Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity

Authors, Texts, and Ideas

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BRILL
Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity (6 volumes)

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The Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity (BEEC) focuses on the history of early Christianity, covering texts, authors, and ideas. The BEEC aims both to provide a critical review of the methods used in Early Christian Studies and to update the history of scholarship.

The BEEC addresses a range of traditions, including iconographic, martyrological, ecclesiastical, and Christological traditions, as well as cultic phenomena, such as the veneration of saints. The history of the transmission of texts and attention to recent scholarship will play an important role. The BEEC focuses on early Christianity from a historical perspective in order to uncover the lasting legacy of the authors and texts until the present day. Its content is intended to bridge the gap between the fields of New Testament studies and patristics, covering the whole period of early Christianity up to 600 CE.

The BEEC will appear both online and in print. The online version will be updated regularly.

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Introduction

Early Christianity is a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon – if we can even refer to it as a single phenomenon at all. Since the publication of W. Bauer's groundbreaking study *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im frühesten Christentum* in 1934, the scholarly world has come increasingly to the conclusion that the variety of early Christian groups was not the result of the disintegration of a single, original form of Christianity over the course of several centuries but rather that variety has always been at the heart of what we call early Christianity.

The label “Christianity” is itself not unproblematic. Although the term naturally has a long history in the tradition of the Christian movement, its use, for example, to refer to 1st-century CE followers of Jesus is nevertheless an anachronism given that the term is first mentioned in the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Magn. 10.1, 3; Rom. 3.3; Phld. 6.1), dated to the early 2nd century CE. One can also question the appropriateness of its use for a number of groups that are currently seen as belonging to the extended family of early Christianity. Far from implying that “early Christianity” was a unified or monolithic movement, therefore, this encyclopedia uses the term as an umbrella covering a wide variety of historical phenomena.

In creating this *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, the editors have made a number of decisions with regard to its subject matter, scope, and structure. The first choice made was to focus on the most significant topics concerning early Christianity: the most important authors, texts, ideas, and places that played a role in the history of the development of Christianity. While it is impossible to provide the user with a comprehensive survey of every detail in the growth of the Christian movement, an effort was made to cover the topics that would best provide the reader with a reliable map of the early Christian movement.

A second decision made was the time period to be covered. Any periodization is bound to be arbitrary to some extent, and thus prone to criticism. For the purposes of this encyclopedia, the editors decided that the end of the 6th century CE should be the cut-off point, as by that time Christianity was established as the Orthodox, Catholic Church in both the West as well as in the East. The formative debates on the nature of God and Christ had been more or less settled, and the biblical canon had been selected and approved by church councils. In the West, the demise of the Roman Empire had led to a new political constellation, and in the East, the rise of the Byzantine Empire ushered in a new era. Late antiquity may not have a clear beginning nor a well-defined end, but it is clear that the 6th century CE belongs to late antiquity and ushered in the start of the Middle Ages. These terms are also modern labels, of course, and also subject to debate. And yet the 6th century CE has the characteristics of a transitional age in the history of early Christianity and, as such, the editors decided to include it within the scope of the encyclopedia.

Early Christianity, in all its variety, did not originate in a vacuum. It started as an intra-Jewish reform movement in Palestine, led by Jesus of Nazareth. Within one generation after Jesus’ ministry it spread over large parts of the Roman Empire, reaching Rome even before Paul. As more and more non-Jews joined the movement, Greco-Roman customs and ideas also came to play an important role. For this reason, early Christianity is just as connected with the Greco-Roman context within which it grew as with its Jewish roots. However, notwithstanding these connections, the focus of the encyclopedia is early Christianity, and Jewish and Greco-Roman topics feature only where strictly relevant.

Two other choices were important for the scope and form of *BEEC*: the need to bridge the divide between the fields of New Testament studies and Patristics, and the history of scholarship of the entries. The fields of New Testament studies and Patristics have, over the years, grown into two separate specializations, organized into two different disciplines with their own methodologies and scholarly traditions. This makes collaboration on a project such as this a sometimes complicated task. And yet, there is no logical reason to divide early Christianity into these two separate fields. For this encyclopedia, the period covered is seen as an organic whole in which a large number of developments took place that led to the formation of the Christian church as a recognizable entity, and to the formulation of the orthodox Christian creeds as guidelines for the faith tradition.
The second decision was to include in each entry some discussion of the modern history of scholarship. Often, this historiographical discussion is included as a separate paragraph; sometimes it is interwoven with the description of the topic of the entry. Our hope is that students of early Christianity who intend to research a particular subject will find their first information in *BEEC*, and will be able to proceed with their research on the basis of the information found here. The articles included in the *BEEC* are based on exhaustive research, using both primary and secondary sources. Wherever relevant, we also include an overview of the historiography of the subject of a particular entry. If the subject of an entry has been extensively studied in the past, its historiography is included in a separate paragraph. In all other cases, the historiography is referred to where necessary. In several cases, no historiography was required, as only one or two studies on the particular subject have been published.

The editors of *BEEC* hope that this encyclopedia will find its way into the libraries of universities, colleges, religious, and other institutions, as well as the studies of many individual scholars. The digital version of the encyclopedia will not require much space on the shelves of a library or study, and will be easy to access and search. May it prove to be a useful and inspiring tool for the study and further understanding of early Christianity.

The General Editors

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Afterlife

The afterlife is the continued existence of human beings after physical death, either in a specific realm or on the earth. It can also be called “life after death,” “the hereafter,” or “the postmortem existence.” The early Christian belief in an afterlife is manifested in several aspects: various ideas of the abode of the dead, an intermediate state of the deceased between their death and their final destiny as well as their final eschatological state, and forms of afterlife existence.

Origins

Early Christian views on the afterlife mostly originated in the cultural-religious milieu of the ancient Mediterranean world, primarily in Jewish beliefs, which were often mixed and molded into more complex concepts, even within one text. Traditionally, the world of the dead is represented in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible as שְׁאוֹל sheol, a dark and gloomy underworld (Job 14:21–22) into which both the righteous and the wicked descend after death and from which there is no possibility of returning. Due to the development of the idea of personal rewards and punishments for the dead, at a certain time the deepest parts of Sheol were regarded as designed for the wicked. In the Septuagint, ἱάδης becomes the regular translation of Sheol. In the archaic Greek view reflected in the Homeric epics, ᾱδεσ Hades is a neutral place for the dead. However, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the concept of Hades was often associated with the idea of an intermediate state of the dead after death as an incorporeal form of immortality of the soul. It seems that in the Qumran community, in spite of their familiarity with the belief in resurrection (see e.g. 4Q521; 4Q385–388 [4QPseudo-Ezekiel]), resurrection itself was not dominant and central for them. In contrast, a few Jewish groups like the Sadducees, who were influenced by popular Epicurean philosophy, had no faith in any postmortem existence at all (see Jos. Bell. 2.165; Ant. 18.16; Mark 12:37; Matt 22:23; Luke 20:27; Acts 23:8; b. Sanch. 90b; ‘Abot R. Nat. 5).

The collective eschatological resurrection was perceived in two ways. Some texts argue that resurrection is a gift and reward for the righteous after the final judgment (see e.g. Isa 26:19; 1 En. 22:3; 102:4–8; 103:4; 104:2–6; 108:9–12; Ps. Sol. 3:10–12; Jub. 23:30–31), while others deal with the general resurrection, which precedes the final judgment. In this scenario, both the righteous and the wicked will be restored to life and will be judged along with the living, either to be rewarded with eternal life or to
be punished and to experience disgrace (see e.g. Dan 12:2–3; 1 En. 5:11–21; 4 Ezra 7:31–38; 2 Bar. 30:3–5; 42:8; Sib. Or. 4:181–182; L.A.B. 3:10; T. Benj. 10:6–10; T. Jud. 25:3–2; L.A.E. 12:13b–6).

Some documents deal with forms of afterlife without direct reference to the end of time or to the issue of judgment. For instance, 2 Macc 7 speaks about the bodily resurrection of the martyrs (individual resurrection) functioning as compensation for losing their bodies because of their adherence to the Jewish Law. It is significant, however, that in its representation of the same story (see 2 Macc 7:4–9), 4 Maccabees replaces bodily resurrection with a spiritual incorporeal existence (e.g. 9:22; 14:5).

In addition, in their final destiny the righteous would be transformed into a glorious state that is often depicted in astral imagery: shining like stars, enjoying celestial life, and in some way resembling → angels (Dan 12:2–3; 1 En. 10:42; T. Levi 18:3; T. Jud 24:1). The latter is connected with the belief that the transformed existence of the righteous is similar to the exalted human state at creation, which is likened to that of angels, especially in their immortality and glorious shape (see 1 En. 6:931; L.A.E. 39:2). It can also be connected with the widespread view that the soul is composed of some celestial substance.

In the Wisdom of → Solomon, the righteous are immortal, and their death in this world is seen as only an illusion (Wis 3:1–4). This text depicts their afterlife existence as the immortality of the soul (see Wis 3:4; 4:7, 10–11), which is not their intermediate state but the ultimate postmortem existence. In contrast to Plato’s views on immortality as an inalienable feature of the human soul, this immortality is granted only to the righteous. Other Jewish texts go even further (e.g. Pseudo-Phocylides [esp. Ps.-Phoc. 115], → Philo of Alexandria, and → Flavius Josephus) and adopt the pagan view on the liberation of the immortal soul from the perishable → body at death, and that of metempsychosis. All this indicates that for many Jews the character of resurrection remains ambiguous and sometimes seems to be that of the spirit or the soul rather than of the body, while for others, other forms of afterlife or more general ideas of the afterlife are implied.

