Easton, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934).

part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." For the second death is the lake of fire that burneth. And again the Lord says, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun shineth in his glory."⁴⁷

In the following paragraph he quotes I Thessalonians 4:13-17 as further Scriptural proof of the resurrection.

The beginning of the resurrection is seen in the resurrection of Christ who was the first to travel the road of resurrection.

But since the Saviour was the beginning of the resurrection of all men, it was meet that the Lord alone should rise from the dead...who Himself first accomplished the course, and was received into the heavens, and was set down on the right hand of God the Father.⁴⁸

Christ is not only the beginning but he is also the first-fruits of the resurrection.

God, the Word Incarnate, passed in honor through the Virgin's womb; and creating our Adam anew, he passed through the gates of heaven, and became the first-fruits of the resurrection and of the ascension for all.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 65. S.D.F. Salmond, The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, Vol. V of Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (American Edition, A.C. Coxe; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1951).

⁴⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁹ Hippolytus, On Proverbs 30.29. Mai, Bibliotheca nova Patrum., vii. ii. 71, Rome 1854. J.H. MacMahon & S.D.F. Salmond, Vol. I of Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome, Vol. VI of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

Tertullian was very insistent upon the belief in a future resurrection of the body. To him "the resurrection of the dead is the Christian's trust" and "if the resurrection of the flesh be denied, that prime article of the faith is shaken."⁵⁰ He also calls it the "rule and groundwork of our faith" and appeals to Ezekiel 37:1-14, I Corinthians 15:12-18 and I Thessalonians 4:15-17 for Scriptural proof of this doctrine.⁵¹

To Tertullian the resurrection of the believer depended upon the resurrection of Christ. If the resurrection of Christ was not a fact then there can be no resurrection of the dead.

Similarly, if Christ's resurrection be nullified, ours also is destroyed. If Christ's [resurrection] be not realized, neither shall that be for which Christ came. For just as they, who said that there is no resurrection of the dead, are refuted by the apostle from the resurrection of Christ, so, if the resurrection of Christ falls to the ground, the resurrection of the dead is also swept away.⁵²

Tertullian protests very strongly against the idea that God would abandon any of His creation to destruction. To him this was unthinkable. This would be true, however, unless there is a resur-

⁵⁰ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 1-2. Peter Holmes, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Vol. III of Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition. op. cit.

⁵¹ Ibid., 19, 20, 41 & 48.

⁵² Tertullian, Against Marcion 111.8. Peter Holmes, The Five Books of Quintus Sept. Flor Tertullians Against Marcion, Vol. VII of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

rection of the body. The work of God's hands, that in which his own Spirit dwells would be destroyed forever.

God forbid, God forbid, (I repeat), that He should abandon to everlasting destruction the labour of His own hands, the care of His own thoughts, the receptacle of His own Spirit, the queen of His creation, the inheritor of His own liberality, the priestess of His religion, the champion of His testimony, the sister of His Christ!⁵³

Death as a word can only be used of the body for it is the only part of men that can die. Therefore, when one speaks of the resurrection it must also be of the body or that which has died.

When, therefore, the apostle refutes those who deny the resurrection of the flesh, he indeed defends, in opposition to them, the precise matter of their denial, that is, the resurrection of the body. You have the whole answer wrapped up in this. All the rest is superfluous. Now in this very point, which is called the resurrection of the dead, it is requisite that the proper force of the words should be accurately maintained. The word dead expresses simply what has lost the vital principle, by means of which it used to live. Now the body is that which loses life, and as the result of losing it becomes dead. To the body, therefore, the term dead is only suitable. Moreover, as resurrection accrues to what is dead, and dead is a term applicable only to a body, therefore the body alone has a resurrection incidental to it. So again the "resurrection," or [rising again], embraces only that which has fallen down. "To rise," indeed can be predicated of that which has fallen down, but had already been always lying down. But "to rise again" is predicable only of that which has fallen down; because it is by rising again, in consequence of its having fallen down, that it is said to have re-risen ...We say, therefore, that the body falls to the ground

⁵³ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 9.

by death, as indeed facts themselves show, in accordance with the law of God. ...That, therefore, which came from the ground shall return to the ground. Now that falls down which returns to the ground; and that rises again which falls down. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection." Here in the word man, who consists of bodily substance, as we have often shown already, is presented to me the body of Christ. But if we are all so made alive in Christ, as we die in Adam, it follows of necessity that we are made alive in Christ as a bodily substance, since we died in Adam as a bodily substance. The similarity, indeed, is not complete, unless our revival in Christ concur in identity of substance with our mortality in Adam.⁵⁴

Another reason the resurrection was a certainty in the mind of Tertullian is the future judgment of God upon man. When God judges he must judge the whole man and this necessitates the resurrection of the body.

Inasmuch, then, as it is most suitable for the great Being who is God, and Lord, and Creator to summon men to a judgment on this very question, whether he has taken care or not to acknowledge and honour his Lord and Creator, this is just such a judgment as the resurrection shall achieve. The entire cause, then, or rather necessity of the resurrection, will be this, namely, that arrangement of the final judgment which shall be most suitable to God. For that which is a suitable object to be judged, is also a competent one to be raised...Now since the entire man consists of the union of the two natures, he must therefore appear in both, as it is right that he should be judged in his entirety; nor, of course, did he pass through life except in his entire state. As therefore he lived, so also must he be judged.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Tertullian, Against Marcion v. 9.

⁵⁵ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 14.

In connection with the resurrection Tertullian has an interesting interpretation of I Corinthians 15:29 where Paul speaks of the baptism for the dead. Tertullian connects this with the resurrection.

To be "baptized for the dead" therefore, means, in fact, to be baptized for the body; for, as we have shown, it is the body which becomes dead. What, then, shall they do who are baptized for the body, if the body rises not again?⁵⁶

The very fact that that which was corruptible is made incorruptible at the resurrection shows that the resurrection concerns the physical body.

In this way, then, it is that corruption shall not inherit incorruption; in other words, death shall not continue. When and how shall it cease? In that "moment, that twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, when the dead shall rise incorruptible." But what are these, if not they who were corruptible before - that is, our bodies; in other words, our flesh and blood? And we undergo the change...What mortal is this but the flesh? What corruptible but the blood?⁵⁷

The type of body which will be given at the resurrection is to be like Christ's. Since he has a body of flesh the resurrected body of man will also have flesh.

Therefore he adds in the concluding sentence: "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall rise up us also with Him," risen as He is already from

⁵⁶ Tertullian, Against Marcion v. 10.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 51.

the dead. But perhaps "with Him" means "like Him": well then, if it be like Him, it is not of course without the flesh.⁵⁸

Using the same type of reasoning Tertullian shows that the things that are done after the resurrection requires a resurrection of the flesh. Among the future activities of the believer are the reclining at a feast in the kingdom of Christ, the sitting on thrones, the standing on the right and left hand of Christ and the eating of the tree of life.⁵⁹ All of these things would be impossible without a bodily resurrection.

To those who say that it would take power far beyond human comprehension to perform such an act as the resurrection, Tertullian shows that they underestimate the power of God. It will take less power to resurrect a body than it did to create it originally.

But how, you say, can matter that has decomposed be brought forth? Consider the case of yourself, man, and you will find grounds for believing it. Recall what you were before you were you. Absolutely nothing! You would remember, if you were anything. So, if you were nothing before your present state, and likewise became nothing when you cease to be, why can you not have another existence from nothing by the will of that same Creator who willed you to exist from nothing? What novelty would happen to you? You did not exist; you came into being. Give me, if you can,

⁵⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 35.

an explanation of how you came into being and then look for one as to how you will come into being again. Yet, you will certainly come quite easily to be what you once were, because it was with corresponding ease that you came to be what you had never been at any time. Someone, I suppose, will have a doubt about the power of God who has produced this great body of the world out of what did not exist, which is no less than to produce it out of the death of emptiness and void, vivified by the spirit which is the principle of life of all souls, a manifest example too, of the resurrection of man given as a testimony to you.⁶⁰

It will make no difference as to the method of death nor to the disposition of the body. No matter what happens to the body it will be resurrected.

But, that you may not suppose that it is merely those bodies which are consigned to tombs whose resurrection is foretold, you have it declared in Scriptures: "And I will command the fishes of the seas, and they shall cast up the bones which they have devoured; and I will bring joint to joint, and bone to bone."...the beasts and fishes are mentioned in relation to the restoration of the flesh and blood, in order the more emphatically to express the resurrection of such bodies as have ever been devoured.⁶¹

Cyprian adds nothing new to the topic of the resurrection. He quotes the same Scripture as Tertullian and Hippolytus. He does make the fact of the resurrection a basis for the exhortation

⁶⁰ Tertullian, Apology 48. 5-7. R. Arhemann, E.J. Daly and A. Quain, Tertullian Apologetical Works and Quinucious Felix Octavius, Vol. X of The Fathers of the Church, op. cit.

⁶¹ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 32.

of the believer. Because death is not the end for the believer, he can look forward to a glorious resurrection. Thus, he should not sorrow over death but have faith in the promises of Christ.

Why either are we ourselves unwilling to depart hence from this life, or do we bewail and grieve for our friends when they depart as if they were lost, when Christ Himself, our Lord and God, encourages us and says, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall not die eternally?"⁶² If we believe in Christ, let us have faith in His words and promises; and since we shall not die eternally, let us come with a glad security unto Christ, with whom we are both to conquer and to reign forever.⁶²

The resurrection of the physical body is a truth beyond doubt to Origen. If there is a resurrection of the dead it has to involve the same physical body which died.

If they [heretics] also admit that there is a resurrection of the dead, let them answer us this. What is that which died? Was it not a body? It is of the body, then, that there will be a resurrection. ...I think that when the Apostle Paul says, that "it is sown a natural body, it will rise a spiritual body,"⁶³ they cannot deny that it is a body which arises, or that in the resurrection we are to make use of bodies. What then? If it is certain that we are to rise again (for only that which before has fallen can be properly said to rise again), it can be a matter of doubt to no one that they rise again, in order that we may be clothed with them a second time at the resurrection.⁶³

⁶² Cyprian, On Mortality 21. E. Wallis, The Writings of Cyprian Vol. V of Ante-Nicene Fathers, American edition, op. cit.

⁶³ Origen, De Principiis ii. 10.1. F. Crombie, Origen De Principiis Vol. IV of Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op. cit.

Origen held that the only thing that happens to the body at death is a change in its condition. Whenever God wills it, a second change will take place in the resurrection.

We, however, who believe in its [the body] resurrection, understand that a change only has been produced by death, but that its substance certainly remains; and that by the will of its Creator, and at the time appointed, it will be restored to life; and that a second change will take place in it, so that what at first was flesh (formed) out of earthly soil, and was afterwards dissolved by death, and again reduced to dust and ashes ("For dust thou art," it is said, "and to dust shalt thou return"), will be again raised from the earth, and shall after this, according to the merits of the indwelling soul, advance to the glory of a spiritual body.⁶⁴

2. The persons involved in the resurrection. The writers of this period spend most of their time discussing the resurrection of the righteous and treat the resurrection of the wicked very little. Hippolytus is a good example of this. His main concern is with the believer's resurrection and the comfort that this hope should bring. One of the Scriptures that he uses is I Thessalonians 4:13-17. This, as far as he is concerned, give teaching about "the resurrection of the righteous."⁶⁵ He does treat the resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous as being separate, calling the resurrection of the righteous the first

⁶⁴ Ibid., iii. 6.5.

⁶⁵ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 66.

resurrection. The one who has part in this resurrection is truly blessed for the second death has no power over him. This teaching he takes from the Apostle John.

And John says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power."⁶⁶

Tertullian, like Hippolytus, while emphasizing the resurrection of the righteous above that of the wicked, clearly distinguishes between the two. The first resurrection, that of the believer, will take place after the devil is cast into the bottomless pit for a short period of time. The second or universal resurrection will take place after the devil is placed into hell.

And...after the casting of the devil into the bottomless pit for awhile, the blessed prerogative of the first resurrection may be ordained from the thrones; and then again, after the consignment of him to the fire,...the judgment of the final and universal resurrection may be determined out of the books.⁶⁷

As to the time of the resurrection of the believer Tertullian leaves one in doubt. In one place he quotes from Paul's Corinthian letter "We shall all indeed rise again...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."⁶⁸ This would

⁶⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁷ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 25.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 42.

indicate that the resurrection of all the righteous took place at the same time. However in another place he states that the believer will be resurrected at various times during the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. Evidently, the resurrection is according to the merit of the individual believer. The more merit, the sooner he is resurrected. Concerning this thousand year period he says "within which period is completed the resurrection of the saints, who rise sooner or later according to their deserts."⁶⁹

Cyprian limits his discussion to the resurrection of the believer. Although his teaching concerning the judgment of the wicked demands a belief in the resurrection of the wicked he nowhere discusses the topic directly.