The Afterlife in the Earliest Christian Tradition

Although the abode of the dead in the New Testament corpus is usually associated with the underworld, the various authors give it different characteristics. Hades, on the one hand, is seen as a neutral place where all the dead are located (Acts 2:27, 31; Rev 20:33), but also with gates (Matt 16:18), the keys of which are held by Jesus after his resurrection (Rev 1:18). However, in Luke 16:27–28 it is a place of punishment immediately after death, without reference to the final judgment. It is separated from the abode of the righteous by a great chasm (Luke 16:26). Nevertheless, in the book of Revelation, the character of Hades is temporal: it will be thrown into the fiery lake together with Death and the enemies of → God (Rev 20:14).

In → Mark and → Matthew, the place of eternal punishment is Gehenna, into which both the bodies and the souls of the wicked will be cast after the final judgment (Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Matt 5:29–30; 10:28; 18:9). The fiery lake in Rev 20:10, 14–15, with its eternal fire and torments, is implicitly related to the same idea. → Luke, however, may use Hades and Gehenna (Luke 12:5) as rough equivalents of the place of punishment for the wicked immediately after death regardless of its interim or final character (Lehtipuu, 2007, 273–274). Moreover, 2 Pet 2:4 refers to Tartarus functioning as the place of the temporal imprisonment of the fallen angels until the judgment at the end of time (see also δὲνατος/abyssos, abyss, with a similar meaning in Luke 8:31). This term (Tάρταρος/Tartáraros) had been taken from Greek writings (Hom. Il. 8:13–15; Hes. Theog. 740–741) and was later used in Hellenistic Jewish texts (e.g. 1 En. 20:2; Sib. Or. 4:186).

As with the fate of the rich man, Luke does not regard Lazarus’ abode as temporary (Luke 16:23–31). He was carried to → Abraham’s bosom (κόλπος Ἀβραάμ/kólpos Abraám) in the afterlife. It rather indicates the belief that they will enter the divine realm that is metaphorically identified with heaven. Other representations of this blessed reality also do not indicate its exact
locality (either heavenly or earthly), but it is certainly not underground. Thus, the Synoptics use the spatial aspect of the concept of the → kingdom of God, which is opposed to Gehenna in Mark 9:47. Entering the kingdom is a reward (Matt 7:21) and a final destiny for believers (Lehtipus, 2007, 291). However, it is not always clear whether entry to the kingdom of God is granted in the hereafter or already in this life. Nevertheless, the context of Luke 13:23–30 may imply that the metaphor of the kingdom as an eschatological banquet refers to the hereafter. In Luke 23:42–43 the kingdom is probably represented as → paradise, which designates its limited character in this age and the gift of eternal life for the righteous. Paradise also occurs in 2 Cor 12:1–4, where Paul identifies it with the present heavenly realm in the third heaven, and in Rev 21:7 (see also Rev 22:3–5) as the final reward of the righteous. In addition, Luke uses the imagery of “eternal habitations” (αἱ αἰωνίοι σκηναί/hai aionioi skēnai) in Luke 16:9 as the place of salvation and joy for the righteous.

A principal form of afterlife existence in early Christianity is resurrection. Nevertheless, the New Testament authors sometimes prefer more general descriptions of the afterlife without reference to corporeal postmortem existence or to any other particular form of the afterlife (see Luke 13:28–30; 16:19–31; 23:42–43). Moreover, among Christians there were those who did not believe in resurrection at all (see 1 Cor 15:12), or who thought about the resurrection of the soul/spirit only (see Iren. Haer. 1.9.13; 5.31.1), or who argued that the resurrection had already taken place, probably as a metaphor of spiritual revival from a dead society or as a certain illumination of the soul (see 2 Tim 2:17–18). It might also have been perceived as the beginning of the new life in conversion, as the link between → baptism and resurrection in Col 2:12 may be interpreted (see Rom 6:2–11).

Eschatological issues include both collective and individual aspects: although Paul talks about the eschatological resurrection in 1 Cor 15:31–52 and 1 Thess 4:14–17, in Phil 1:23–24 he speaks about his desire to be with Christ immediately after his death, with no reference to resurrection. Individual → eschatology is also very important for Luke. Indeed, in certain passages that speak about the individual's afterlife, he interprets the traditional eschatological terminology in an “individual” way: the judgment with its reward or punishment explicitly or implicitly takes place immediately after one's death (see e.g. Luke 12:16–21; 16:19–31; 23:42–43; Acts 12:5). This eschatological dichotomy was supported by later authors. For instance, → Ignatius of Antioch, while depicting the resurrection of Jesus as the prototype for the future resurrection of believers (Ign. Trall. 9.1–2), expects immediate access to heaven after death (Ign. Rom. 6.1–2).

→ Paul was probably the first who linked together the resurrection of → Jesus Christ and the eschatological resurrection (1 Cor 15:20–23; see also Rom 6:5; Holleman, 1996, 137.) He describes the eschatological resurrection as a two-stage process (1 Cor 15:20–23), with the two stages corresponding “to two categories of people to be raised” (Holleman, 1996, 52). As the firstfruits (ἀπαρχή/aparchē) of those who have fallen asleep, Jesus belongs to the first category, while Christians belong to the second. His resurrection is the basis of the victory over death and the future resurrection of believers (1 Cor 15:57). While the resurrection of Jesus Christ is “a unique incidence of a full bodily resurrection” (Fletcher-Louis, 1997, 70), the nature of the collective eschatological resurrection was less clearly defined in this period. In his early accounts, Paul deals with it in very general terms (1 Thess 4:13–18), merely assuring the believers that the dead will be raised and taken up together with the living to meet the Lord. Then, in 1 Cor 15, he clarifies the nature of the resurrection body by making an analogy with heavenly bodies (σῶμα ἐπουράνιον/sōma epourania; see 1 Cor 15:39–41) in order to distinguish the resurrection body (σῶμα/sōma) from earthly → flesh (τέρσα/sárx): “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:20 NRSV). For him, resurrection is a transformation of the physical body, which is subject to decay, into a new incorruptible, glorified, and “spiritual” (πνευματικόν/pneumatikon) substance (1 Cor 15:44–44). Nevertheless, even this “spiritual” resurrection is expressed in bodily terms. The Synoptics metaphorically represent the transformed state of the resurrected as angel-like (ἰσάγγελοι/isángeloi in Luke 20:36), not as if they literally became angels, but because they are similar in their immortality and celestial life as well as in their splendid and glorious shape (Mark 12:28–27; Matt 22:33–33; Luke 20:29–40).

The → general resurrection and that of the righteous only are often combined or mingled in the New Testament texts (Matt 12:42–42 and 22:30; Luke 14:14; 20:35 and Acts 24:15; Rev 20:4–6 and 2012–13; John 5:29 and 6:33; 11:25). On the other hand, some texts are less ambivalent about the features of the resurrection: for instance, Mark speaks only about the resurrection of the righteous
Further Developments in Early Christian Literature

A very detailed description of the otherworld is found in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (2nd cent. CE), which is probably the first Christian account of postmortem destiny outside the New Testament (Bernstein, 1993, 282). This text synthesizes several views on the afterlife, attested not only in previous Christian and Jewish apocalyptic ideas (e.g. 4 Ezra) and images, but also in some Greek traditions, such as the detailed description of the underworld (see Plato’s myth of Er in Plato *Rep.* 10.614d–62d). It also uses some Greek terminology: Tartarus with the Acherusian Lake (see Hom. *II.* 8.13–15; Hes. Theog. 740–741; Plato *Phaid.* 113–114) and Elysium (see Hom. *Od.* 4.561–569; Plato *Gorg.* 526c).

In the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the judgment follows the general resurrection at the end of time (*Apoc. Pet.* 4). Then the wicked will experience 21 different punishments in hell appointed for their specific sins. Their torments are depicted in a much more elaborate way than in the New Testament (see Mark 9:48). Moreover, the very image of this underworld is much more developed than that given in Luke 16:19–31. For instance, those who blasphemed the way of righteousness will be hung by their tongues, those who perverted justice will be put into the fiery lake, murderers will suffer from beasts and snakes, and so on (*Apoc. Pet.* 7–13). As this punishment takes place after the general resurrection, these people will be penalized in the flesh, and their torments are depicted in a very physical way. Repentance after death is impossible (see Luke 16:25–26). However, some of these people would be saved by washing in the Acherusian Lake with the intercession of the elect, which may even reverse their postmortem fate (*Apoc. Pet.* 14).

After the judgment, the elect will be given eternal life in the kingdom of God (*Apoc. Pet.* 14). This place is depicted as a beautiful paradise-like garden with fruit-bearing trees and fragrant spices, where the elect are clad in shining angelic garments (*Apoc. Pet.* 16). Similar accounts of the abode of the righteous as a garden full of light and with plenty of trees and flowers of all kinds, where the believers are dressed in white garments, are found in some other early Christian texts (e.g. *Mart. Perp.* 4.22–26; 11.11–15; see also Rev 22:2).

While the *Apocalypse of Peter* developed the Lucan image of Hades (Luke 16:19–31), some others tried to give an adequate interpretation of Abraham’s bosom. They usually did not regard it as a type of relationship but represented it as a specific location in the otherworld to which they wanted to assign an appropriate place. For instance, criticizing → Marcion, who located Abraham’s bosom in heaven, → Tertullian argues that it is not located in heaven while at the same time stating that is not as deep as hell. For him, it is a sort of temporal refuge for the souls of believers until the general resurrection, similar to the Greek Elysian fields (Tert. *Marc.* 4.34.11–14; see also Tert. *An.* 7.3). It is a higher region of Hades where the righteous already experience their consolation, while the lower one is designed for sinners who are already being punished there in anticipation of their final verdict (Tert. *An.* 57.11; 58.1–8). Hippolytus of Rome...
also regards Abraham’s bosom as the abode of the righteous in Hades, where they await the final judgment that will bring them to eternal life in heaven (Hipp. Univ. 33).

In addition, according to Tertullian, the souls of the dead cannot escape Hades until the general resurrection, apart from the souls of the martyrs, who go to paradise in heaven immediately after death (Tert. An. 55.4). The idea that the destiny of a martyr is special appears already in Acts 7:54–60: → Stephen the Martyr certainly goes to heaven immediately after his death. This view is also supported by some → martyr acts of the 2nd–3rd centuries CE (e.g. Mart. Pol. 14.2). However, in the → Shepherd of Hermas, all Christians go to heaven immediately after death, but the martyrs sit at the right hand of Christ, while the rest are at his left (Herm. Vis. 3.2.1). In the Passion of Perpetua, this female martyr has a vision of thousands of people in heaven (Mart. Perp. 4.22–26) apart from martyrs (Mart. Perp. 13.17–19). Later, → Augustine of Hippo regards the souls of the wicked as being in Hades, where they suffer from an immaterial fire. After the general resurrection and the Last Judgment, they will be sent to Gehenna, where both their souls and bodies will be punished by eternal and material fire (Aug. Civ. 21.10).

The vagueness of Jewish and New Testament texts regarding the character of resurrection and its role in the future fate of believers became a matter of debate in early Christian thought, typically appearing in a polemical context. Given Paul’s idea that Jesus’ resurrection is an anticipation of the eschatological resurrection, its bodily character came to be closely associated with the general resurrection. Paul’s claim that earthly flesh and blood are excluded from resurrection (1 Cor 15:50) was reinterpreted and developed into the idea of the “resurrection of the flesh,” an expression introduced in the 2nd century CE by → Justin Martyr, which, as he argues, will follow the 1,000-year reign of Christ (Just. Dial. 80.5; see 1 Apol. 52.3). To prove his argument about bodily resurrection, he refers to Ezek 37:6–7 (Just. 1 Apol. 52.5). Some other works also indicate that the sins of the wicked will be punished in their flesh after the general resurrection (Herm. Sim. 5.7.1–4; 2 Clem. 9.1–5; Barn. 5.6–7; see also Apoc. Pet. 4; Apoc. Paul 14). The idea of the resurrection of the flesh was further developed by → Irenaeus of Lyon in the context of his thoughts on the involvement of the material world in salvation and his chiliastic picture of Christ’s 1,000-year kingdom (Iren. Haer. 5.33–36). Tertullian also argued that the body will receive its reward or punishment along with the soul (Tert. Res. 14–17).

Later Developments

In the course of time, the picture of the otherworld reflected in the Apocalypse of Peter acquired a more detailed description and imagery. The → Apocalypse of Paul (Visio Pauli; c. 388 CE), which depends on the Apocalypse of Peter as well as on some other earlier apocalyptic documents, became the main source in the spread of the popular ideas of heaven and hell in the Western church. In this text, each soul has its guardian → angel watching over it and defending it at the judgment (Apoc. Paul 11–12). After death, the deceased go to God to receive preliminary judgment. Then the souls of the righteous are handed over to the archangel Michael to go to heaven, while those of the sinners are handed over to the angel Tartaruchus to go to the underworld (Tartarus), there to be in torment until the general resurrection and the final judgment (Apoc. Paul 14–18). The heavens have further divisions within each, described in paradise-like terms (Apoc. Paul 19–21). Between them lies an intermediate region (Lake Acherusia) where repentant sinners are baptized by Michael so that they can join the righteous in the city of Christ (Apoc. Paul 22).

Further, the → sinners are gathered into groups in hell, which is located in the dark region beyond the ocean (Apoc. Paul 31). In addition to classes of sinners similar to those in the Apocalypse of Peter, new classes are added in this text, such as false clergy and monastics that perverted the way of their calling (Apoc. Paul 36; 40). Moreover, the punishment of sinners for ethical crimes is seven times less than of those who denied the basic doctrines of Christianity (the incarnation, the resurrection, or the Eucharist; Apoc. Paul 41). However, this text stresses the importance of prayer for the wicked and attributes this practice to Christ himself (Apoc. Paul 43–44). Because of his mercy and his resurrection, he grants the sinners relief from their torments for a 24-hour period every Sunday in perpetuity.

The interest of Christians in the description of the otherworld as well as in postmortem rewards and punishments is also attested in the apocryphal literature ascribed to Ezra. The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, dated from 150 to 850 CE, uses both Jewish (e.g. 4 Ezra) and Christian sources (e.g. several NT documents; the Syriac Apocalypse of Ezra; Melito, Paschal Homily) and gives an extended picture of
the afterlife. It contains a meticulous description of Tartarus with its lowest parts designed for sinners (esp. mentioning Herod in Gk. Apoc.Ezra 4.9–12) and various punishments according to their crimes (Gk. Apoc.Ezra 4.13–24; 5.1–6, 23–28). The righteous are rewarded in paradise in the East (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1.12–15; 5.20–22). This text also speaks about the final judgment following the appearance of the → Antichrist coming up from Tartarus (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 3.15). At the end of time, the dead will be raised up uncorrupted at the signal of a trumpet. Then the Antichrist will hide himself in the deeps of the earth (Gk. Apoc.Ezra 4.36–37). Thereupon, the earth and the heavens along with the wicked will be burned and melted (Gk. Apoc.Ezra 4.38–39). Moreover, according to Gk. Apoc.Ezra 3.5–6, the wicked will be annihilated.

The Vision of Ezra (dated from the 4th to 7th cent. CE) offers an even fuller description of the underworld. The list of the sins according to which punishments are imposed in Tartarus corresponds to church teaching about almsgiving, fidelity in marriage, confession, hospitality, right instruction, and so on (Vis. Ezra 12–55). In contrast, the reward of the righteous in paradise, which is eternal rest and the kingdom of heaven, is granted for observing these norms (Vis. Ezra 64–66).

The further development of the issue of an intermediate state of the deceased and their final fate is found in the Questions of Ezra. This text contains the dualistic idea that the souls of the righteous and the wicked are taken by good and evil angels, respectively. According to it, there are seven heavenly levels: the lower ones are for those who are held by evil powers, while the upper are for the good. Hell is located in the third level; the throne of God is on the highest level (Ques. Ezra A9–21). The righteous are led into the upper atmosphere through these levels and allowed to see the throne of God, while the wicked are placed into the lower atmosphere held by evil spirits and are punished by demons and Satan (Ques. Ezra A31–33; B 12). At the end of time, at Gabriel’s trumpet blast, the dead will be resurrected in their bodies and judged at Christ’s second coming (Ques. Ezra B1–14).

Another spectacular description of the underworld is attested in the fictive → Acts of Pilate containing the → Gospel of Nicodemus (4th–6th cent. CE). The second part of this work, attributed to Nicodemus from the Gospel of John (31–15; 19:39), contains an account of Christ’s descent into Hades prior to his resurrection and reflects earlier beliefs (see Acts 2:31; Eph 4:9; Tert. An. 55.1–2). In this story, the underworld (Hades) is seen as the abode of all the dead. Death, Hades, and Satan have been defeated. Satan has been bound in chains and cast into Tartarus (Acts Pil. 6–8). Thereafter, Jesus led → Adam by the hand from Hades (see the Gk. Apoc. Ezra 7.2) and delivered all the righteous to the archangel Michael to settle them in paradise, where Enoch, → Elijah, and the repentant criminal (see Luke 23:40–43) met them (Acts Pil. 9–16). Various details of this story were later visualized in medieval artworks, including the Eastern → iconography of Christ’s descent to hell. Moreover, the picture of the otherworld with its division into several regions assigned to the different categories of the righteous and the wicked that the texts discussed above depict affected many medieval descriptions of heaven and hell, including such a prominent work as Dante Alighieri’s Divine Comedy.

Further, although the corporeal character of the eschatological resurrection had more or less become the standard view from the 2nd century CE, it had not always been perceived as the resurrection of the physical body. Thus, linking resurrection to the → Eucharist, the Gnostic → Gospel of Philip (3rd cent. CE) argues that the resurrected flesh and blood are not earthly but those of Jesus, which are associated with Logos and the Spirit. The resurrected body is indeed connected with that of Jesus, who had been raised in the true spiritual flesh (Gos. Phil. 23). → Origen, following Paul’s thought in 1Cor 15:36–44, confirms that the body has to be transformed in resurrection because it is unworthy of God to raise untransformed matter. Accordingly, God transfigures the nature of the body and lifts humans up above nature, thus making them more divine in resurrection (Or. Cels. 5.22–23). In the even later writings of Augustine, the spiritual bodies of the righteous are different from those of the wicked because for the former, it is flesh that is joined to spirit, while for the latter it remained flesh, which will suffer from eternal fire (Aug. Civ. 21.9–10; 22.21).