The same general statement can be made of Origen also although he is clearer on the subject of a resurrection for the wicked. One place in his writings he makes this fairly obvious. In speaking of the punishment or rewarding of the souls of men according to their just deserts he also speaks of the "time of resurrection from the dead."⁷⁰

3. The nature of the resurrection. This particular topic is rather fully treated by the writers of this period. They go into greater detail as to what is meant by the spiritual body of

⁶⁹ Tertullian, Against Marcion iii. 24.

⁷⁰ Origen, De Principiis Preface 5.

the resurrection and how it differs from the body that was known before death. The only writer who does not develop this topic is Hippolytus and it may have been that he assumed his readers to be well informed on the subject. Tertullian, of course, has much to say on this subject as does Origen.

Tertullian has a quite lengthy discussion concerning the nature of the resurrection body and how the term "spiritual" could be applied to the body.

"But some men will say, How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?" Having established the doctrine of the resurrection which was denied, it was natural to discuss what would be the sort of body in the resurrection, of which no one had an idea. ...How? Just as the grain, which is sown a body, springs up a body. This sowing of the body he called the dissolving thereof in the ground, "because it is sown in corruption," [but "is raised] to honour and power." Now, just as in the case of the grain, so here: to Him will belong the work in the revival of the body, who ordered the process in dissolution thereof. ...Likewise, "although it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Now although the natural principle of life and the spirit have each a body proper to itself, so that the "natural body" may fairly be taken to signify the soul, and the "spiritual body" the spirit, yet that is no reason for supposing the apostle to say that the soul is to become spirit in the resurrection, but that the body (which, as being born along with the soul, and as retaining its life by means of the soul, admits of being called animal or "natural") will become spiritual, since it rises through the Spirit to an eternal life. In short, since it is not the soul, but the flesh which is "sown in corruption," when it turns to decay in the ground, it follows that [after such dissolution] the soul is no longer the natural body, but the flesh, which was the natural body, [is the subject of the future change], forasmuch as of a natural body it is

made a spiritual body.⁷¹

This does not seem to clarify the issue as to what a spiritual body actually is except to show that it is the fleshly body in a changed condition. This may be the only thing Tertullian wanted his readers to understand from this involved discussion.

The resurrection body will be one of immortality and incorruption and thus be made fit to enter into the kingdom of God. All of this involves a change of the body from that which is known today. Tertullian calls the resurrection the gate of the kingdom of God.

Not that we indeed claim the kingdom of God for the flesh: all we do is, to assert a resurrection for the substance thereof, as the gate of the kingdom through which it is entered. ...The resurrection is first, and afterwards the kingdom. We say, therefore, that the flesh rises again, but that when changed it obtains the kingdom. "For the dead shall be raised incorruptible," even those who had been corruptible" - and as he spake, the apostle seemingly pointed to his own flesh - "must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," in order, indeed, that it may be rendered a fit substance for the kingdom of God. ...Having then become something else by its change, it will obtain the kingdom of God, no longer the [old] flesh and blood, but the body which God shall have given it. Rightly then does the apostle declare, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," for this [honour] does he ascribe to the changed condition which ensues on the resurrection.⁷²

⁷¹ Tertullian, Against Marcion v. 10.

⁷² Ibid.

In opposition to those who say that only those who are alive at the time of the resurrection will partake of a changed body Tertullian strongly holds that the resurrected saint and the one alive at Christ's second coming will be changed as they go up to meet Christ in the air.

If again, Christ in His advent from heaven "shall change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto His glorious body," it follows that this body of ours shall rise again. ...If, however, this is only said of those who shall be found in the flesh at the advent of God, and who shall have to be changed, what shall they do who rise first? They will have no substance from which to undergo a change. But he says [elsewhere], "We shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord [in the air]." Then if we are to be caught up along with them, surely we shall likewise be changed together with them.⁷³

Although there will be a difference between the resurrected body and man's present body, in some respects the two bodies will be the same. It might be said that at death time stops and then at the resurrection it starts once again. Thus whatever the age of the body when it died, that will be its age when it is resurrected.

Here let me remind our people that we will be at the Resurrection be restored to the bodies in which we died. Therefore, we must expect our bodies to return under the same conditions and in the same state as when we died, for such particulars make the

⁷³ Ibid., v.20.

body to be a certain age...Therefore, it is my opinion that any soul, no matter what its age at death, stays at that age until the time arrives when the promised perfect age will be realized.⁷⁴

At this time the believer need not fear that he might have a defective body. His body will have neither defect nor blemish. He will be freed from death, corruption, sorrow, and sighing and will experience everlasting joy.⁷⁵

Little is said by Cyprian concerning the nature of the resurrection but he does state that the believer is made equal to the angels and that marriage is unknown in the resurrected state.

It is the word of the Lord which says, "The children of this world beget and are begotten; but they who are counted worthy of that world, and of the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: neither shall they die any more: for they are equal to the angels of God, being the children of the resurrection."⁷⁶

The amount of detail with which Origen discusses the nature of the resurrection almost defies logical order. It is hard to determine where to start, stop, and how much in between is overlapping. He criticizes those who think that the future resurrection body will be involved in pleasures like those of

⁷⁴ Tertullian, On the Soul 56. 5-7. Arbesmann, Daly and Quain, op. cit.

⁷⁵ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 52-53.

⁷⁶ Cyprian, On the Dress of Virgins 22. Wallis, op. cit.

this present world. These people understand the Scriptures in a Jewish sense and they do not perceive that Scripture is to be taken figuratively.

Certain persons, then, refusing the labor of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the law and yielding in some measure to the indulgence of their own desires and lusts,...are of the opinion that the fulfillment of the promises of the future are to be looked for in bodily pleasure and luxury; and therefore they especially desire to have again, after the resurrection, such bodily structure as may never be without the power of eating and drinking and performing all the functions of flesh and blood, not following the Apostle Paul regarding the resurrection of a spiritual body and consequently they say, that after the resurrection there will be marriage, and the begetting of children,...Moreover, they think that the nations of other countries are to be given them as the ministers of their pleasures, whom they are to employ...and they think they will have control over their riches...and many...scriptural illustrations are adduced by them, the meaning of which they do not perceive is to be taken figuratively. ...they think they are to be kings and princes, like those earthly monarchs who now exist;...Such are the views of those who, while believing in Christ, understand the divine Scriptures in a sort of Jewish sense, drawing from them nothing worthy of the divine promise.⁷⁷

In another writing Origen calls such beliefs "absurd fables and silly tales."⁷⁸

The body is the tabernacle of the soul and the soul requires a body which is suited to the environment in which it

⁷⁷ Origen, De Principiis ii. 11.2.

⁷⁸ Origen, The Song of Songs Prologue 2. R.P. Lawson, Origen: The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1957).

finds itself. Thus this present body or tabernacle is in the process of being dissolved so that the soul may abide in one "made without hands."⁷⁹

It [Scripture] teaches that the tabernacle of the soul, as it is called in the Bible, possesses a seminal principle. And in this tabernacle those who are righteous groan, being weighed down, and desiring not to put it off but to be clothed on top of it...we know that when the soul, which in its own nature is incorporeal and invisible, is in any material place, it requires a body suited to the nature of that environment. ...Since there is an earthly house of the tabernacle, which is somehow necessary to the tabernacle, the Bible says that the earthly house of the tabernacle is being dissolved, and that the tabernacle put on a 'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'⁷⁹

This involves a change in the body which will take place at the resurrection and make this mortal tabernacle incorruptible.

Neither we nor the divine scriptures maintain that those long dead will raise up from the earth and live in the same bodies without undergoing any change for the better...it is enough to quote the words of Paul from the First Epistle to the Corinthians,...We also hear the Bible teaching by many passages that there is a difference between the body that is, as it were, sown, and that which is, as it were raised from it. It says: 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in honor, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.'...the soul that has studied wisdom...understands the difference between the earthly house which is destroyed in which is the tabernacle,

⁷⁹ Origen, Contra Celsum vii. 32. H. Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum (Cambridge: University Press, 1953).

and the tabernacle itself in which those who are righteous groan being burdened, not because they desire to put off the tabernacle, but because they want to be clothed upon, in order, that as a result of this 'mortality may be swallowed up by life.' For since the nature of the body is to be entirely corruptible, this mortal tabernacle must put on incorruptibility; and its other part, which is mortal and capable of death which is the consequence of sin, must put on immortality.⁸⁰

In trying to explain what is meant by immortality and incorruptibility, Origen speaks of it as a clothing of the body.

Some such meaning, then, as this, seems to be suggested by the apostle. ...This matter of the body, then, which is now corruptible shall put on incorruption when a perfect soul, and one furnished with the marks of incorruption, shall begin to inhabit it. And do not be surprised if we speak of a perfect soul as the clothing of the body (which...is named incorruption), when Jesus Christ Himself...is said to be the clothing of the saints. ...The expression then, "This corruptible must put on incorruption," is as if the apostle had said, "This corruptible nature of the body must receive the clothing of incorruption - a soul possessing in itself incorruptibility."⁸¹

There are different degrees of glory in the resurrection. Concerning the saints of God this is illustrated by heavenly bodies. In connection with sinners earthly things are used.

The apostle [Paul] wishing to describe the great difference among those who rise again in glory, i.e., of the saints, borrowed a com-

⁸⁰ Ibid., v. 18-19.

⁸¹ Origen, De Principiis 11. 3.2.

parison from the heavenly bodies, saying, "One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, another the glory of the stars." And wishing again to teach us the difference among those who shall come to the resurrection, without having purged themselves in this life, i.e., sinners, saying, "There is one flesh of birds, another of fishes." For heavenly things are worthily compared to the saints, and earthly things to sinners.⁸²

In closing this section on the nature of the resurrection it is fitting to mention one final aspect of the resurrection touched upon by almost all the writers. It is the final victory of the believer over death and the grave. In the words of Origen:

For it is possible that these things should come to pass for each of us, and that the "last enemy" should be "abolished, even death," so that in our case also it may be said by Christ, "O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?"⁸³

4. Illustrations of the resurrection. More illustrations of the doctrines of the resurrection are used in this period than in the previous one. The two men who are the most detailed and complex in their discussion of the resurrection used the most illustrations. Perhaps they felt the need of

⁸² Ibid., 10.2.

⁸³ Origen, On Prayer 25.3. J.E. Oulton and H. Chadwich, Alexandrian Christianity. Vol. II of The Library of Christian Classics. ed. J. Baillie, J.T. McNeill and H.P. Van Dusen (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954).

them more than the other writers. Tertullian used day and night and the seasons of the year as object lessons which God had put into nature to illustrate the resurrection.

Day dies into night, and is buried everywhere in darkness. ...But yet it again revives, with its own beauty, its own dowry, its own sun, the same as ever, whole and entire, over all the world, slaying its own death, night-opening its own sepulchre, the darkness-it too, being accompanied with a retinue of its own. ...Winters and summers return, as do the springtide and autumn, with their resources, their routine, their fruit. ...The whole, therefore, of this revolving order of things bears witness to the resurrection of the dead. ...He [God] first sent Nature to you as a teacher, meaning to send Prophecy also as a supplemental instructor, that being Nature's disciple, you may more easily believe Prophecy.⁸⁴

He also uses the example of the seed falling into the ground, dying and then living again and bringing forth fruit, and the sleep of the body to illustrate the death and resurrection of the soul.⁸⁵ Once again the Phoenix bird is used as an illustration of the resurrection of the body.⁸⁶ It is interesting to note the fascination that this story had for the early defenders of the doctrine of the resurrection. It was often used throughout this period.

The main illustration used by Origen was that of the

⁸⁴ Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 52. On the Soul 43. 10-12.

⁸⁶ On the Resurrection of the Flesh 13.

seed. He quotes from the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

'But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what kind of a body do they come?' You foolish man, that which you yourself sow is not brought to life unless it dies, and what you sow is not the body that shall be, but a mere grain, it may be of wheat or of some other kind; but God gives it a body even as it pleased him and to each seed a body of its own. Notice how he here says that 'the body that shall be' is not sown, but he says that as it were a resurrection takes place from that mere grain sown and cast in the earth, since God gives to each seed a body of its own. For from the seed that has been thrown down there is raised in some cases an ear of corn, and in others a tree such as the mustard, or a still larger tree...or one of the other fruits.⁸⁷

Conclusion

As can be seen by the amount of material given to the doctrine of the resurrection, this subject was widely held and discussed by the Church Fathers. A belief in the resurrection is found in all the periods studied with the last two periods having a great amount of detailed discussion on the subject.

1. The fact of the resurrection. In none of the periods is the fact of the resurrection doubted. It was a common belief of all believers during this period. Anyone who denied that there was a future resurrection only emphasized his relationship

⁸⁷ Origen, Contra Celsum v. 18.

to Satan. This one was a child of Satan and not a child of God. Great emphasis is placed upon the power of God which is able to accomplish this resurrection no matter what happens to the body at death or from death to the resurrection. Christ is generally considered the first fruits of the resurrection and the one who enables the believer to triumph over death and the grave. The Scripture passages most frequently used are I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Not mentioned as frequently but still found in the writings of the fathers is the fact that the resurrection is necessary for the uniting of the body and soul and for the preparation of the whole man for the final judgment of God. The fact of the resurrection is to be a source of comfort and strength to the believer for he knows that death is not the end of his existence.