The belief in the future eschatological judgment and resurrection found its place in the Nicene Creed (325 CE), while that of Christ’s descent into Hell and of the resurrection of the flesh had been included in the → Apostles’ Creed. However, the debates about the activity or inactivity of the souls in their intermediate state between death and the eschatological resurrection continued unabated. These debates were provoked by the development of the cult of the saints and of intercession for the
dead. While it seems that Irenaeus saw the souls of the dead as dwelling in a certain allotted invisible place where they remain inactive and await their future resurrection (Iren. Haer. 5.31.2), Eustatius of Constantinople, writing around 582 CE, argued in his On the State of the Souls that the souls of the deceased retain their activity and that this feature enables the souls of the saints to intercede on behalf of the living and to perform miracles. In contrast, the souls of the sinners are also active in hell, where they experience remorse. According to this view, the souls of those who are neither saints nor unrepentant sinners also remain active. The Western church resolved this problem by accepting the doctrine of purgatory at the Second Council of Lyons (1274 CE). The Eastern church also de facto assumed the postmortem activity of souls, although their condition was not always certain (Dal Santo, 2009, 45).

Historiography

The study of early Christian views on the afterlife has always been a subject of particular scholarly interest. In contrast to the idea (held, e.g., by O. Cullmann) that the Christian view of the afterlife as well as the Jewish one (the resurrection of the body) has to be clearly distinguished from the pagan view (the immortality of the soul), modern scholarship emphasizes the great diversity of views of the hereafter in pagan, Jewish, and early Christian documents. In this regard, mention must first be made of the works of G.W.E. Nickelsburg (1972; 2006), H.C.C. Cavallin (1974), and G. Stemberger (1972), which present a multifaceted picture of the diversity of Jewish beliefs shared by early Christianity. Furthermore, A.E. Bernstein (1993) explores afterlife issues focusing on the origins of the idea of hell as far back as ancient Mediterranean views and then into early Christianity up until Augustine. A.F. Segal (2004) also examines the origins and the history of the development of the beliefs in afterlife and their interrelations, starting from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan, then moving to Greece and Rome, Judaism and early Christianity, and finally to Islam. In his opinion, the various views on afterlife reflect the social identity of the religious communities.

C. Walker Bynum (1995) investigates the idea of the resurrection of the body in ancient and medieval Western culture (the late 2nd–14th cents.) in the context of its social, cultural, and religious background, including the cult of saints, burial practices, and the visualization of afterlife issues in Christian art. She argues that modern attitudes toward the body, personal identity, and individuality are affected by the discussions of that period.

In addition, C. Setzer makes an important contribution to the development of modern research about the idea of the resurrection of the body in Jewish and early Christian circles (2004). This idea has also been explored in the study of O. Lehtipuu (2015), who demonstrates that the issue of the resurrection of the dead was approached in different ways in early Christianity. She shows that the belief in resurrection was used as both an identity marker and as a sign of inclusion in the community.

J. Clark-Soles (2006) discusses the questions of death and afterlife in the New Testament texts (mainly in Paul’s writings, Matthew, John, and 1–2 Peter) and indicates that although they speak about resurrection, each author depicts the afterlife with his own unique language and imagery. However, J. Clark-Soles does not discuss the diversity of the views on afterlife in Luke–Acts, this gap having been filled by O. Lehtipuu’s (2007) and A. Somov’s (2017) integrated studies of Luke’s afterlife ideas and imagery.

Analyzing the early Christian beliefs in the resurrection of the flesh D.O. Endsjø (2009) investigates the views of Greco-Roman paganism and argues that especially in popular circles, it often understood immortality as involving both body and soul, that is, it regarded human nature as a psychosomatic unity. The development and reception of the idea of physical incorruptibility in Christianity contributed to the success of this religion among the pagans.

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Alexey Somov

Anastasius (Emperor)

Born in Dyrrachium in circa 430 CE, little is known about Anastasius’ early life. He pursued a career at the imperial court and became one of the 30 silentiaries. His interest in theological matters is clear from his habit of preaching private sermons to a select congregation in the Great Church, an action that incurred the wrath of the → patriarch, Euphemius of Constantinople. Anastasius, however, went on to become a candidate for the patriarchy of → Antioch in 488 CE after the death of Peter the Fuller. When he was chosen by Ariadne, Emperor Zeno’s widow, as the successor to the imperial throne, Euphemius was only persuaded to carry out his role in the coronation ceremony in return for a declaration of orthodoxy accepting the Council of → Chalcedon signed by the new emperor.

On his accession, Anastasius inherited a number of problems from his unpopular Isaurian predecessor, including the Isaurian issue itself, a struggling state economy, and religious schisms. In addition to these, he later had to deal with issues of foreign policy on the eastern frontier (war with the Persians) and difficult diplomatic relations with the West (esp. the Ostrogoths) and security issues in the Balkans.

Anastasius got of to a good start by expelling the hated Isaurians from Constantinople, and, carrying the offensive to their native mountainous terrain, he had rounded up and executed the key Isaurian leaders by 498 CE. At the start of his reign, it was important for Anastasius to remove the threat of a coup masterminded by Zeno’s brother, → Longinus, and the Isaurians, characterized as bandits, had never been popular in the capital. Anastasius’ victory was celebrated by his panegyrists, Procopius and Priscian, who likened him to Pompey the Great.

Anastasius was now free to turn his attention to financial and administrative matters. In an erratic reign troubled by three internal revolts and the depredations of the two Gothic Theoderics, there had been no opportunity for Zeno to rebuild the treasury after the disastrously expensive (and unsuccessful) 468 CE naval expedition against the → Vandals. The empire Anastasius inherited was close to bankruptcy. That the treasury held 320,000 pounds of gold at the time of his death in 518 CE is a tribute to his successful reforms to taxation and monetary, agrarian, and military policy. He introduced improvements to bureaucratic procedures and the judicial system, and he took stringent measures to bring faction rioting under control. The smooth running of the state led to a stronger economy, allowing Anastasius to offer tax cuts and subsidies, and to fund a building program.

Concern for efficient economic governance is also apparent in his foreign policy: a fragmentary inscription found in several locations in Arabia records changes to army regulations and the administration of customs. Otherwise, defense and diplomacy were Anastasius’ key weapons against external threats. In the East, he cultivated relations with the Arab tribes and made an important alliance with the Ghassanids, hoping to counter the Persians’ Arab allies, the Lakhmids. Interestingly, doctrinal politics played a role in this maneuvering: Anastasius successfully encouraged the loyalty
of the Ghassanids by their cultural and religious assimilation into his empire, while similar efforts by the monophysite patriarch, Severus of Antioch, failed to wean the Lakhmids away from the Persians. When the Persians did invade Roman territory in 502 CE, they won several easy victories, but eventually the Romans began to hold their own and even conduct incursions into Persian territory. A peace treaty was negotiated in 506 CE, after which Anastasius took care to strengthen the defenses along the eastern frontier, most conspicuously at Dara.

Even greater diplomatic efforts were required in the West. As he was in no position tooust Theodoric, now ruling in Italy courtesy of an invitation from Zeno, Anastasius could only seek to control the Ostrogothic king’s expansionist plans and secure the loyalty of the Franks and Burgundians. To control the menace of the Bulgar incursions into Thrace, he built or restored the Long Walls to the west of Constantinople.

An exemplary ruler in many ways then, Anastasius has attracted criticism for his handling of the doctrinal dispute between the Chalcedonians and → Monophysites. The problem stemmed from the unresolved issues of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), which Zeno had attempted to resolve with his Henoticon, a document that preserved a uneasy compromise among the Eastern patriarchs but led to a split between Patriarch Acacius of Constantinople and Felix III. Anastasius failed to heal the Acacian → schism, which endured for 35 years, and apart from the short-lived papacy of the sympathetic Anastasius II, Popes Gelasius, → Symmachus, and Hormisdas remained intransigent on any softening of the decisions taken at Chalcedon, and opposed to the notion that an emperor could formulate church policy. The attempt to install the pro-Henotic Laurentius as successor to Anastasius II was thwarted by Theodoric, who gave recognition to the hard-line Symmachus.

While Anastasius could not dictate theological policy in the West, he could assert his authority much more easily over the Eastern patriarchates. In Constantinople, Euphemius resolutely promoted the Chalcedonian cause, aligning himself closely with Pope Gelasius. When he refused to surrender the emperor’s signed profession of faith, he found himself deposed on the charge of → Nestorianism and exiled to Euchaita. He was replaced by the compliant Macedonius, who adopted a flexible approach by signing the Henoticon, accepting communion with the monophysite patriarch of Alexandria, John II, and winning support from the pro-Chalcedonian Sleepless Monks in Constantinople. However, the rise of the extreme Monophysites, Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus, made his accommodating methods unacceptable, and in 511 CE he followed his predecessor in exile to Euchaita. Building on their success, they exerted pressure on the patriarch of Antioch, the moderate Flavian of Antioch. Despite some setbacks, Philoxenus and his disciples eventually succeeded in forcing him into exile at Petra. Severus was ready to succeed him (Nov 512 CE) and was consecrated at the Synod of Antioch in 513 CE, orchestrated by Philoxenus.

But even as the Monophysites celebrated their achievements, the tide began to turn in favor of the Chalcedonians. In → Constantinople, the monophysite version of the Trishagion led to severe rioting until Anastasius was forced to appear in the hippodrome without his diadem and offer to resign. In the eastern provinces, the position of Severus proved too extreme for many of the clergy and monks who adhered to rather more moderate views. Anastasius continued to hope that communion among the four Eastern patriarchates could be achieved and in July 516 CE agreed to the deposition of Elias, patriarch of → Jerusalem, a pro-Chalcedonian who would not accept the ordination of Severus. However, the new incumbent, John, bowing to the pressure of the crowds inflamed by the monks Theodosius and Sabas, anathematized all those who did not accept the definition of Chalcedon, including Severus.

Meanwhile, in the Balkans, many bishops declared their loyalty to the pope, including Dorotheus, bishop of → Thessalonica, who switched his allegiance from the Constantinopolitan patriarch to Hormisdas in January 515 CE. Far more serious was the rebellion of Vitalian, who used Anastasius’ increasingly hard-line anti-Chalcedonian stance as a pretext for his uprising. After several military successes in 514 CE, he arrived on the outskirts of the capital, and – following negotiations in which a number of concessions were supposedly accepted, including the reinstatement of Patriarchs Macedonian and Flavian, and the healing of the Acacian schism – Vitalian retreated. Hostilities continued, however, with Vitalian enjoying the upper hand, and for a second time he brought his forces to the capital. This time the promise of a synod at Heraclea attended by all bishops was one of the concessions. A lengthy correspondence between
Anastasius and Hormisdas followed, but ultimately the demands for the complete submission of the emperor to the pope, and acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon, were too great a price to pay for communion. For a third time, Vitalian brought his army to Constantinople, only to be defeated by the praetorian prefect, Marinus, who used Greek fire against the enemy ships at the Golden Horn. Vitalian was defeated and remained in exile until after the death of Anastasius. To his credit, the emperor continued to negotiate with the West, sending letters to Hormisdas and also the Roman Senate, but such was the distrust on both sides that no compromise could be reached. After his death, Justin (emperor) and Justinian rapidly healed the schism but on terms scarcely acceptable to the East, and their attempts to impose unity among the Eastern patriarchates were as unsuccessful as those of their predecessor. Indeed, a separate monophysite (Jacobite) church developed, demonstrating that a compromise solution between Chalcedonians and Monophysites was no longer viable. Anastasius’ support for the monophysite cause not only represented his personal belief but also was a pragmatic policy to retain the loyalty of the eastern provinces, crucial in the context of the Persian threat. And his methods in handling the crisis should be judged against the background of the ultimate impossibility of achieving unity among the four Eastern patriarchates and with Rome.

Historiography

Basic accounts of Anastasius’ reign are found in all the standard studies of the late Roman world (e.g. Bury, 1923; Stein, 1949–1959; Jones, 1964). However, there are now three monographs devoted to the reign of Anastasius (Capizzi, 1969; Haarer, 2006; Meier, 2009). There are also two studies on Anastasius’ panegyricists, Priscian and Procopius (Chauvot, 1986; Coyne, 1991), and separate aspects of the reign have been covered in a number of books and articles, starting with G.A. Rose (1888) and E. Merten (1906), but these have obviously been superseded by P. Charanis’ study on religious policy (Charanis, 1939) and G. Greatrex (1998) on the Persian wars; and there is also J. Prostko-Prostysiński (1994) on western foreign policy. Of the proliferation of publications on all aspects of the late Roman world perhaps the most useful aspect to mention is the widening access to Anastasius’ reign by the growing availability of translations of and commentaries on some of the key primary sources: for example, Theophanes (1997); Malalas (1986) and Marcellinus Comes (1995) published by the Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, and the Chronicon Paschale (1989), Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (1996), Evagrius (2000), Joshua the Stylite (2000) and Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor (2011) published in the Translated Texts for Historians Series.

Bibliography


Arnobius of Sicca

One of the least understood Christian authors of the pre-Constantinian period, Arnobius was a → rhetor from Sicca Veneria (Le Kef, Tunisia), in the Roman province of Africa Proconsularia, and → Lactantius was his pupil (Jer. Ep. 70; Vir. ill. 80). His Adversus nationes in seven books was first published in Rome in 1542 by Franciscus Sabaeus, curator of the Vatican Library, and since that time more than 30 editions of the → Latin text have appeared. A. Reifferscheid’s edition, published as volume IV of the Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum (1875), superseded all previous editions until C. Marchesi’s 1934 publication in
volume LXII of the Corpus scriptorum latinorum Paravianum. In recent years editions of various books of the *Adversus nationes* have appeared in the Budé series. Two manuscripts preserve the original Latin text: the *Parisinus Latinus* 1661 (P) at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the *Bruxellensis Latinus* 10847 (B) at the Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles. Both contain the *Octavius* of → Minucius Felix as the eighth book. → Jerome, the sole source of information about Arnobius from antiquity, offers intriguing biographical data about him in his *Chronicon*:

Arnobius enjoys great repute as a rhetorician in Africa. While he was giving instruction in oratory to the youth of Sicca and was yet a pagan, he was drawn as the result of dreams to belief in Christianity. Failing, however, to obtain from the bishop acceptance into the faith which he had hitherto always attacked, he gave all his efforts to the composition of most splendid books against his former religion, and with these as so many pledges of his loyalty, he at last obtained the desired affiliation. (Jer. *Chron.* 326–327 CE; Simmons, 1995, 94–139, analyzes Jerome’s remarks about Arnobius)

The contents of the *Adversus nationes* and the incipit of Book 5, which states *Arnobius orator*, indisputably support the remark that Arnobius was a rhetor. References to the cult of Saturn, Moorish deities, the Psylli, Garamentes, Gaetuli and Zeugitan, and ethnic customs, as well as possible allusions to the marble quarries at Simitthu (Chemtou) and the testimonial about pagan practices before his → conversion to → Christ, betray an African background for the author (Simmons, 1995, 8, 16; and Arn. *Adv.* nat. 1.16; 1.36; 1.39; 2.32; 2.40; 2.68, 79, 71; 3.6–29; 4.9; 4.14, 20, 22, 24, 26; 5.3; 6.5; 6.12, 25). Personal devotion to a deity as the result of dreams is also deeply imbedded in the religious culture of Roman North Africa, and it is not something that Jerome himself fabricated. M.B. Simmons has shown that Books 1–2 represent a revocation of the criticisms of → Porphyry of Tyre derived from his anti-Christian works, which Arnobius used when he himself had attacked Christianity. Books 3–7 reveal that the author used the same method, literary retorsion, against paganism, that Porphyry used against Christian beliefs and practices. When Arnobius had proved to the → bishop that he had revoked his formerly held Porphyry’s method against paganism, he was admitted into membership in the church at Sicca (Masterson, 2014, 375n6), and in any event the contents of the *Adversus nationes* provide strong evidence that it was written during the Great → Persecution. In *Adv. nat.* 4.36 Arnobius asks why Christian scriptures have been given to the flames and places of worship have been violently torn down, a clear reference to the first edict against the Christians promulgated on Feb 24, 393 CE. References to contemporary persecutions occur in all seven books of the work. Roman officials despoil Christians of their goods and inflict capital punishment on them (*Adv. nat.* 1.26). Arnobius alludes to Apollo’s oracle at Didyma consulted before the persecution (*Adv. nat.* 1.25–26). Christian executions result from unjust hatred (*Adv. nat.* 1.35, 55, 64). All kinds of morbid tortures are mentioned (*Adv. nat.* 2.5, 77, 78). Christians are being burned alive, thrown to wild beasts (*Adv. nat.* 3.36), and exiled (*Adv. nat.* 5.29). The “new penalties” of *Adv. nat.* 6.11 (see *Adv. nat.* 6.27) allude to Diocletian’s second and third edicts, and most of Book 7 attacks animal sacrifices, which were universally required of the empire’s subjects by the fourth edict. Conversely, there is no mention in the work of any of the post-311 CE events favoring the Christians, which attracted the keen interest of contemporary apologists (*→ Eusebius of Caesarea and Lactantius*), for example Gaius’ *Edict of Toleration* (Apr 30, 311), the “Edict of → Milan,” Constantine’s vision before the battle of the Milvian Bridge and his subsequent conversion, his massive church-building program, the Council of → Nicaea, nor any of the pro-Christian policies that positively impacted Roman North Africa and the other provinces of the empire. G.E. McCracken is therefore correct to conclude that 311 CE should be taken as an absolute *terminus ante quem* for dating the *Adversus nationes*, and most scholars have agreed with M.B. Simmons, who posits 302–305 CE.
Structure and Style

Of the seven books of the *Adversus nationes*, the first two contain retractions of Porphyrian criticisms of Christianity that Arnobius had formerly used against the Christian religion before his conversion (Edwards, 1999, 200n14: “A very cogent case.”). Books 5–7 represent a sustained attack upon pagan beliefs and practices. Due to a deficient knowledge of the Bible and Christian doctrine, Arnobius is more effective in his attack upon → pagan than in his defense of Christianity. Strategically interwoven in the work are seven résumés (*Adv. nat.* 1.18; 3.12–13; 4.28; 6.2; 7.4–5; 7.35–36) that recapitulate the argument that the gods are not immortal, retorting, for example, Porphyry’s Hecatean oracle that proclaimed Christ to be only a good mortal being (*Aug. Civ.* 19.23). Each book develops an appropriate polemical theme in conjunction with this literary infrastructure. Book 1 responds to the pagan accusations blaming all the evils occurring in the empire upon the Christians and that the gods are angry at their impiety due to worshipping a mere man, and are thus punishing the Roman Empire. A digression from the main theme, Book 2 is an intriguing critique of philosophical doctrines in which Arnobius develops his notion of the nature and destiny of the → soul, which is granted immortality only by Christ. Book 3 attacks the anthropomorphic depiction of the gods that has resulted from the erroneous and contradictory views of pagan theologians. It is therefore the pagans who should be blamed for the gods’ anger toward humanity. The immoral nature and behavior of the gods are addressed in Book 4. Applying a method of literary retorsion, Book 5 calumniates the mystery cults and pagan mythology, which are described as pure literary fiction. Pagan temples and images (Book 6) and animal sacrifice (Book 7) terminate one of the best polemical arguments against paganism in the Ante-Nicene period. Since Book 7 breaks off abruptly and betrays the need of editorial revision, Arnobius might have planned a final eighth book that was never realized due most probably to his death circa 305 CE of unknown causes.