2. The persons involved in the resurrection. For the most part, the writers dealt mainly with the resurrection of the believer. They all held to a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked but spent most of their time discussing that of the righteous. Outside of the first period, there is found in each period the definite teaching concerning a separate resurrection of the believer and unbeliever. The believer will be resurrected before the millennial reign of Christ and after this reign comes the universal, general resurrection and judgment of the unbeliever. According to Justin, this was the view of every completely orthodox Christian of his day. Many of the writers do not

mention the time of the resurrection of unbelievers but no writers contradict the fact that the two resurrections are separate. One writer, Irenaeus, although he seems to contradict himself, states that the believer is resurrected some time during the millennium according to his merit.

3. The nature of the resurrection. The detail with which this topic is discussed increases from one period to the next. Various attempts were made to explain just what is meant by a body which is immortal and incorruptible. All the writers believed in the resurrection of the same body that had died except at the resurrection a change was to take place in this body. The resurrected body would be like that of Christ's. Some held that this body would eat and drink while others state that eating and drinking along with marriage would be done away with in the resurrected state. Emphasis is placed on the fact that this is the time of the reuniting of the body and soul. Tatian believed that the soul of the wicked died with the body and both body and soul are resurrected.

The most perplexing problem in the minds of the writers was the explanation of immortality and incorruptibility. Through all their writings no one actually does explain the meaning of these words in relation to the resurrection. It is that changed condition of the resurrected body. This body is a perfect body, without any trace of defect or blemish and partakes of the

characteristics of immortality and incorruption. Origen strongly opposed those who interpreted the Scripture in a Jewish sense and which made the resurrection body one capable of pleasures like those found on earth. According to Origen, incorruption is the clothing of the resurrection body.

4. Illustrations of the resurrection. Various illustrations are used by the different writers to explain the nature of the resurrection. The most common are those of night and day, the seasons of the year, and the sowing of seed. One writer uses the human body in that it is sickly and then becomes healthy again as an example. Also used throughout the period is the mythological story of the Phoenix bird. This myth seemed to have a great attraction for the writers of this period and was used more than once to illustrate the resurrection.

Chapter VI

The Kingdom

One of the most debatable topics in eschatology today concerns the subject of Christ's millennial kingdom on earth. Is there to be a literal reign of Christ on earth or is Christ's kingdom limited to his reigning in the hearts of men? It is easy to see that this question does not necessitate an either-or answer. It is possible that both may be true. However, the tendency has been to deny the literal reign of Christ. The purpose of this chapter will be to examine the teaching of the Church Fathers on this subject.

It can be seen by an examination of the New Testament that the millennial kingdom was not established at the first advent of Christ. Even towards the end of his life, Paul was still looking for the appearing of Christ and his kingdom (II Timothy 4:1). There is much in the New Testament, however, to show that this kingdom will be established at the second advent of Christ. This truth is taught by Christ, Peter, and John (Luke 21:27, Acts 3:19-21, Revelation 11:15-18). It is at this time that the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of Christ and the promise of a kingdom will be fulfilled (II Samuel 7:16; I Chronicles 7:11,14; Acts 2:30). At this time the whole earth will be under the dominion of God and all nations will be under the one kingdom of God (Daniel 2:44; 7:27, Zechariah 14:8). Jerusalem will once again be the center of the world. The nation

Israel will be regathered and restored to the land of Palestine and Jerusalem will be rebuilt and made great (Isaiah 11:12, Jeremiah 32:37,44, Isaiah 60:11-14, Jeremiah 3:17). Israel will now be highly favored and once again will be the most honored of all the nations (Isaiah 14:1-2; 60:1-22, Zechariah 8:23). The length of this kingdom is a thousand years after which it will merge into the eternal state (Revelation 20:2-7).

This kingdom is to usher in a time of great blessing that has not been known since the garden of Eden. Its main characteristic is one of universal peace and righteousness. Nations will no longer be at war with one another but the implements of warfare will be destroyed and their materials used for peaceful things (Micah 4:3-5; Zechariah 9:10). All false religion will be completely destroyed and none but the worship of the one true God will exist upon the earth (Isaiah 45:22-25). This universal peace and righteousness will be possible because the chief enemy of men, Satan, will be unable to do his destructive work. Completely conquered by Christ at the second advent, Satan is then bound and cast into the bottomless pit for the thousand years. The purpose of this binding is so that he will no longer be able to deceive the nations (Isaiah 24:21, 27:1; Revelation 20:1-3). This peace is seen not only between nations and individuals but also extends to the relationships of man with the animal kingdom. The enmity which is seen between the two today will disappear and neither man or animal will harm each other (Isaiah

11:6-9, 65:25; Ezekiel 34:25-31). The curse which has been put on the earth and which resulted in waste land and wilderness will be lifted. Then the wilderness will be no more and the desert will be as fruitful as any other part of the earth. The whole earth will be fertile ground which will produce much to make man's life pleasant upon the earth (Isaiah 35:1-7, 41:18-20; Amos 9:13-15). The final blessing that needs to be mentioned here is that of longevity of life. Life will no longer be cut short and someone a hundred years old will still be considered a child (Isaiah 65:20).

The ruler of this kingdom will be Christ himself. This is clearly taught by the Scriptures connected with the second advent. It is Christ who receives the kingdom, sits on the throne of his glory and of whom it is said that it is "his kingdom" (Matthew 25:31, II Timothy 4:1). However, he will be assisted in the government of the kingdom by his saints. The apostles were promised the task of judging the twelve tribes of Israel while Paul teaches that the Christian will judge the world and the angels (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; I Corinthians 6:23). Just what the particular task of the believer will be during this period is unknown. Scripture is silent on this point outside of stating that he will reign with Christ.

Each section of this chapter will be divided into four parts. These are: the time of the kingdom; the nature of the kingdom; the blessings of the kingdom; and the ruler of the king-

dom.

The Fathers from 96 A.D. to 150 A.D.

The subject of the future reign of Christ on earth is not treated very extensively in the writings found in this early period. Although most of the writers at least mention the subject only two, the writers of the so-called Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle of Barnabas, give any details. Papias evidently treated the subject in full in his writings but all that are extant are fragments found in Eusebius and Irenaeus. Both of these writers attribute to Papias a belief in a future reign of Christ. Despite this limitation, a general outline of the belief of this period can be determined.

1. The time of the kingdom. Of the writers who discuss the kingdom of God, not all of them consider the time when this kingdom will be inaugurated. Clement of Rome connects it with the resurrection of the righteous dead. They will be revealed at the time of the kingdom of God.

Those who by God's favor have been made perfect in love live in the abode of the godly, and they will be made manifest at the visitation of the kingdom of God. For it is written, "Go into your chambers for a little while, until my wrath and anger pass, and I will remember a good day, and will raise you up from your graves."¹

¹ To the Corinthians 50. 3-4. E.J. Goodspeed, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950).

This is of some help as to his belief concerning the time the event would take place. The resurrection of the righteous dead is generally connected with the second advent of Christ. Evidently, he did not believe it was too far distant from his own time. He speaks of the apostles, being strengthened by the resurrection of Christ, going about preaching that the kingdom of God was soon to come.

So having received their instructions, and having been reassured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in the Word of God they set forth in conviction of the Holy Spirit, preaching that the kingdom of God was about to come.²

Polycarp is also rather indefinite as to the time of this kingdom. The only definite statement he makes is that it was still in the future in relation to his own time. This is seen by his reference to it as an "inheritance" of the believer which is unobtainable to the unbeliever.³ He also speaks of a time in the future when the believer will "also reign with him."⁴ Once again the investigator must be satisfied with this indefinite reference.

² Ibid., 42.3.

³ Epistle to the Phillippians 2.3; 5.3. L. Schopp Vol. I of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1947).

⁴ Ibid., 5.2.

Ignatius uses practically the same language as Polycarp. He speaks of the kingdom of God as an inheritance which is denied to "the corrupters of families," those "with bad doctrines" and "one who follows another into schism."⁵

According to Eusebius and Irenaeus, Papias follows Clement in connecting the inauguration of the kingdom with the resurrection of the righteous dead. In speaking of the views of Papias, Eusebius states:

Among other things [he says] that a thousand years will elapse after the resurrection of the dead and there will be a corporeal establishment of Christ's kingdom on this earth.⁶

This statement is quite significant in the light of the fact that Eusebius was in disagreement with Papias concerning the kingdom of Christ. Thus, the same conclusion concerning the beliefs of Papias is found in one writer who disagrees with him and one writer who agrees with him. Irenaeus gives the same sequence of events as does Eusebius. First there is the resurrection of the just and then the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Irenaeus makes the following statement and says that the teaching contained in it is also found in the writings of Papias, specifically his fourth book.

⁵ Epistle to the Ephesians 16.1 & Epistle to the Philadelphians 3.3. L. Schopp, op. cit.

⁶ Eusebius History Eccl. 111. 39.

So, the blessing foretold undoubtedly refers to the time of His kingdom, when the just will rule on rising from the dead.⁷

The writer of the Didache sheds no light on this subject except that he thought of it as something still in the future. He prays for the deliverance of the Church from evil that it might be perfect and sanctified for the Kingdom.

Remember, O Lord, Thy Church, deliver it from all evil and make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Thy kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for it.⁸

In another place he desires that the "Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into "the kingdom."⁹

It is in the so-called Second Epistle to the Corinthians that the beginning of the kingdom is directly linked with the second advent of Christ. At this time the wicked shall see the glory of Christ and be amazed. The whole world will be under the control of Christ.

And the believers shall see his glory and might and shall be astounded when they look upon the sovereignty of the world given to Jesus.¹⁰

⁷ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v.33.3. L. Schopp, Op. cit.

⁸ The Didache 10.5. L. Schopp, op. cit.

⁹ Ibid., 9.4.

¹⁰ Second Epistle to the Corinthians 9.1. L. Schopp, op. cit.

The exact time of this event is unknown but the believer is to wait expectantly for it to take place. Certain conditions, however, must exist among the believers before it can happen.

Let us, then, wait for the Kingdom of God, from hour to hour, in love and justice, since we know not the day of God's manifestation. For the Lord Himself, when asked by someone when His kingdom would come, said; When the two shall be one; and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male nor female. Now, the two are one when we speak truth to each other, and there is one soul in two bodies without dissimulation. And the outside as the inside means this: the inside is the soul and the outside the body. Therefore, just as your body is visible, so let your soul be apparent in your good works. And the male with the female neither male nor female means that a brother seeing a sister has not thought of her as a female, nor she of him as male. If you do this, He says, the Kingdom of my Father shall come.¹¹

In the Letter of Barnabas the greatest amount of detail is found as to the time of the kingdom. The reader is referred to the chapter on the Great Tribulation for an introduction to the chronology of this writer. He views the seven days of creation as representing seven periods in the history of the earth each a thousand years in duration. At the end of six thousand years Christ will come and overthrow the Antichrist and inaugurate the last thousand years. This he equates with the rest of God on the seventh day.

And he rested on the seventh day. This

¹¹ Ibid., 12. 1-6.

means: When His Son will come and destroy the time of the lawless one and judge the godless and change the sun and the moon and the stars - then He shall indeed rest on the seventh day.¹²

After this seventh day comes an eighth day or as the writer states it, "the beginning of another world."¹³ Thus, between the sixth day, which is ended by Christ's second advent, and the eighth day, which evidently is the eternal state, is a period of a thousand years. This is the time when the believer experiences the convent he has with the Lord and exercise authority over the earth.

So we too are fed with faith in the promise and with the word and will live and take possession of the earth. For he [the Lord] said before, "and let them increase and multiply and rule the fish." Who, then, can rule wild beasts or fish or birds of the heaven? For we ought to perceive that to rule implies authority, so that one gives orders and is obeyed. So if this is not now the case, then he has told us when it will be; when we ourselves are perfected to become heirs of the Lord's covenant.¹⁴

2. The nature of the Kingdom. Very little is actually said about the nature of the kingdom in this early period. They

¹² The Letter of Barnabas 15.5. Goodspeed, op. cit.

¹³ Ibid., 15.8.

¹⁴ Ibid., 6. 17-19.

do speak of a future time when the saints of God will reign with Christ. These saints are identified as those who have faith in God and live a life well-pleasing to him. For example Polycarp states:

If we please him [God] in this present world, we will receive the world to come also, even as he promised us to raise us from the dead, and if we conduct ourselves in a way worthy of him, we shall also reign with him, provided we have faith.¹⁵

Of the writers in this period, Papias is perhaps the clearest on this point. He states quite clearly that this was to be a literal kingdom established upon the earth. The fact that Eusebius who did not hold this view, is the source of the quotation greatly increases the probability of its authenticity.

Among other things [Papias says] that a thousand years will elapse after the resurrection of the dead and there will be a corporeal establishment of Christ's kingdom on this earth.¹⁶

The writer of the so-called Second Epistle to the Corinthians must have held to some sort of literal reign of Christ upon the earth for he speaks of "the sovereignty of the world" being given to Christ.¹⁷ This was to be an actual event in

¹⁵ To the Philippians 5.2.