The great erudition represented by a vast knowledge of Greek and Latin works is evident throughout the work. Arnobius certainly knew Greek, and of the 51 Greek authors named, Plato, mentioned 14 times, exerted the greatest influence upon his thought, though many others are cited including Aristotle, Sophocles, Epictetus, Hesiod, Homer, Numenius, Plutarch, and Pythagoras. Latin sources include Cicero, Q. Fabius Pictor, and Verrius Flaccus, among many others, with Varro and Lucretius heading the list of the most frequently cited. Jerome's pejorative assessment of Arnobius’ style as “uneven and prolix and without clear divisions in his work, resulting in confusion” (*Jer. Ep.* 58.10) has been challenged and modified by modern scholarship. H. Bryce and H. Campbell (1975) note the abundance of solecisms and barbarisms, while at times Arnobius rises to genuine eloquence. H. le Bonnec (1982) observes his penchant for abstraction, a tendency toward archaic words in imitation of Cicero, and the employment of poetic language. G.E. McCracken (1949) partly agrees with Jerome while noting the organic unity of the work and rightly attributes any stylistic deficiencies to the author’s rhetorical device. In making his point, Arnobius is often repetitive. B. Fragu (2010) and others have shown his mastery of irony and a sardonic wit reminiscent of Tertullian articulated with a rich vocabulary, neologisms, and a complex word order preserved by a Latinity that has been described as between classical metrical and medieval rhythmic prose.

Knowledge of Christianity

As a recent convert to Christ and not yet under catechetical instruction as he wrote the *Adversus nationes*, Arnobius did not have a sound knowledge of scripture, the sacrament, or basic teaching of the church, nor does his concept of God cohere with evolving orthodox views. Described as the Father of all things and high king to whom Christians pray daily, God is the creator of the universe, but not of human beings, who were created by an inferior demiurgic figure (*Adv. nat.* 2.45–48). Conceived as highly transcendent and understood apophatically (*Adv. nat.* 3.19), the supreme being is the first god without form who does not possess anthropomorphic characteristics (*Adv. nat.* 1.31) and cannot express anger (*Adv. nat.* 6.2; 7.35). Omnipotent and omnipresent, → God does not remove evil from the world (*Adv. nat.* 2.54–65) even though he is aware of its existence. Christ is repeatedly described as God, and not a human being as the pagans claim. He is more powerful than the fates and has liberated his disciples from the error of polytheism (*Adv. nat.* 1.38). Christ’s miracles included healing the sick and exorcising → demons and prove his deity, though the miracle of glossolalia recorded in Acts 2 is incorrectly attributed to Christ. Christians
worship him daily as a divine being (pro numine), but the relation between the Father and the Son is unclear, and Arnobius does not offer a theological exposition of the doctrines of the → incarnation, → crucifixion, and → resurrection. Christ came to earth in human form to reveal knowledge of the supreme God and to confer immortality upon human souls. There is no mention of the → Holy Spirit in the work.

Arnobius does not exhibit knowledge of the doctrine of original sin (arguably, there is no doctrine of the original sin yet). The soul possesses an intermediate character between life and death (Adv. nat. 2.35–36) and sins due to a natural weakness, not free will or choice. Wretched and unhappy, it is totally blind and ignorant (Adv. nat. 1.49) but can be delivered from death to life by Christ’s teachings. At death souls without knowledge of God will experience torments (Adv. nat. 2.14). Arnobius shows no familiarity with the Old Testament and makes only a few allusions to the New Testament, though he has a basic knowledge of Christ’s miracles. The only Christian predecessor cited is Simon Peter, who is depicted as destroying the arch heretic Simon Magus. This implies an influence from the cult of Peter observed in the North African provinces of the period. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Minucius Felix represent the principal Christian sources used by Arnobius.

Arnobius and Porphyry

Since the publication of M.B. Simmons’ book (1995), there has been a growing scholarly consensus that the principal adversary of Arnobius was his contemporary Porphyry of Tyre, the author of the Contra Christianos and De philosophia ex oraculis, which contained a number of anti-Christian oracles published before the launching of the great persecution. At the beginning of the Adversus nationes, Arnobius alludes to pagans speaking against Christianity in oracular fashion, which is a response to the De philosophia ex oraculis of Porphyry. After his conversion Arnobius used the same methods against Prophry: by means of literary retorsion, he argues that the pagan myths are ridiculous and contradictory (e.g. Adv. nat. 5.2–4), a good example of the kind of method Porphyry used in criticizing Christian scripture (Champeaux, 2007, xxvi note 51; and Fragu, 2010, xxv). The New Men (viri noui) of Adv. nat. 2.15 have been identified as Porphyry and his followers. In the work Arnobius develops a sustained attack upon major Porphyrion themes (e.g.): Christianity is antisalvific (Adv. nat. 1.3), theurgical rituals (Adv. nat. 2.13), souls are sent to earth to learn evil and receive their wings at death (Adv. nat. 2.33–42), temples and images (Book 6), the true nature of a god (Book 7), and the belief that Aesculapius cured Rome of the plague, which Arnobius denies (Adv. nat. 7.47f.), retorting Porphyry’s claims that since Christ began to be worshipped Asclepius and the other gods have not blessed the eternal city.

Arnobius also responds to the attacks that Porphyry made directly upon Christ and the apostles by defending the criticism that Christian faith cannot prove that what it claims is true (Adv. nat. 1.4; 2.8–10); Christ was a mere man (Adv. nat. 1.26f.); the disciples were entangled in error and did not acquire knowledge of God (Adv. nat. 1.38f.); Christ died an ignominious death by crucifixion (Adv. nat. 1.41), the disciples were rustic and uneducated men (Adv. nat. 1.50–59) who fabricated lies about Christ (Adv. nat. 1.57), Christianity is a new religion (Adv. nat. 1.57), the advent of Christ is recent (Adv. nat. 2.74), the disciples were fated not to receive salvation from the gods (Adv. nat. 1.47; 2.2; 2.14), Christians have abandoned ancestral religious customs (Adv. nat. 2.67), and Christianity does not offer the via salutis universalis animae liberandae (Adv. nat. 2.64–74). Arnobius responds to the latter, mentioned by Augustine of Hippo in Book 10 of De civitate dei, throughout the Adversus nationes, but especially in Book 2, by showing that Christ is the only way to the salvation of the soul, and this gift is conferred on anyone who asks, resulting in the soul’s immortality and bliss with God in the afterlife (Adv. nat. 2.60–65).

Significance for Early Christianity

The 6th-century CE Decretum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis formerly ascribed to Pope Gelasius, which included the Adversus nationes among the apocrypha a catholicis vitanda can help to explain the reason for the work’s neglect until the post-Enlightenment period. Although still one of the most highly ignored Christian writers of late antiquity, Arnobius is increasingly gaining the attention he deserves from ancient historians and patristic scholars as an important source for Greco-Roman religion and philosophy due to the fact that the Adversus nationes offers a goldmine of information on pagan beliefs and practices. It also provides invaluable insight for an understanding of the pagan/Christian conflict during the
age of Diocletian, and specifically the intellectual background to the great persecution of 303–305 CE. Recent scholarship has shown how the works of Arnobius, Lactantius, and Eusebius studied together can shed light on the composite picture of Christian apologetics in the period leading up to the conversion of Constantine.

**Historiography**


**Bibliography**

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The following preliminary points concerning the Bible and its interpretation in the early church should be noted. The Bible never existed as a single book during the period covered. Technologically it was impossible. The scriptures consisted of multiple scrolls or codices, and exactly which belonged to the collection, as well as how they constituted a unity, was only gradually established. To begin with, the only scriptures were those known to Jesus and his apostles – the Law and the Prophets, together with the Psalms and some other writings – in other words, Jewish books, read by most Christians in Greek translation. Late 2nd century CE, four Gospels, Acts, and various epistles were added, and the two collections began to be designated the "old testament" (= covenant) and the "new testament." Together they constituted Christian scripture.