¹⁶ Eusebius Hist. Eccl. iii. 39.

¹⁷ Second Epistle to the Corinthians 17.5.

history for which the believer was to wait in earnest expectation.

A literal kingdom on earth is also found in the Epistle of Barnabas. However, in this writing, the kingdom is strictly limited to the Church, the body of Christ. The author states "so then we [the Church] shall live and rule over the earth."¹⁸ Although the Jews once received this promise through the covenant to Moses they proved unworthy of it. Now the Church as this promise given to her by Christ himself.

Moses received the covenant, but they were not worthy. Well! how did we receive it? Let me tell you. Moses, a mere servant, received it, but the Lord Himself gives it to us, as the people of the inheritance, by suffering on our account.¹⁹

As far as this writer was concerned the Jews have lost this hope and will never be able to regain it.

And besides, I ask this also of you,... that you now take heed to yourselves and be not like some, piling up your sins and saying that the covenant is theirs as well as ours. It is ours, but they lost it completely just after Moses received it...their covenant was broken in pieces, in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed on our hearts in the hope of his faith.²⁰

¹⁸ Letter of Barnabas 6.17 L. Schopp, op. cit.

¹⁹ Ibid., 14.4.

²⁰ Ibid., 4. 6-8. Goodspeed, op. cit.

In keeping with this belief he proceeds to allegorize the Old Testament promises given to Israel. By this method he applies these promises to the Church. Two examples will illustrate his approach to the Old Testament. In Daniel 9:24-27 a future temple is considered. He states that this temple refers to the body of the believer which becomes an habitation of God through salvation.

For, the Scripture says: 'And it shall come to pass when the week is ended that a temple of God shall be built gloriously in the name of the Lord.' I find, accordingly, that such a temple exists. Let me tell you, then, how it will be built in the name of the Lord. Before we believed in God the habitation of our heart was corrupt and weak, as is a temple actually built with hands, because it was full of idolatry and was the house of demons from doing things contrary to God. 'But it shall be built in the name of the Lord.' Now, make sure that the temple of the Lord be built gloriously. How? I shall tell you. When we received forgiveness of sins, and put our hope in the Name [of Jesus], we were renewed, totally recreated; and so God truly dwells in us as in His habitation.²¹

In much the same way he treats the subject of the millennial river found in Ezekiel 47:1-12. This he connects with the baptism and fruit bearing of the believer.

What does He say next? 'And there was a river flowing on the right hand, and beautiful trees grew out of it, and whoever shall eat of them shall live forever.' This means that we go

²¹ Ibid., 16. 6-8. L. Schopp, op. cit.

down into the water [of baptism] full of sins and foulness, and we come up bearing fruit in our hearts, fear and hope in Jesus in the Spirit. 'And whoever shall eat of them shall live forever.' This means: Whoever hears these things spoken and believes shall live forever.²²

Many have tried to show, by the Anti-Jewish bias of the writing and by such examples as were just given that this writer did not believe in a future kingdom of Christ on earth. However, when the whole writing is considered it is clearly seen that he did believe in a future kingdom but that the Jews were to have no part in it.

3. The blessings of the kingdom. Irenaeus attributes to Papias a rather fanciful description of some of the conditions that will be found during the kingdom. It was this use of the Asiatic imagination and extravagance that led to the rejection of this belief in the kingdom by many. Of course, it is impossible to know with absolute certainty that Papias actually taught this, as one has to accept the word of Irenaeus that he did. However extreme one considers the language, it is eloquent proof that Papias believed that this kingdom would usher in a time of unparalleled blessing.

The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, when

²² Ibid., 11. 10-11.

the righteous shall bear rule upon their raising from the dead; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth: as the elders who saw, John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these times, and say: The days will come, in which vines will grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in each one of the shoots ten thousand clusters and on everyone of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretes of wine. ...In like manner [the Lord declared] that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear should have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that all other fruit-bearing trees and seeds and grass, would produce in similar proportions...; and that all animals feeding [only] on the products of the earth, should become peaceful and harmonious among each other, and be in perfect subjection to man.

Papias,...also bears written testimony to this in the fourth of his books, for he is the author of five books.²³

Among the blessings of this time given by Irenaeus are the removal of the curse of sin from the earth, the resultant abundance of food and the restoration of peace in the animal kingdom and their subjection, once again, to the control of man.

The writer of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians thought of the kingdom as a time of rest for the believer. This would be a fulfillment of one of the promises given by Christ.

²³ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 33.3-4.

The promise of Christ is great and wonderful and is a repose [rest] in the kingdom to come.²⁴

He believed that man could not even begin to comprehend the wonderful blessings which would be the believers' in the kingdom.

If, then, we perform justice before God, we shall enter into His kingdom and receive the promises which ear has not heard, nor eye seen, nor has it entered into the heart of men.²⁵

In the Epistle of Barnabas the glorification of the believer is mentioned. If he follows the commandments of God in this life, he will then be exalted in the kingdom.

It is good, therefore, that a man who has learned all the commandments of God, which are written here [previous quotation from the Bible], should walk in them. For, he who does this shall be glorified in the kingdom of God.²⁶

4. The ruler of the kingdom. Not much material is found on this particular subject as the writers assume that their readers are quite well acquainted with this fact. Most of them mention it in passing if at all. All held that Christ would be the ruler of this kingdom. Typical of what is found is the statement by Polycarp that "we shall also reign with him,

²⁴ Second Epistle to the Corinthians 5.5.

²⁵ Ibid., 11.7.

²⁶ Letter of Barnabas 21.1.

provided we have faith,"²⁷ Christ is to be the supreme ruler with the believer reigning with him in some subordinate capacity.

The Fathers from 150 A.D. to 200 A.D.

More material is found on the future kingdom of Christ in this period than the last. Along with the increase in amount of material there is also an increase in the amount of detail given concerning certain specific aspects of the kingdom. The writers of this period who give the greatest amount of space to this teaching are Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria.

1. The time of the kingdom. Justin clearly believed that the kingdom of Christ was in the future and would come after death and the resurrection. If it were a kingdom established in this present world then the believer would try his best to keep from dying. However, the believer dies gladly as his kingdom is a future one.

When you hear that we look forward to a kingdom you rashly assume that we speak of a human kingdom, whereas we mean a kingdom which is with God. ...If we expected a human kingdom, we could deny that we are Christians, that we might not be put to death, and we would try to hide from you, that we

²⁷ To the Philippians 5.2.

might attain what we expect. But because we do not place our hope in the present, we do not mind when men murder us, since death is inevitable anyhow.²⁸

In another of his writings Justin is even more specific. The kingdom takes place between the resurrection of the believer and the universal and everlasting resurrection and judgment. It is a kingdom whose duration will be a thousand years.

Now by the words, "For as the days of the tree of life, so shall be the days of my people, and the works of their hands shall be multiplied," we understand that a period of one thousand years is indicated in symbolic language. When it was said of Adam that "in the day that he eateth of the tree, in that he shall die," we knew he was not a thousand years old. We also believe that the words, "The day of the Lord is a thousand years" also led to the same conclusion. Moreover, a man among us named John, one of Christ's Apostles, received a revelation and foretold that the followers of Christ would dwell in Jerusalem for a thousand years, and that afterwards the universal and, in short, everlasting resurrection and judgment would take place. To this our Lord Himself testified when He said: "They shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, being sons of God, [that is] of the resurrection."²⁹

Irenaeus agrees with Justin as to the future of the kingdom. Christ had appeared once upon the earth and he is the

²⁸ Justin, First Apology 11. T.B. Falls, Writings of Saint Justin Martyr, Vol. VI of The Fathers of the Church, ed. L. Schopp (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc. 1948).

²⁹ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 81. Falls, op. cit.

expectation of the believer who is waiting for him to re-establish the kingdom.

For He [Christ] had come and arrived "for whom lies in store" a kingship in heaven. ...Therefore is He also "the expectation of the nations," of those who hope in Him, because we expect Him to reestablish the kingdom.³⁰

This kingdom will be established at the second advent when he raises the believers from the dead.

Wherefore He shall, at His second coming, first rouse from their sleep all persons of this description [men who have loved God], and shall raise them up...and give them a place in His kingdom.³¹

Clement of Alexandria is not as specific as Justin or Irenaeus but he also speaks of a future kingdom of Christ. This is given to the believer as a reward and will be a glorious kingdom in which the saints will have part and will be partakers of the glory of God. This kingdom is nothing new in the plan of God. It was part of that eternal plan made before the world began. Since before the creation of the world it was God's plan for those who believed in Him to inherit this kingdom which

³⁰ Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching 57. J.P. Smith, St. Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching, Vol. 16 Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quiston and J. Plumpe (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952).

³¹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies iv. 22.2. A. Roberts & W.H. Rombant, The Writings of Irenaeus, Vols. 5 & 9 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868).

was prepared for them.

He said: "Come to me, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."³²

The fact that the believer is to one day reign with Christ in His kingdom is made the basis of a plea for correct living. The believer, by loving God and his neighbor is to live worthy of this kingdom.³³

At the end of the thousand year period Irenaeus believed that Christ would turn over this kingdom to the Father and the kingdom age would then merge into the eternal state. This takes place after Christ has subjected all his enemies.

In due time the Son will yield up His work to the Father, even as it is said by the apostle [Paul], "For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." ... "And when all things shall be subdued into Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."³⁴

2. The nature of the kingdom. To the writers who treat this particular aspect of the kingdom, the future kingdom of Christ meant a literal reign of Christ upon the earth. Unlike the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas in the early period they

³² Clement of Alexandria, Instructor iii. 12. W. Wilson, The Writings of Clement of Alexandria, Vols. 4 & 12 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

³³ Ibid., iii.11.

³⁴ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 36.2.

even include the Jews in this kingdom. However, being a Jew will not automatically insure entrance into the kingdom. Without faith and obedience to God they can not enter the kingdom any more than the non-Jew.

Besides this, those [Jewish] teachers deceive both themselves and you when they suppose that those who are descendents of Abraham according to the flesh will most certainly share in the eternal kingdom, even though they be faithless sinners and disobedient to God, suppositions which the Scriptures show have no foundation in fact.³⁵

This kingdom would have in it the righteous Jews and their proselytes, the patriarchs, the prophets and all Christians. To Justin, one had to believe this fact to be called a truly orthodox Christian. He seems to admit that there were some Christians who did not hold to this view of the kingdom but in the same paragraph states that those who did not hold to this belief were not to be considered as real Christians.

But tell me [Trypho] truthfully, do you really believe that this place Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, and do you actually expect that you Christians will one day congregate there to live joyfully with Christ, together with the patriarchs, the prophets, the saints of our people and those who became proselytes before your Christ arrived? I [Justin] have declared to you earlier that I, with many others, feel that such an event will take place. However, I did point out that there are many pure and pious Christians who do

³⁵ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 140.

not share our opinion...If you have ever encountered any so-called Christians who do not admit this doctrine [of the millennium], but dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob by asserting that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that their souls are taken up to Heaven at the very moment of their death, do not consider them to be real Christians. ...But I and every other completely orthodox Christian feel certain that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, followed by a thousand years in the rebuilt, embellished and enlarged city of Jerusalem, as was announced by the Prophets Ezekiel, Isaias and others.³⁶

The center of this kingdom was to be the city of Jerusalem where Christ was to shine forth an eternal light.

This is He [Christ] who is to shine in Jerusalem as an eternal light. This is He who is King of Salem and Priest of the Most High forever according to the order of Melchisedech.³⁷

Irenaeus believed that this future kingdom was a fulfillment of the promise made first to Abraham and then to David. Abraham believed in this promise as though it was already fulfilled and in the same way, the believer through faith looks for the future kingdom.

For He [Abraham] believed in things future, as if they were already accomplished, because of the promise of God; and in like manner do we also, because of the promise of God behold through faith

³⁶ Ibid., 80.

³⁷ Ibid., 113.

that inheritance in the [future] kingdom.³⁸

God had also promised David that he would raise up a person from his seed who would be "an everlasting king" and "of whose reign there would be no end."³⁹ Abraham never saw this promise fulfilled in his life time and because God's promises are lasting, this will be fulfilled in the future. The Church as the seed of Abraham will also enter into this promise.

Thus, then, the promise of God, which He have to Abraham, remains steadfast. ...If, then, God promised him the inheritance of the land, yet he did not receive it during all the time of his sojourn there, it must be, that together with his seed, that is, those who fear God and believe in Him, he shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For his seed is the church.⁴⁰

Clement of Alexandria does not treat this aspect of the kingdom in any detail but more than once he states that the believer shall "reign over the earth."⁴¹ It is at the coming of the kingdom that the godly shall be revealed.

But they who have been perfected in love through the grace of God, hold the place of the godly, who shall be manifested, at the visitation

³⁸ Irenaeus, Against Heresies iv. 21.1.

³⁹ Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching 36.

⁴⁰ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, v. 32.2.

⁴¹ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata v. 14. W. Wilson, op. cit.

of the kingdom of Christ.⁴²

This kingdom will put in subjection all nations and kingdoms so that it alone will be the supreme power on earth.