The earliest traces of interpretation of these scriptures are found in the use and citation of texts in letters, homilies, and treatises, where the application of the quotation carries an implicit interpretation. The quotation may reinforce exhortation to a particular action or way of life, but more often than not what is implied, and sometimes explained, is that the scripture quoted is an oracle or prophecy that had its fulfilment, and therefore its meaning, in the new dispensation brought about by Jesus Christ. Explicit exegesis or exposition came with the development of commentaries, and/or the practice of working through a whole scriptural text in a series of homilies; this scholarly approach utilized the interpretative methods practiced in the schools of antiquity in which education centered on classical texts such as Homer, while also taking up the prophetic meaning of the "old testament" claimed by Christian tradition from the beginning, and sometimes offering more formal justification for adopting symbolic or spiritual senses.

So Christian interpretation, as distinct from that of Jewish scholars and rabbis, assumed that the scriptures were fundamentally about Jesus Christ. The word of God was revealed in Christ, so he unlocked the word of God in the scriptures. This was the key to the unity of the disparate documents assembled together as holy scripture.

Recent research has emphasized such points over against the former tendency to characterize patristic biblical interpretation in terms of the attribution of various senses to scripture – literal, typological, allegorical.

Contested Meanings

In the earliest period, Christians differentiated themselves from Jews and from one another by claims about the meaning of the scriptures.

Already in the New Testament, Christ is seen as the fulfilment of the scriptures: in Matthew's Gospel and elsewhere, this is demonstrated by citing proof texts. It is also implicit in the telling of stories that parallel scriptural narratives: for example, the story of the feeding of the multitude recalls the gift of manna in the desert, a point made explicit in the Johannine discourse (John 6); the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11–16) recalls stories of Elijah; and so on. Such typological storytelling can already be traced in the Old Testament (Fishbane, 1985), but in early Christianity spotting such correspondences becomes an interpretative tool. Two 2nd-century CE texts are of particular interest for analyzing the various ways in which early Christian readers found their own truth foretold or prefigured in the Jewish scriptures: the Epistle of Barnabas and Melito of Sardis' Peri Pascha. The latter rhetorically plays out the biblical story of the Passover as prefiguring salvation from sin and the devil through the sacrifice of Christ, perhaps as a homily, maybe even as a Christian Passover haggadah. Both demonstrate how etymology, metaphor, and figurative language were exploited to show how the text was a sign pointing beyond itself.

The wider cultural implications of this approach are evident in the works of Justin Martyr. The Greco-Roman world was wedded to arts of prediction, the imperial government seeking advice not only from rites of augury but also from interpreters of the Sibylline Oracles – books of sayings from inspired prophetesses at well-known shrines. So in his 1 Apology, Justin treats prophecy and its fulfillment as the strongest argument for the truth of Christianity and then tells the gospel story through carefully selected prophetic texts taken as oracles.
predicting the events. Justin’s culturally powerful argument, however, had one considerable flaw, namely the fact that the Jews, to whose scriptures he appealed, contested the messianic meaning he and other Christians attributed to the texts; or, if willing to agree a text was about the Messiah, he insisted that that Messiah was still to come. His Dialogue with Trypho addresses this issue. As they explain,

if the prophets foretold cryptically that Christ would suffer first and then be Lord of all, it was well-nigh impossible for anyone to grasp the full meaning of such prophecies until Christ himself convinced his Apostles that such things were explicitly proclaimed in the scriptures. (Just. Dial. 76.6)

Whether or not this work in some sense records actual Christian-Jewish dialogue, it demonstrates the Christian claim to have the true meaning of scripture over against the apparently more legitimate claims of the Jews.

Careful study of this work may also provide evidence regarding the forms of Greek text and translations used by Christians in the 2nd century CE (Skarsaune, 1987). It seems likely that notebooks (codices rather than scrolls; → codex) were used to collect “testimonies” – that is, oracles or other excerpts potentially understood as pointing to Christ – and these circulated as handy aids among traveling Christian teachers, whereas for full texts Christian groups were dependent on obtaining scrolls from synagogues. Be that as it may, Christian identity was clearly bound up from the beginning with assertions about the meaning of the Jewish scriptures that the Jews themselves contested.

At first, it seems, Christians could sit lightly to the scriptures by comparison with Jews. They never established strict codes for the transmission of scriptural texts such as Jews already followed, and → Paul had argued that gentile Christians did not need to take on the Jewish practice of circumcision or the dietary laws prescribed in the Torah (→ Law), despite the scriptural basis of these commands. → Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch at the start of the 2nd century CE, wrote,

Certain people declared in my hearing, “Unless I can find a thing in our ancient records (archeiai), I refuse to believe it in the gospel”; and when I assured them that it is indeed in the ancient scriptures (gesgraptai), they retorted, “That has got to be proved.” But, for my part, my records are Jesus Christ; for me the sacrosanct records are his cross, and death and resurrection, and the faith that comes through him. (Ign. Phld. 8)

In a sense, then, the Jewish scriptures were relativized in relation to Christ and valued simply as prophetic testimony to him.

So perhaps it is not surprising that the 2nd century CE is marked by some Christian groups that treated the gospel as new revelation and contested dependence on scriptures that they came to regard as misleading, indeed as issuing, not from the ultimate, true God but from a lesser, or even fallen, Creator God. In detail that statement requires refinement: the various sects commonly designated “gnostic” had a variety of attitudes and approaches, and what lay at the basis of → Marcion’s critique of the Jewish scriptures continues to be debated. However, the following statements offer a starting point for further exploration:

The Epistle to Flora, written by → Ptolemy, a follower of the gnostic → Valentinus, distinguishes, as did other early Christians, among commandments that were interim, intended to deal with hard-hearted Israel, and no longer in force; commandments that were moral and universal, fulfilled by the Savior and still to be followed; and commandments that were shadows or types of what was to come. What makes this different from the classic Christian position is that the letter identifies the interim laws as human, introduced by Moses and the elders, and the law of God as issuing neither from the devil, nor the perfect God revealed by Jesus, but the inferior Creator. Thus, the God of what became the Old Testament becomes a different God from the God of Jesus Christ.

Rediscovered gnostic texts, such as the Apocryphon of John, confirm the “upside-down” reading of Genesis, reported by → Irenaeus of Lyon, whereby the embodiment of wisdom, the serpent, provides the knowledge needed to escape the material world, the work of the inferior Creator God. Thus we have exploitation of the scriptures to confirm that the Creator God of the Bible is not the transcendent, spiritual God revealed by Jesus Christ.

Marcion seems to have taken to extremes the logic of the Pauline Epistles, which formed the core of his scriptural canon. The Jewish scriptures, he concluded, were to be rejected on the grounds that they reveal a God of wrath and judgment, whereas
the God of Jesus Christ was to be identified as a God of love. This is to oversimplify the complex issues raised by Marcion, but it is hardly surprising that he has sometimes been associated with gnostics. For all alike challenged the identification of the God of Jesus with the God of the Jewish scriptures. This made the claim to fulfilment of prophecy irrelevant and challenged continued allegiance to the Jewish writings traditionally accepted as scriptures.

Nor was it only the Jewish scriptures that figured in debate, for the circulation of various writings that claimed access to the real meaning of the new revelation in Jesus Christ complicated the identification of valid testimonies and authentic teaching, whereas Marcion argued for a more restricted list of books than those generally in use in the churches. These 2nd-century CE contests within the Christian movement had scripture at their heart, so it is perhaps not surprising that by the end of the century we can see a kind of authorized canon of scripture emerging, along with the articulation of an overarching scheme within which the scriptures were to be read and interpreted.

Irenaeus bears witness to a “rule of faith” that summarizes how God’s plan may be seen in retrospect through interpreting scripture in terms of the revelation of the divine purpose in Jesus Christ. This is spelled out in The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching and rehearsed in his great work, Against Heresies. There he accuses gnostics of taking apart a mosaic depicting a king and reassembling the pieces to portray a dog (Iren. Haer. 1.8.1) – for they failed to interpret according to the grand overarching plot that unifies the scriptures traditionally read by the church. A shorthand summary would go like this: → creation, → fall, → redemption, and consummation constitute the keys to understanding the purposes of the one and only God, whose “hands,” the word and the Spirit, have performed the divine intention, creating all things, inspiring the prophecies, becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ and sanctifying the church. The theme of “rearticulation,” so often treated as typical of Irenaeus’ theology, is to be seen as a focal point within that overarching scheme from beginning to end; the traditional Adam-Christ typology (already used by Paul and Justin) is thus developed to counter the perverse reading of Genesis offered by the → Gnostics. Fundamentally Irenaeus’ claim is that the churches throughout the world have received such traditions of interpretation, along with the collection of books in standard use. He possibly refers to collections of books as constituting an “old testament” and a “new testament”; if so, he was the first to do so, and indeed the inference may be incorrect, since the word still carries dispensational associations. Be that as it may, late 2nd century CE we find the basic shape of Christian scripture established and the classic framework of interpretation articulated.

Scholarship

It was in the 3rd century CE that biblical scholarship began to flourish, the most notable example being the massive works of → Origen. The allegorical approach that issued from his scholarship came to be controversial, yet the reaction itself emerged from debates within the same scholarly traditions; meanwhile, in the West, Augustine produced a handbook on biblical interpretation for Christian teachers.