It has indeed been proved sufficiently by your Scriptural quotations that it was predicted in the Scriptures that Christ should suffer, and that He should come again in glory to accept the eternal kingdom over all nations, and that every kingdom should be made subject to Him.⁴³

Only one writer of this period gives any suggestion that he might oppose the belief in a literal reign of Christ on earth. Athenagoras speaks of the life after death as a life in heaven and not another life on earth.

We believe that when we have departed from this life, we shall live another life in heaven better than this, not another earthly one. We shall then abide with God as heavenly spirits, not as fleshly creatures, even if we have bodies, and by His aid shall be changeless and free from suffering in our souls.⁴⁴

It is possible that he is contrasting the nature of the two lives and not the place where they take place but the general tone of the statement favors a contrast between a life in heaven and a life on earth.

⁴² Ibid., iv. 18.

⁴³ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 39.

⁴⁴ Athenagoras, Embassy 31. J.H. Crehan, Athenagoras, Vol. 23 of Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quisten & J.C. Plumpe (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1956).

3. The blessings of the kingdom. At the time of the kingdom, Jerusalem will be rebuilt and glorified. Some of the writers believed that it would be rebuilt according to the plan of the new Jerusalem in heaven.

But in the times of the kingdom, the earth has been called again by Christ [to its pristine condition] and Jerusalem rebuilt after the pattern of the Jerusalem above, of which the prophet Isaiah says, "Behold, I have depicted thy walls upon my hands, and thou art always in my sight." ...And in the Apocalypse John saw this new Jerusalem descending upon the new earth.⁴⁵

This will be a glorious time of rejoicing for those in Jerusalem because of the great blessings which God will give to them. Justin quotes from the book of Isaiah in proof of this.

These are the words of Isaias concerning the millennium: ...⁴⁵"For behold, I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and My people a joy; and I shall rejoice over Jerusalem, and be glad over My people. And the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more an infant of days there, nor an old man that shall not fill up his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruits of them, and drink the wine. ...My elect shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for a curse; for they shall be a righteous seed blessed by the Lord, and their posterity with them. And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will hear; as they are yet speaking, I will say, What is it?"⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 35.2.

⁴⁶ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 81.

Another reason for the joy of the people is the reigning of a righteous ruler in the city of Jerusalem.

Then again, speaking of Jerusalem, and of Him reigning there, Isaiah declares, "Thus saith the Lord, Happy is he who hath seed in Zion, and servants in Jerusalem. Behold, a righteous king shall reign, and princes shall rule with judgment."⁴⁷

In further proof of this fact Irenaeus quotes Isaiah 54:11a and 65:18.

Although this is to be a kingdom connected with the Jews in many ways, there will be no reinstating of the Jewish sacrificial system. Passages in the Old Testament which seem to teach this are to be interpreted allegorically.

And do not suppose that Isaias or the other prophets speak of sacrifices of blood or libations being offered on the altar at His second coming, but only of true and spiritual praises and thanksgiving.⁴⁸

It is at this time that the earth will be restored to its original creation. This truth is made quite clear by the Apostle Paul.

It is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself being restored to its primeval condition, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous; and the apostle has made this plain in the Epistle to the Romans, when he thus speaks:

⁴⁷ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 24.4.

⁴⁸ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 118.

"For the expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature has been subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; since the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."⁴⁹

Because of this restoration of the creation, the earth will produce in great abundance. It sounds as though Irenaeus had allowed his imagination to get the best of him.

The predicted blessing...therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food...as the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these times, and say: The days will come, in which vines will grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in each one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretes of wine...In like manner [the Lord declared] that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear should have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that all other fruit-bearing trees and seeds and grass, would produce in similar proportions.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 32.1.

⁵⁰ Ibid., v. 33.3-4.

Also connected with this restoration is a change in the animal creation. Animals will once again be subject to man and will no longer be carnivorous. They will eat what God originally intended them to eat, the fruit of the earth. Harmony and peace will be found among all animals.

And it is right that when the creation is restored, all the animals should obey and be in subjection to man, and revert to the food originally given by God (for they had been originally subjected in obedience to Adam), that is, the productions of the earth. ...the lion shall [then] feed on straw. And this indicates the larger size and rich quality of the fruits. For if that animal, the lion, feeds upon straw, of what a quality must the wheat itself be whose straw shall serve a suitable food for lions?⁵¹

Theophilus also speaks of the restoration of the animal world to an original condition. This will take place when man no longer does evil.

When, therefore, man again shall make his way back to his natural condition, and no longer does evil those [the animals] also shall be restored to their original gentleness.⁵²

This belief that the animal world would no longer operate under the law of the "tooth and claw" but live peaceably together was one handed down by the elders.

⁵¹ Ibid., v. 33.4.

⁵² Theophilus, To Autolycus ii. 17. B.P. Pratten, M. Dods & T. Smith, The Writings of Titian and Theophilus: and the Clementine Recognitions, Vol. III of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

But as regard the union and concord and tranquillity of the animals of different kinds, and by nature mutually hostile and inimical, the elders say, that it will really be even so at the coming of Christ, when He is to be king of all.⁵³

Another privilege the believer will enjoy at this time is fellowship with the angels and other spiritual beings along with a participation in the glory of God.

The righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord: and through Him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father, and shall enjoy in the kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels, and union with spiritual beings.⁵⁴

The greatness of this glory the believer will never know until he experiences it. In his present condition, it is beyond his capacity to know or understand.

The saints of the Lord shall inherit the glory of God and His power. What glory, tell me, O blessed One, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man;" and "they shall be glad in the kingdom of their Lord for ever and ever! Amen."⁵⁵

There appears in this period a definite teaching concern-

⁵³ Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching 61.

⁵⁴ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 35.1.

⁵⁵ Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation 10. W. Wilson, op.cit.

ing degrees of glory for the believer. All believers will not receive the same reward nor have the same position. This is seen particularly in the writings of Irenaeus and Clement. Irenaeus states that this is based upon the fruitfulness of the believer while on earth. The place in which they dwell is dependent upon their fruitfulness in this life.

And as the presbyters say, Then those who are deemed worthy of an abode in heaven shall go there, others shall enjoy the delights of paradise, and others shall possess the splendour of the city: for everywhere the Saviour (or God) shall be seen according as they who see Him shall be worthy. [They say, moreover], that there is this distinction between the habitation of those who produce an hundred-fold, and that of those who produced sixty-fold, and that of those who produce thirty-fold; for the first will be taken up into the heavens, the second will dwell in paradise, the last will inhabit the city; and that it was on this account the Lord declared, "In my Father's house are many mansions."⁵⁶ ...even as His Word says, that a share is allotted to all by the Father, according as each person is or shall be worthy.⁵⁶

Irenaeus does not identify this city but it probably is a reference to the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven which he connects with the kingdom of Christ. Clement connects the fruitfulness of the believer with the believers conformity to the image of Christ or his nearness to being a perfect man.

Therefore, there are various abodes, according to the worth of those who have be-

⁵⁶ Irenaeus, Against Heresies v. 36.1-2.

lieved. To the point Solomon says, "For there shall be given to him the choice grace of faith, and a more pleasant lot in the temple of the Lord." For the comparative shows that there are lower parts in the temple of God, which is the whole church, and the superlative remains to be conceived, where the Lord is. These chosen abodes, which are three, are indicated by the numbers in the Gospel - the thirty, the sixty, the hundred. And the perfect inheritance belongs to those who attain to "a perfect man," according to the image of the Lord.⁵⁷

These who have reached this last and highest position will have the greatest honor and be the judges and rulers during this period.

And the chosen of the chosen are those who by reason of perfect knowledge are called [as the best] from the church itself, and honoured with the most august glory - the judges and rulers - four-and-twenty (the grace being doubled) equally from Jews and Gentiles.⁵⁸

For those who have not yet reached this high state of being a perfect man, there will evidently be an opportunity for them to progress from their position at the start of this period to this highest state.

For those taken up in the clouds, the apostle writes, will first minister [as deacons], then be classed in the presbyterate, by promotion

⁵⁷ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata vi. 14.

⁵⁸ Ibid., vi.13.

in glory (for glory differs from glory) till they grow into a "perfect man."⁵⁹

4. The ruler of the kingdom. All the writers who treat this particular aspect of the kingdom are in agreement on this subject. The ruler of the future kingdom on earth will be Christ who will rule in all his glory. This was promised to David by God the Father and it is the Father who gives the kingdom to him.

Further, Nathan spoke thus of Him [Christ] to David: "I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son and I will not take My mercy away from Him, as I did from them that were before Him; and I will establish Him in My house, and in His kingdom forever."⁶⁰ And Ezechiel states that He shall be the only Prince in this house, for He is the chosen Priest and Eternal King and the Christ, since He is the Son of God.⁶⁰

The Fathers from 200 A.D. to 250 A.D.

In this period is seen for the first time, a definite opposition to the belief that Christ will set up a literal kingdom upon the earth. Although the great majority still taught a literal reign of Christ on the earth, opposition was forming under the leadership of Origen. The amount of material found on the subject is about the same as that found in the preceding period.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 118.

1. The time of the kingdom. The writers of this period, regardless as to their opinion of the nature of the kingdom, believed in a future kingdom of Christ in which he would reign with his saints. Hippolytus sees this promise even in the book of Genesis. This fact comes second hand through the writings of Jerome.

The word of God here is the promise anew of the blessing and the hope of a kingdom to come, in which the saints shall reign with Christ, and keep the true Sabbath. ...He [Isaac in blessing Jacob] announces with clear voice the perfection of the resurrection and the kingdom.⁶¹

Tertullian calls this kingdom "the hope" of the believer.⁶² Since the believer had this as his hope, he should not have a desire for the world to remain as it is but should pray that he might soon be found in the kingdom.

And so, if the open manifestation of the Lord's kingdom pertains to God's will and to our expectation, how do certain persons ask for what they call a prolongation for the world, when the kingdom of God, which we pray may come, is directed towards the consummation of the world? Our desire is to reign the sooner and to be no longer slaves. Even if there were nothing laid down in the prayer [the so-called Lord's prayer] about asking for the

⁶¹ Hippolytus, Commentary on Genesis, Jerome, epist. 36 ad Damasum, Num. 18. J.H. MacMahon & S.D.F. Salmond, Vol. I of Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome, Vol. 6 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, op. cit.

⁶² Tertullian, On the Prayer 9. Ernest Evans, Tertullian's Tract on the Prayer (London: Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1953).

coming of the kingdom, we should of our own initiative have uttered that sentiment while hastening towards the embracing of our hope. ...Yea, let thy kingdom come, O Lord, as speedily as may be, the hope of Christians, the confounding of the gentiles, the joy of angels, that for the sake of which we suffer affliction, yea rather, that for the sake of which we pray.⁶³

Cyprian also considered this kingdom as one of the promises of God purchased for the believer by Christ at his death on Calvary. The Christian is to guard against losing this kingdom, which is what happened to the Jews when they left the true faith.

We pray that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, which was acquired by the blood and passion of Christ; that we who first are His subjects in the world, may hereafter reign with Christ when He reigns, as He Himself promises. ...But there is need of continual prayer and supplication, that we fall not away from the heavenly kingdom, as the Jews, to whom this promise had first been given, fell away; even as the Lord sets forth and proves: ...He shows that the Jews were previously children of the kingdom, so long as they continued also to be children of God; but after the name of Father ceased to be recognized among them, the kingdom also ceased.⁶⁴

Not only is the believer to pray that the kingdom might come, but is to "ask that the kingdom of God should come quickly."⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁴ Cyprian, On the Lord's Prayer 13. E. Wallis, The Writings of Cyprian, Vol. X of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, op. cit.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 19.

Generally, this kingdom is connected with the resurrection of the righteous and the second advent of Christ. Hippolytus quotes from Daniel, Isaiah, Christ and John to show that the kingdom takes place after the first resurrection of the righteous dead.

Moreover, concerning the resurrection and the kingdom of the saints, Daniel says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall arise, some to everlasting life, (and some to shame and everlasting contempt)." Esaias says, "The dead men shall arise, and they that are in their tomb shall awake; for the dew from thee is healing to them." The Lord says, "Many that day shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." And the prophet says, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And John says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." For the second death is the lake of fire that burneth. And again the Lord says, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun shineth in his glory." And to the saints He will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."⁶⁶

Tertullian calls the resurrection the gate through which one enters the kingdom. This must necessarily precede the kingdom in order that the body may be made suitable for the kingdom.

Not that we indeed claim the kingdom of God for the flesh: all we do is, to assert a resurrection

⁶⁶ Hippolytus, *Christ and Antichrist* 65. S.D.F. Salmond, *The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus*, Vol. X of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (American Edition ed. A.C. Coxe; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1951).

for the substance thereof, as the gate of the kingdom through which it is entered. ...The resurrection is first, and afterwards the kingdom. We say, therefore, that the flesh rises again, but that when changed it obtains the kingdom. ...⁶⁷"For this corruptible" - and as he spake the apostle seemingly pointed to his own flesh - "must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," in order, indeed, that it may be rendered a fit substance for the kingdom of God.⁶⁷

In another place Tertullian states that "it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years."⁶⁸ It would then start after the first resurrection and would be a thousand years in duration.

Origen agrees with the other writers of this period that the kingdom follows the resurrection. He follows much the same reasoning as Tertullian in that the body must be changed before it can enter into the kingdom. He speaks of this in commenting on the Song of Solomon 2:10.

She the [Church] is told to arise, as though the consummation of the age were already reached and the time of resurrection come. And, because this word of command forthwith seals the work of resurrection, she is invited into the kingdom, as being now, by virtue of the resurrection, brighten and more splendid.⁶⁹

Some of the writers believed that at the end of this king-

⁶⁷ Tertullian, Against Marcion v. 10.

⁶⁸ Ibid., iii.24.

⁶⁹ Origen, The Song of Songs iii.14. R.P. Lawson, Origen: The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1957).

dom Christ would then turn over his kingdom to the Father. This event is mentioned two places in the writings of Origen. Two things must happen before this can take place. First, Christ must subdue all his enemies.

Seeing, then, that such is the end, when all enemies will be subdued to Christ, when death-the last enemy-shall be destroyed, and when the kingdom shall be delivered up by Christ (to whom all things are subject) to God the Father.⁷⁰

Second, all sin must be taken out of the kingdom.

The Saviour delivers the kingdom prepared and completed to the Father, a kingdom in which no sin is left at all, and which, therefore, is ready to accept the Father as its king.⁷¹

2. The nature of the kingdom. Now for the first time is found two distinct and opposing viewpoints as to the nature of the kingdom. The great majority of the writers still held to a literal reign of Christ upon the earth. However, under the leadership of Origen, there now arose another school of thought which held to a heavenly kingdom of Christ and opposed any thought of an earthly kingdom. They considered an earthly kingdom

⁷⁰ Origen, De Principiis i. 6.1-2. F. Crombie, Origen De Principiis, Vol. IV of Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op.cit.

⁷¹ Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John i.37. A. Menzies, Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John, Vol. X of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op. cit.

Jewish and far beneath the dignity of Christianity. The views of those who believed in a literal kingdom will be given first, followed by the opposing view.

Tertullian continued in the belief of the two earlier periods and held to a thousand year reign of Christ centered in the rebuilt city of Jerusalem. This is the city from heaven, the new Jerusalem spoken of by both the apostle John and the prophet Ezekiel. This is part of the reward given to the believer for that which he lacked during his life on the earth.

But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, "let down from heaven," which the apostle also calls "our mother from above," and while declaring that our...citizenship is in heaven, he predicates of it that it is really a city in heaven. This both Ezekiel had knowledge of, and the apostle John beheld. ...We say that this city has been provided by God for receiving the saints on their resurrection, and refreshing them with the abundance of all really spiritual blessings, as a recompense for those which in the world we have either despised or lost; since it is both just and God-worthy that His servants should have their joy in the place where they have also suffered affliction for His name's sake.⁷²

After this kingdom is over, then the earth will be destroyed and the kingdom of heaven will begin.

⁷² Tertullian, Against Marcion iii.24.

Cyprian quotes many passages to show that Christ is the one who is to fulfill the promises given to David and that he is the one who is to sit upon the throne of David. This is the kingdom that was promised to David. Among these passages are I Samuel 7:5, 12-16; Isaiah 11:1-3; Psalm 132:11 and Revelation 5:1-5.⁷³ This same belief was held by Tertullian.⁷⁴ The kingdom that is Christ's will be far greater than that of David. David's kingdom was only a small one but Christ's will be world wide. His power will be over all the people of the earth. Hippolytus based his belief of this on Daniel.

"I saw in the night visions, and beheld one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and was brought near before Him. And there was given to Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; all peoples, tribes, and languages shall serve Him." He [Daniel] showed all power given by the Father to the Son.⁷⁵

Opposed to the view that Christ will reign over the earth is the brilliant Origen. With his basic method of interpreting Scripture being that of allegory it was only natural for him to apply this method to the passages dealing with the future kingdom of Christ. To him it was impossible for a future literal kingdom

⁷³ Tertullian, Testimonies Against the Jews ii. 11.

⁷⁴ Tertullian, Against Marcion iii.20.

⁷⁵ Hippolytus, Christ and Antichrist 26.

connected with the Jews to be established. Israel will be saved in the future but the kingdom has been lost forever. Israel has been given a "bill of divorcement" by God which nullifies the promises given to her by God.⁷⁶ With their rejection and crucifixion of Christ, they had committed a crime which would deny them any fulfillment of these promises.

We will go so far as to say that they [the Jews] will not be restored again. For they committed the most impious crimes of all, when they conspired against the Saviour of mankind.⁷⁷

Origen considered anyone who held to a literal kingdom on earth to be a shallow thinker and one who was Jewish in his interpretation of the Scriptures. He also thought that man's own fleshly wants helped promote the belief.

Certain persons, then, refusing the labor of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the letter of the law, and yielding rather in some measure to the indulgence of their own desires and lusts, ...are of the opinion that the fulfillment of the promises of the future are to be looked for in bodily pleasures and luxury; and therefore they especially desire to have again; after the resurrection, such bodily structures as may never be without the power of eating and drinking and performing all the functions of flesh and blood, not following the Apostle Paul regarding the resurrection of a spiritual body and consequently they

⁷⁶ Origen, Commentary on Matthew xiv. 19. J. Patrick, Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Vol. X of Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op. cit.

⁷⁷ Origen, Contra Celsum iv. 22. H. Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum (Cambridge: University Press, 1953).

say, that after the resurrection there will be marriages, and the begetting of children, imagining to themselves that the earthly city of Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, its foundation laid in precious stones, and sapphire, and chalcedony, and emerald, and sardonyx, and onyx, and chrysolite, and chrysoprase, and jacinth, and amethyst. Moreover, they think that the nations of other countries are to be given them as the ministers of their pleasures, whom they are to employ either as tillers of the field or builders of walls, and by whom their ruined and fallen city is again to be raised up; and they think that they are to receive the wealth of nations to live on and that they will have control over their riches;...and many...scriptural illustrations are adduced by them, the meaning of which they do not perceive is to be taken figuratively. ...they think they are to be kings and princes, like those earthly monarchs who now exist; chiefly, as it appears, on account of that expression in the Gospel: "Have thou power over five cities."⁷⁸ And to speak shortly, according to the manner of things in this life in all similar matters, do they desire the fulfillment of all things looked for in the promises, viz., that what now is should exist again. Such are the views of those who, while believing in Christ, understand the divine Scripture in a sort of Jewish sense, drawing from them nothing worthy of the divine promise.⁷⁸

Some of Origen's opposition may have been caused by the extreme language of such writers as Irenaeus but it would be a natural outgrowth of his own method of interpretation.

Origen believed that the kingdom would be established in heaven and not upon the earth. The believer must be taken off of the earth before the kingdom could begin.

Perhaps it will shortly be said of us:

⁷⁸ Origen, De Principiis 11. 11.2.

"Get out of the earth altogether." And it will be good to obey the command, so that God may quickly show us the heavens in which is the kingdom of heaven as it is called.⁷⁹

The Jerusalem in which the believer is to dwell is not some city on earth but is that Jerusalem in heaven where the believer will one day go. An appeal is made to the Apostle Paul who "says there is a heavenly Jerusalem, and speaks of believers coming thither."⁸⁰

Origen has much to say concerning the kingdom of God which is within the individual but a discussion of this is not within the scope of this chapter. It will suffice, here, to show that he does use both the terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of Christ" in a present sense.

It is evident that he who prays that "the kingdom" of God should come prays with good reason that the kingdom of God should spring up and bear fruit and be perfected in him. ...And I think that by God's kingdom is meant the blessed state of the reason and the ordered condition of wise thoughts; while by Christ's kingdom is meant the words that go forth for the salvation of those who hear them and the works of righteousness and the other virtues which are being accomplished.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Origen, Exhortation to Martyrdom 5. J.E. Oulton and H. Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity, Vol. II of The Library of Christian Classics, ed. J. Baillie, J.T. McNeill & H.P. Von Dusen (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956).

⁸⁰ Origen, Song of Songs, Prologue 4.

⁸¹ Origen, On Prayer xxv. 1. Oulton and Chadwick, op. cit.

3. The blessings of the kingdom. Not as much is found on this aspect of the kingdom in this period as in the last. Less detail is given as the writers are content to state the blessedness of this period in generalities. Tertullian believed that the blessings of this period were beyond human comprehension. To show this he refers to Isaiah and Paul.

So again in Isaiah, "Ye shall eat of the good of the land," the expression means the blessings which await the flesh when in the kingdom of God it shall be renewed, and made like the angels, and waiting to obtain the things "which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard and which have not entered into the heart of man."⁸²

Cyprian speaks of the great pleasures and happiness which will be the lot of the believer. In this kingdom whose origin is from heaven there is no longer any fear of death and time is passed in the company of the righteous of the ages.

What a pleasure is there in the heavenly kingdom, without fear of death; and how lofty and perpetual a happiness with eternity of living! There the glorious company of the apostles - there the host of the rejoicing prophets - there the innumerable multitude of martyrs, crowned for the victory of their struggle and passion - there the triumphant virgins, who subdued the lust of the flesh and of the body by the strength of their continency - there are merciful men rewarded, who by feeding and helping the poor have done the works of righteousness - who, keeping the Lord's precepts, have transferred their earthly patrimonies to the heavenly treasurers.⁸³

⁸² Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 26. P. Holmes, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Vol. III of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, American Edition, op. cit.

⁸³ Cyprian, On Mortality 26. Wallis, op. cit.

Everything of evil will be kept out of this kingdom. This not only refers to things such as immorality, idolatry or drunkenness but extends to quarrels and fightings among believers. In fact, the person who is at odds with his brother will be unable to enter the kingdom.

The quarrelsome and disunited, and he who has not peace with his brethren, in accordance with what the blessed apostle and the Holy Scripture testifies, even if he have been slain for the name of Christ, shall not be able to escape the crime of fraternal dissension, because, as it is written, "He who hateth his brother is a murderer," and no murderer attains to the kingdom of heaven, nor does he live with God.⁸⁴

Evidently there will be degrees of glory in this kingdom. At least, the teaching of Cyprian would lead to this conclusion. He talks about what is necessary in this life to qualify as one of the greatest in the kingdom. One must not only teach the truth but also practice it in his life to become great in the kingdom.

All which things, most brave and faithful soldiers of Christ, you have suggested to your brethren, full filling in deeds what ye have previously taught in words, hereafter to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, as the Lord promises and says, "Whosoever shall do and teach so shall be called the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Cyprian, On the Lord's Prayer 24.

⁸⁵ Cyprian, Epistle 76.6. Wallis, op. cit.

Tertullian thought that this is also seen in the time of the resurrection of the believer. He held that the resurrection of the believers was a process which took place during the time of the kingdom. It depended upon the merits of the believer as to the time of his resurrection. If he stood high in the mind of God then he would be resurrected at the beginning of the kingdom. If he had less merit, it would be some time during the kingdom that he would be resurrected.

Of the heavenly kingdom this is the process:
...within which period [the thousand years] is completed the resurrection of the saints, who rise sooner or later according to their deserts.⁸⁶

There will be no night or darkness in this kingdom as the believer "shall possess day alone, without the intervention of night."⁸⁷

Origen also predicates great blessing for the kingdom which he states will be established in heaven. He used the same verse as Tertullian to illustrate the truth that these blessings will be greater than any known to man.

For truly, when this black and beautiful one [the Church] comes to the heavenly Jerusalem and enters the vision of peace, she will see things many more and far more splendid than have been told her now. For she sees now as in a glass

⁸⁶ Tertullian, Against Marcion iii.24.

⁸⁷ Cyprian, On the Lord's Prayer 36.

and in a dark manner; but then face to face, when she attains to the things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man. And she will see then that what she heard while she was still in her own country was not half of them.⁸⁸

Those who hold in contempt the shame attached to Christ while in this life, will have the privilege of reigning with Christ in this kingdom.⁸⁹ However, he does not explain what is involved in this reigning and judging with Christ. Another apparent requirement to reigning with Christ is martyrdom. This is what Christ meant when he asked his disciples if they were able to drink of the same cup which he did.

For when those who are ambitious for greater honors desire to sit on the right and left of Jesus in his kingdom, the Lord says to them, "Can you drink of the cup that I drink?" By "cup" he means martyrdom. ...We learn, besides, that he who drinks of that cup that Jesus drank will sit and rule and judge with the King of Kings.⁹⁰

In this kingdom, everyone will have the same standards by which he will govern his life. This standard is based upon the everlasting gospel.

In the kingdom of heaven all the saints

⁸⁸ Origen, Song of Songs 11.1.

⁸⁹ Origen, Exhortation to Martyrdom 37.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 28.

shall live according to the laws of the everlasting Gospel.⁹¹

Unfortunately, he does not explain what these laws are.

4. The ruler of the kingdom. No matter what their views on the kingdom may be, all the writers of this period denote Christ as the ruler of the kingdom. As Tertullian states it, Who is better able to fulfill the demands of the ruler of this kingdom than Christ?

"He shall have dominion," says the Psalmist, "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." To Christ alone was this given; whilst Solomon reigned over only the moderately - sized kingdom of Judah. "Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him." To whom shall all thus do homage, but Christ?⁹²

This is one point on which Tertullian and Origen agree. Origen speaks often of Christ as king or of him reigning in his kingdom.⁹³

Conclusion

From the material just presented a clear outline of the beliefs of the early fathers concerning the future kingdom of Christ can be discerned. Also, for the first time is found a

⁹¹ Origen, De Principiis iv. 1.25.

⁹² Tertullian, Against Marcion v.9.

⁹³ Origen, Commentary on Matthew 1.30; xii.20.

definite view which is in opposition to the main stream of thought.

1. The time of the kingdom. There is a general belief throughout all the periods investigated that Christ will some time in the future establish a kingdom in which he and the saints of God would reign. This is the hope of the believer and he is to govern his life accordingly. Many were praying that this event might take place in the near future. The kingdom will be established after the resurrection of the righteous and those who give a length to the kingdom state that it will last for a thousand years. A few of the writers are very specific as to the time and place the kingdom between the first resurrection which concerns the righteous and the universal resurrection and judgment. At the end of the kingdom Christ will turn over the kingdom to God the Father.

2. The nature of the kingdom, The great majority of the writers believed in a literal earthly kingdom which would be established by Christ. It would involve the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and all the righteous of all ages will join the Church in reigning with Christ. This will be the fulfillment of the promises made by God to Abraham and David. There was some opposition to including the Jews in this kingdom. Men like Barnabas objected to the inclusion of the Jews and held that only the Church would be involved in the kingdom. Through the rejection of Christ the Jews had forfeited their right to the kingdom.

Towards the end of the period under study there arose a view in opposition to the majority view. This opposition was given great impetus by Origen as he was the first to put it into a definite form. He considered those who believed in a literal kingdom on earth rather Jewish in interpretation and easily satisfied with a superficial study of Scripture. The kingdom was not to be on the earth but in heaven. The Scriptures that seem to teach an earthly kingdom are to be allegorized. This is the start of the development of the view which was given final form by Augustine and which replaced the literal view as the predominant view of the church.

3. The blessings of the kingdom. The blessings of this kingdom are indescribable and beyond the comprehension of man. It has not even entered into the mind of man the blessings God has prepared for him in the kingdom. The curse will be lifted from the earth and it will produce in great abundance. Some use rather extravagant language in describing this which helped raise opposition to the literal view. This lifting of the curse will extend to the animal kingdom and not only will they once again obey man but they will no longer be at war with one another. The saints of God will receive great glory and will reign with Christ over the kingdom. Some teach that there will be degrees of glory for the believer dependent upon his faithfulness while in this life. Tertullian seems to teach that the believers will have a difference in the time of their resurrection and entrance

into the kingdom depending upon their merit. There will be no evil in this kingdom and no darkness as Christ will be the light and will cast out all darkness.

Origen agrees that the blessings of this kingdom are beyond the comprehension of man. However, as a result of his view of the nature of the kingdom, he limits these blessings to the spiritual sphere. He also speaks of the saints reigning and judging with Christ.

4. The ruler of the kingdom. With one united voice all of the writers proclaim Christ as the ruler of this kingdom. He is the only one who is worthy of this great honor.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

This last chapter will be devoted to a summary of the teaching of the Church Fathers on the various subjects discussed in the previous chapters along with an attempt to analyze the reasons for the beliefs. Since little is known of most of the writers and of some nothing is known that would be helpful in this area, only general suggestions can be made in most instances. As an overall statement, which can be said to generally mark the position of the early Church Fathers in relation to their eschatological beliefs, one must agree with Ayer who states that they were definitely chiliastic in belief.

Primitive Christianity was marked by great chiliastic enthusiasm, traces of which may be found in the New Testament. ...This belief, in somewhat varying form, was one of the great ethical motives in apostolic and post-apostolic times.¹

The Church Fathers never divorced their doctrinal beliefs in eschatology from their practical life. As has been noted many times in this paper, the various doctrines were made the basis upon which a plea for practical Christianity was given. One could wish that this same emphasis were found in our present day

¹ J.C. Ayer, A Source Book for Ancient Church History. (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1952) p.25.

discussion of the subject. Too often the study of eschatology is used as an escape mechanism by which one tries to divorce himself from the necessity of responding to the demand of God for an ethical Christian life.

It is quite evident that the Church Fathers believed that they were carrying on the doctrines taught by the Apostles of the New Testament. Some even try to trace it from the Apostle John through Papias down to their own time. Thus the beliefs that they put forth were nothing new or startling but only those which had been taught before with various refinements depending upon the ability of the writer. The only group that would not fit into this pattern is the Alexandrian School which developed towards the end of the period under consideration. This indicates that for at least the first three centuries of the Christian Church it was believed that the Bible definitely taught a chiliastic, or to use a present day term, premillennial, system of doctrine in the field of eschatology. It took the combined genius of Origen and Augustine before the tide was turned toward the non-chiliastic position.

The Great Tribulation

For the great majority of the writers the Great Tribulation period or the last days was still in the future. Only one writer thought that he was living in the last days and that was the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas. He also used the days of

creation as a means of determining the end of the age. Each day of creation stood for a thousand year period and at the end of six thousand years this age would come to a close. He considered himself to be living in the last days of the age. Two other writers used basically the same chronological scheme as this writer but neither one of them thought they were living in the last days. Irenaeus uses the same method but to him the time of great tribulation was still future. Hippolytus put the end of the age five hundred years after the death of Christ and warns against believing that the last days were already here. He states that the hindering force of the Roman Empire had not yet been taken out of the way so it was impossible for this time period to have begun. Tertullian also gives certain events which must happen before one could say he was living in the last days.

Not much is said by these writers as to the length of this period. It is not even mentioned among the earlier writers. In the Epistle of Barnabas it is stated that the time will be shortened but no clue as to its length is given. Justin uses the phrase time, times and half a time but does not say how long this period is. According to Irenaeus the Antichrist reigns in absolute control over the earth for three and a half years. If the usual starting point is given to this event, which is the middle of the tribulation period, then the length of the period would be seven years. Hippolytus is the only writer who gives

any definite teaching on this point. He clearly states that the length of the last half of the tribulation period is three and a half years. This would make the length of the whole period seven years.

The Church Fathers believed that the Church would be on earth during the tribulation period. This is seen in the earliest writers and there is nothing in the other writers to contradict this. They speak of the persecution of the Church by the Antichrist and of the Church being on earth at the second advent of Christ. Two writers mention the translation of the Church but one, Irenaeus, does not tell when it will take place and the other, Origen, places it at the second advent of Christ. They did not seem to realize that part of the blessed hope of the Church was the escape from the wrath to come. The passages where the Apostles Paul and John teach this truth are neglected by these writers. Perhaps the extreme persecution which the Christians received during the first three centuries conditioned them to believe that they would go through the tribulation. They may have been unable to imagine a persecution much more severe than that which they were undergoing. Along with this was an incorrect interpretation of the symbolism of the book of Revelation which helped reinforce this belief. For example, Hippolytus held that the woman of Revelation 12 represented the Church. But since Christ comes from the woman and not the woman from Christ the woman must represent the nation Israel. Otherwise, the symbolism is just the

reverse of the true facts of history. Of course, the Church was not the only group upon the earth during this period. The Jews and Gentiles are also participants in this time of trouble.

The tribulation period was to be a time of false prophets and lawlessness. During this time the Antichrist would appear and persecute the Church. This was the basic belief of all the writers investigated. There was, however, a slight progression from one group to another. In the second period this was broadened to include the idea of a judgment upon the nations of the earth. Irenaeus also held that this was the time of the salvation of the Jews. The only exception was the tribe of Dan out of whom no one would be saved as punishment for being the tribe of the Antichrist. Origen also believed in the salvation of the Jews at this time and that the gospel would be preached to every nation on earth. Hippolytus added to the judgments of the tribulation the judgment on Babylon and Cyprian believed it was a time of God's judgment upon the world. The later writers also included the two witnesses of Revelation 11 in this period.

As can be readily seen, there is agreement on the main features concerning the tribulation period. There are not two or three different viewpoints struggling for recognition but one view with various details being added as a fuller treatment of the subject was given.

The Antichrist

The Antichrist is an evil personage who will arise during the tribulation period. All agree that he will arise out of the ten kingdom form of the Roman Empire mentioned by Daniel and Revelation. The earlier writers appeal only to the book of Daniel for proof of this but the later writers use both Daniel and Revelation. The writer of the Letter of Barnabas held that he was a Roman Emperor and scholars have written many pages trying to prove which one he had in mind. At best, however, it will have to remain rather indefinite with Vespasian, Domitian and Nero having their supporters. This is in keeping with the view of the writer of the Letter of Barnabas that he was living in the tribulation period. The other writers put the rise of the Antichrist future to their own time. Irenaeus and Hippolytus believed that he would come from the tribe of Dan and therefore he would be a Jew. Tertullian taught that the Roman Empire was the restraining force which kept the Antichrist from appearing. Origen also mentions this restraining force but he does not identify it. Hippolytus makes a very interesting identification of the ten kingdoms. He says they represent ten democracies. Irenaeus states that the Antichrist rises to supreme power after he puts down three other rulers while Hippolytus states that he overthrows all the remaining rulers symbolized by the ten horns.

One writer in each period made an attempt to identify the Antichrist. Reference has been made in the preceding

paragraph to the Letter of Barnabas which identifies the Antichrist with a Roman Emperor. Unfortunately he does not give any definite clues as to the one he had in mind. The other two writers do not actually attempt to identify him as they attempt to determine the name he will use when he does appear. The suggested names are all based upon the number of the Antichrist which is 666. Thus, they attempt to find a name whose numerical equivalent would be 666. Evidently there were a few who thought the number of the Antichrist was 616 and Irenaeus takes time to show that this is a false interpretation and that the true number was 666. Irenaeus considered this attempt at finding the name of the Antichrist a rather hazardous task but he produces three names as possibilities. They are Evanthas, Lateinos and Teitan or Titan with the last one having his preference. He cautions that no definite decision can be made nor is it necessary to know the name of the Antichrist before he actually appears. Hippolytus discusses the same three names put forth by Irenaeus but he prefers Latinus. However, he also cautions against being dogmatic on the subject and admits that no one can be certain.

Little is said about the work of the Antichrist by the earliest writers. In fact, only in the Letter of Barnabas is this aspect of the subject considered. Here is found a general outline of the work of the Antichrist. He is to control the whole world but this is not his own power as it has been given to him by God. He is to set himself up as Christ and perform great works. The

later writers agree with this general outline and add many details to it. His rule is characterized by unrighteousness and he is guilty of blasphemy against God. He destroys all other forms of idolatry so that he may be the sole object of worship. He will be a great deceiver of the people of the earth because God will cause all those who have rejected Christ to accept the message of the beast. The Jews will be restored to their own land by him so that they might also worship him. Help is given in this ambitious undertaking by a false prophet. This prophet receives his power from Satan and it is he who makes the image of the Antichrist and causes the mark of the Antichrist to be put on the people of the earth. Without this mark no one will be able to buy or sell. The most infamous work of the Antichrist apart from claiming to be God will be his persecution of the saints of God. In this task he will be joined by the unbelieving Jews. The one beneficial thing that he will accomplish is the destruction of Babylon. Cyprian believed that Antiochus Epiphanes was a historical example of what the future Antichrist was to be like in character and action.

The Antichrist is to be overthrown at the second advent of Christ. Christ is the one whom Daniel symbolized as the stone cut without hands which crushed all the empires of the earth beneath it. The Antichrist is brought from his position of power and cast into hell. His kingdom is taken from him and given to Christ and the saints of God. Then comes a time of rest and peace

upon the earth with the inauguration of Christ's kingdom. Irenaeus also connects the binding of Satan with the overthrow of the Antichrist and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

The Second Advent

From the time of Justin onward, the writers take great care to show that the Scriptures teach two advents of Christ. The first one was in dishonor and humility while the second advent will be in great glory and power. The earliest writers teach a second advent but do not contrast it with the first as do the later writers. Irenaeus showed how the Jews had refused to believe their own prophets who taught the truth of the two advents of Christ. He quotes from the Old Testament prophets and the Apostle Paul for Scriptural proof of the two advents. In this line of thought Irenaeus is followed by Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen. Origen includes among those who do not understand the Scriptural teaching concerning the two advents all those who have not believed in Christ.

The writers believed that Christ's return would take place in the near future. The exact time would be unknown and therefore the believer was to live in constant expectation of this advent. He was to cast aside the things of the world and be found a faithful servant waiting for the return of his master. This uncertainty concerning the time of the second advent is seen even in the writings of those who date the end of the age. Towards

the end of the tribulation period signs would appear which will be a warning that the time of the second advent is close at hand. While the events of the tribulation itself will be a sign that the advent is near the most mentioned sign is that of the two witnesses of Revelation 11. When these two men appear upon the scene then the time is very near. Irenaeus also likens the time right before the second advent to a time in which the conditions in the world will be the same as they were in the days of Noah and Lot. All through the writers, it can be seen that there was an eager desire for the second advent to take place as soon as possible. Doner is correct when he speaks of the universality of this truth among the early writers.

All were at one; men of the Johannine school, as Polycarp and Papias - of the Pauline, as Ignatius and Clement of Rome - of the Petrine, as Barnabas - of that of James, as Hermas...all were at one as to the fact that a return of Christ was to be expected.²

Very little is said about any participants who would accompany Christ at his second advent. Of the earliest writers only the writer of the Didache has anything to say on this aspect of the second advent. He connects the second advent with the resurrection of the righteous and has Christ returning with all

² I.A. Doner, Vol. I of The Person of Christ. trans. by W.L. Alexander. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1861) p. 143

his saints. Since the Church is also on the earth at the second advent the saints who come with Christ are evidently those who have died. They are resurrected and accompany Christ on his return to the earth. Only one other writer mentions this possibility and that is Cyprian. He, too, seems to teach that those believers who have seen death will be resurrected and join Christ in his second advent. None of the other writers treat this subject with more than a passing glance and they limit their reference to Christ and the angels.

As one progresses from the earliest writers to the later ones, there increase in number the events that are connected with the second advent. The earliest writers mention the rewarding of the believer, his final redemption, and the judging of the Antichrist and the unbeliever. In the Letter to Barnabas there is also mentioned the fact that the sun, moon and stars are changed. Just what is meant by this the author does not say. Perhaps since Christ is now the light of the world there is no longer any need for the present use of these bodies of light. In the second group of writers the themes of reward and judgment are again considered with more detail being added. The believer must give an account of what he has done for the Lord and then is rewarded. Death is finally destroyed and no longer has any power over the believer. Everlasting punishment is the lot of the unbeliever and the Antichrist has all his power taken from him and his body is burned with fire. Justin taught that the Jews would

be restored to their land and that it would be redistributed to them by Christ. Involved in this would be the repentance of the Jews and their acceptance of Christ as the Messiah. Christ will now establish his kingdom. To all of this, the later writers contribute a few more details. Hippolytus believed that every one who did not acknowledge Christ as Lord in this life will be forced to acknowledge him as judge at this time. To the judgment of the unbeliever and the Antichrist, Cyprian adds the judgment of the devil. Christ now realizes his position of being head over all things. Origen emphasized the union of the believer with Christ and that all things will then be perfected. In contrast to the other writers, Origen taught a universal judgment of both believer and unbeliever in connection with the second advent. The other writers put the universal judgment of all unbelievers at a later time.

The Resurrection

The resurrection is the most extensively treated subject in the field of eschatology treated by the early Church Fathers. From the first writer to the last it is assumed to be a truth essential to the Christian Faith. The earliest writers never attempted to prove that a resurrection would take place. They assumed that all true Christians believed this fact. All that is found are strong condemnations of those who would even dare suggest that there would not be a future resurrection of the body. Start-

ing with Justin, more of an attempt was made to prove that Scripture taught such a doctrine and that it was not beyond reason. Justin based his belief in the resurrection on the omnipotence of God. No matter what happened to the body at death, the power of God is sufficient to raise it again at the resurrection. In the final analysis, the resurrection is no greater miracle than that of birth and if one is possible so is the other. Tatian uses this same argument but bases it not upon the omnipotence of God but upon his sovereignty. He also introduces the idea that the resurrection is necessary for the judgment of the individual. Athenagoras held that the resurrection was necessary for the future union of the body and soul. God created man to be a permanent being in order that man might witness God's great majesty and wisdom. This would be possible only through the resurrection. Irenaeus uses the argument of Christ in the gospel of John that God is the God of the living and not of the dead and this necessitates a resurrection. The latest writers assume that their readers are instructed in this doctrine. Both the Old and New Testaments are used to prove that the Scriptures plainly teach the resurrection. Christ is considered the first-fruits and the guarantee of the resurrection of the believer. Tertullian calls the resurrection "the prime article of the faith" and states that it is inconceivable that God would abandon any of his creation to destruction. Since death is a term used only of the body it is only the body that is invol-

ved in the resurrection. The things that will be done after the resurrection will require a physical body and therefore the resurrection is necessary. Cyprian used this doctrine to exhort the believer not to sorrow over death but to have faith in the promises of Christ. Death is not the end for him but he can look forward to a most glorious resurrection.

Generally speaking, the writers considered in this paper are mainly concerned with the resurrection of the righteous. In fact, this is the only resurrection definitely mentioned by the earliest writers. However, in their treatment of the judgment of the unbeliever they assume his resurrection. Starting with Justin, however, there is a definite teaching concerning two resurrections, one of the believer and one of the unbeliever. These two resurrections are separated by a definite period of time. Justin states that Christ's earthly kingdom takes place between the two. This same teaching is definitely found in Justin, Irenaeus and Tertullian. Hippolytus is not as clear in this respect but he does speak of the resurrection of the righteous as the first resurrection. This infers that there is another resurrection of the unrighteous. This belief in two resurrections is a distinguishing mark of those who believe in a future kingdom of Christ upon the earth.

We have to say that wherever two resurrections are spoken of in Scripture and in the Fathers, a kingdom of glory on earth is also implied, before the universal judgment and the creation of the new world. ...Thus it is implied

that there is to be a kingdom of glory before the general resurrection and judgment.³

The nature of the resurrection is first described simply as one of the physical body like that of Christ's. This belief in the resurrection of the physical body is seen in all the writers but the later writers felt compelled to explain its nature in more detail. The resurrected body will be a perfect body without a single defect. Theophilus illustrates it by reference to a potter remoulding a vessel in which there are flaws. Through the resurrection God will remove all defects from our bodies. One reason for Christ's healing ministry on earth was to show that he had this power. No matter what happened to the body at or since death, all its parts were to be once again united. This was to be done by the same power that created the body in the first place. However, there were to be certain changes in the resurrection body. Most writers took Christ's teaching concerning the absence of marriage quite literally although some such as Cyprian showed this meant that there would be no sensual desire. Contrary to some writers Clement of Alexandria correctly taught that this body would not require nourishment. The greatest change mentioned by all was the putting on of immortality and incorruption. In fact the later writers tended to emphasize this change

³ G.V. Lechler, Vol. I of The Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1886) pp. 338-39.

more than any others. What died a natural body was to be raised a spiritual body. The change to immortality and incorruption made the body fit to enter the kingdom of God and with this in mind Tertullian calls the resurrection "the gate of the kingdom of God." He also believed that the age of a person at his death would also be his age at the resurrection. Origen insisted that the resurrected body would not desire pleasures like those sought in this present world. All those who taught this interpreted the Scriptures in a Jewish sense. The body is the tabernacle of the soul and the soul needs a body suited to its present environment. Thus, through the resurrection and the putting on of incorruptibility the body becomes a fit tabernacle for the soul. Origen speaks of immortality and incorruptibility as the clothing of the body. He also believed that there would be different degrees of glory in the resurrection depending upon the life lived on earth. Irenaeus had somewhat the same idea but he held that the difference would be seen in the time of the resurrection. The more deserving being resurrected early in the kingdom, the less deserving later. One other great event connected with the resurrection was the final victory of the believer over his great enemy death.

All the writers except one emphasized that only the physical body was involved in death and therefore the resurrection. The one exception was Tatian. He held that this was true for the believer but not for the unbeliever. He believed that the soul in

itself was not immortal and that it must know the truth or die. Therefore, the soul of the unbeliever as well as his body experiences death.

Many examples were used by the various writers to illustrate the resurrection. The most popular were the seasons of the year, the dying of a seed sown in the ground and its resultant fruit and day and night. Some writers also used the different phases of the moon and the sickness of the body and its regaining of health. One story found throughout the period is that of the Phoenix bird. For some reason this story of ancient mythology had a strong attraction for the Church Fathers.

The Kingdom

Generally speaking the establishment of Christ's kingdom was connected with the resurrection of the righteous. This was true regardless of the writer's view concerning the nature of the kingdom. Some also connected it with the second advent of Christ but it was more frequently mentioned in relation to the resurrection. The exact time of its establishment could not be determined but it was regarded as an event in the not too distant future. Justin puts the kingdom between the resurrection of the righteous and the final universal resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous. This kingdom is to last for a period of a thousand years. He is followed in this by Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Tertullian. Tertullian called the resurrection the gate of

the kingdom.

The earlier writers had little to say concerning the nature of this kingdom. They limited themselves to statements such as "the saints would reign with Christ" over the earth. This is enough to show that they believed that this kingdom would be a literal kingdom upon the earth. The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas excluded the Jews from this kingdom. Because they had rejected Christ, the kingdom had been taken away from them. In order to hold this belief he was forced to allegorize many parts of the Old Testament. The middle group of writers considered the nature of the kingdom in detail. It was a literal kingdom on earth which would even include Jews if they would turn to God. The center of this kingdom would be the rebuilt city of Jerusalem from which Christ would reign. This was the new Jerusalem which John saw coming down out of heaven in the book of Revelation. All the people and nations of the world would be subject to the rule of Christ. At last the promises made by God to Abraham and David would be fulfilled. Justin held that one had to have this view of the kingdom to be considered a truly orthodox Christian. Whether or not this was the commonly held view of the church in general can not be determined but it does point up the fact that this view was widely held during this period. Only one writer seems to be opposed to this view of the kingdom. Athenagoras seems to stress that the life after death is to be lived in heaven not on earth. It is in the later writers

that real opposition to the prevailing view of the kingdom developed. The School of Alexandria under the leadership of Origen was the center of this opposition. However, it must be pointed out, that the majority of people still held to a literal kingdom on earth. Eventually, the view espoused by Origen became the dominant view, but that was never true in the period under discussion. In this point Harnack agrees.

But in the second century such Christians [those against a literal kingdom] were still in the minority in the Church. It was only in the course of the third century that chiliasm was almost completely ousted in the East. This was the result of the Montanistic controversy and the Alexandrian theology. In the West, however, it was only threatened. ...In the West, on the contrary, the millennial hopes retained their vigour during the whole third century.⁴

Origen believed in the future salvation of the Jews but not in a restored kingdom. Only those who did not wish to be bothered with the strain of thinking would indulge in such a Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures. The kingdom is a heavenly one and the Jerusalem spoken of by the prophets a city in heaven. Many things helped Origen to this conclusion concerning the nature of the kingdom. The extreme language used by many in connection with the literal kingdom would offend his sense of delicacy. Also the fact that various schismatic groups held to the literal view of the kingdom

⁴ Adolph Harnack, Vol. II of History of Dogma. trans. by Neil Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1903) p. 300.

would tend to draw him away from it. The whole emphasis of Alexandrian Theology was on the deeper spiritual meaning of the Christian Faith and it reacted against anything that seemed to be merely the satisfaction of carnal desires. The most important factor, however, was the hermeneutic principle used by Origen in his interpretation of Scripture. He rejected the literal meaning of Scripture as being worthless and always hunted for the mystical or spiritual sense of Scripture. In keeping with this principle he would naturally reject the very bases upon the literal view of the kingdom is founded.

The greatest amount of detail concerning the blessings of the kingdom is found in the writers of the middle period. The other writers are more general in their statements. Papias and Irenaeus use rather fanciful and exaggerated language in discussing this subject. Generally speaking, all the writers believed that the human mind could not conceive of the great blessings laid in store by God for the righteous. It was to be the time of the glorification of the believer. A time of great rejoicing and blessing upon the earth. Jerusalem was to be rebuilt and glorified. Christ, a righteous ruler was to control all the earth. The earth, itself, was to be restored to its original condition and produce fruit in great abundance. A corresponding change would be seen in the animal creation where the law of survival of the fittest would no longer be in force. Peace would characterize all. There would be no night or darkness and evil would be conspicuous by its

absence. The righteous would have fellowship with the angels and other spiritual beings. Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Cyprian and Tertullian believed that there would be degrees of glory based upon the life of service on earth.

Summary

Down through the Church Fathers considered in this paper runs a central core of teaching. Although it may vary slightly from one writer to another, it remains essentially the same. This is true until the time of Origen. These men believed that what they taught had come to them from New Testament times through the disciples of the Apostles. Thus, they were only teaching what had been generally taught by the church from the very beginning. That is why Justin could make the belief in a literal kingdom on earth a test of orthodoxy. This teaching stood without a serious challenge until the rise of the Alexandrian School and the ascendancy of Origen. The core of this teaching, or to use a modern term, the "kerygma," was the following: a future time of tribulation with the rise of the Antichrist followed by the second advent of Christ; at the same time the resurrection of the righteous took place which prepared them for entrance into the kingdom; the kingdom of Christ on earth then was established which would last for a thousand years; this would be followed by the universal resurrection and judgment. The different writers elaborated on various aspects of these points as their inclinations led them. However, these remain the basic points of the eschatology of the early Church Fathers.

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