These examples will represent for us the way educated Christians applied to the scriptures the techniques of exegesis used in rhetorical and philosophical schools for classics like Homer. Books lay at the heart of education systems in antiquity, and in response to Plato’s critique of the poets, educators sought moral and/or philosophical truths through interpretation of literature. In the same way, Christians discovered their teaching (= dogma or doctrina) about life, the way things are, and the right way of living through exegesis of the books generally used in the churches, books that had by now regained the sanctity long attributed to scripture by the Jews.

Origen was not the first systematic commentator. His Commentary on John engages in critical dialogue with an earlier commentary written by a gnostic, Heracleon. However, he was the most prolific Christian scholar of his time, being commissioned by a patron, Ambrosius, to produce learned works, especially commentaries on the scriptural books, and thus able to employ a large staff of stenographers and copyists. He learned Hebrew and assembled the huge volumes of the so-called Hexapla, setting out in parallel columns the original Hebrew, Hebrew transliterated into the Greek alphabet, the Septuagint, and various other available translations. This work has not survived, possibly because there was only ever one copy, which disappeared some centuries later along with the library he set up at Caesarea. Its production, however, testifies to his interest in the precise wording of the text. He adopted the Jewish point of view...
that there is nothing superfluous in the scriptures, and therefore every jot and tittle may have significance. The exact wording is what Origen meant by “literal,” and close attention to the wording was the foundation of his approach to exegesis.

Exegesis in detail is providing explanation. When books were handwritten, the first stage (to methodikon) was to agree the same wording, then to explain rare or archaic terms, then to consider how to construe the sentences, and identify figures of speech and explain their import. Ancient rhetoricians distinguished between the wording and the intention; they knew it was possible to say the same thing in different ways, so the wording was the dress in which the sense was presented for best effect. Thus, Origen could distinguish the intent of the Holy Spirit from the wording of the text, the wording sometimes raising difficulties. He regarded problems in the text as stumbling blocks deliberately inserted by the Holy Spirit in order to provoke the reader into searching for the moral or spiritual meaning. Analysis of the wording would alert the reader to metaphorical usage and other figures of speech, an indication that the text pointed beyond itself. Origen became notorious for allegorical interpretation, but sometimes it was overattentive to what he understood as the literal sense that generated what might be regarded as artificial or inappropriate exegesis. Much of Origen’s so-called allegory, however, arose out of the traditions of prophetic exegesis already discussed: a prophetic oracle was assumed to be a riddle whose reference was obscured until insights discerned the key, picking up clues from the wording through such things as metaphor or etymology.

The second stage (to historikon) was to provide explanations of allusions, characters, narratives, or other features of the text not immediately transparent. Historia meant more than history, and in-school exegesis encompassed all the investigation and research needed to explain myths and legends, geographical features, personalities, or anything else needed. It was an open invitation to digression, and a classic example is Origen’s pages of discussion about pearls when commenting on Matt 13:45–6. Yet it was this more than anything else that allowed the incorporation into his commentaries of those traditional Christian approaches already discussed. Explanation of the parallels, signs, and associations that revealed the prophetic implications of Old Testament narratives opened the way to identifying prefiguration (often referred to as typology). So when Origen produced his homilies on Joshua, a name that means “God saves” and to which “Jesus” was the Greek equivalent, it was not enough to focus on the history, for everything pointed forward or anticipated the fulfilment to come, and so the spiritual meaning related to Jesus Christ. Likewise Origen’s homilies on Leviticus treat the rules about sacrificial worship as referring to the sacrifice of Christ or to the spiritual sacrifices Christians should offer. Furthermore, seeing the unity of God’s plan running through all the books, as Irenaeus had, he treated this as vital for discerning the true meaning, allowing it to contribute to his allegorical approach – for somehow every jot and tittle had to have a meaning that was both useful and consistent with the overarching plot summarized in the rule of faith. Origen not only treated the whole of scripture as about Christ and/or the → salvation of the → soul, but also applied the same methods to the New Testament as to the Old: not only the parables also but the actions of Jesus could be treated as allegories.

In his De Principiis, especially Book 4, Origen outlines his view of the right approach to scripture and its interpretation. This has given rise to two areas of debate. The first concerns his discussion of three levels of interpretation, the literal, the moral, and the spiritual, and its relationship to his actual practice in commentaries and homilies. There he mainly seems to operate with two levels, literal and spiritual, and often provides a number of different suggestions concerning the spiritual meaning, including applications to the soul and its moral, spiritual advancement, as well as aspects of → Christology or → ecclesiology. The second question relates to his apparent identification of three kinds of readers for whom the three levels of meaning are intended: for example the literal for the simple minded. This was once treated as parallel to the gnostic tendency to differentiate three classes of people: those only concerned with the physical or material, the “psychic” or “soul people” (who are probably to be identified with ordinary Christians), and the spiritual, in other words the gnostics who knew the truth and belonged to the spiritual world. More recent studies suggest that Origen never meant that those who heard the scripture read belonged to fixed categories – rather, these represent stages in the spiritual journey of the believer (Torjesen, 1985). He certainly affirmed that scripture contains commandments that are to be literally followed, however advanced you may be,
but it was through exploring deeper meanings that the soul could advance morally and grow in spiritual understanding.

Origen did firmly believe that the traditions received from the apostles provided the framework for understanding scripture, but he also affirmed the importance of investigation, even speculation, where the answers to questions were not provided by tradition. This applied not only to philosophical questions, but also to the exegesis of scripture. It was through biblical exegesis that wisdom was acquired and exercised.

Reaction against Origen’s allegorical approach is associated with the so-called Antiochenes, to whom an alternative tradition of exegesis has sometimes been attributed. Specific treatment of the issue is found in a little treatise by Eustathius of Antioch called On the Witch of Endor and Against Origen; in the commentaries of → Theodore of Mopsuestia and → Theodoret of Cyrrhus, particularly their discussion of the problem text, Gal 4:25, where Paul appears to endorse allegory; and in the homilies of → John Chrysostom. Their underlying approach, however, betrays the same philological methods evidenced in Origen’s exegesis; their commentaries are packed with material belonging to to methodikon and to historikon – it is a debate within a common tradition.

The underlying assumptions on the basis of which they attack either Origen or allegory are revealed in a little handbook by Adrianos, Isagoge ad sacras scripturas (PG 98.1273–1312). This work sets out to analyze the particular literary characteristics and idioms of Hebrew texts. The first section deals with the dianoia (sense or intention) of scripture, inquiring in particular about how God’s energeiai (activities) are represented by human attributes – in other words, he deals with the anthropomorphic language of the Bible, working with the standard rhetorical distinction between wording and sense. No more than Origen does he take literally references to God’s eyes, mouth, hands, feet, anger, or passions, nor indeed to God sitting, walking, or being clothed, though he never employs the term “allegory” to describe what he is doing when he suggests that it is God’s knowledge that is expressed in the phrase “God’s eyes on us” and God’s mercy in the suggestion that God has ears to hear.

The second section concentrates on wording and style, noting the use of metonymy, epitasis, parable, simile and metaphor, rhetorical questions, and so on. The third section looks at the principles of synthesis, and, after providing examples of ellipsis, tautology, transposition, and so on (every point discussed being illustrated by quotations from the scriptural text throughout the treatise), he turns to tropoi (tropes), covering the great list of figures of speech distinguished in ancient theory. Beginning with metaphor, parable, synkrisis (comparison), and hypodeigma (example), the list goes on through periphrasis (circumlocution), anakephalaiosis (summary), prosopopoia (personification), and hyperbole, then irony, sarcasm, enigma – I forbear providing the full list of around two dozen. In the midst of all this appears allegory treated to but four lines where, for example, hyperbole merits 16. In other words, allegory is recognized as a figure of speech, but not treated as very important. In the classic passages on allegory, particularly those which discuss Paul’s use of the word allegoroumena (things being allegorized) in Gal 4:25, the Antiochenes accept allegory as a figure of speech, but maintain the principle that it must only be identified in texts where something in the text itself demands it. Adrianos sees no need to press that point, but this distinction between “compositional allegory” and allegory used by an interpreter potentially to turn every text into an expression of something other than its obvious meaning was one key point in the attack on Origen.

But it was not the only one. The earliest text that attacks the use of allegory, Eustathius’, On the Witch of Endor, in fact accuses Origen of being too literal, of paying too much attention to the verbal details of the text, so drawing false conclusions by not attending to the narrative logic of the whole. Eustathius argues that the story does not imply that Samuel came up from Hades at all – rather the witch played upon the mad mind of Saul so that he seemed to see Samuel: one should certainly not make deductions about the resurrection, as Origen had. In an aside Eustathius suggests that it is scandalous to take this story literally and allegorize other key biblical narratives.

Two points are raised here:

(1) Piecemeal interpretation that does not take seriously the akolouthia (sequence) of the text is rejected. Adrianos confirms that meaning is grounded in the akolouthia; he uses the analogy of the steersman – the interpreter is blown about if not fixed on the goal. One must begin with the normal sense of the words, but one gets a sure and certain outcome by paying attention to scriptural idioms – the figures, tropes, and so on – that he has detailed, and by taking the sequence seriously.
The **dianoia** (mind or intent) of the words must be earthed in the order found in the body of the text, and the **theòria** (insight) must be grounded in the shape (**schéma**) of the body, and thus the limbs and their synthesis can be discerned properly, and nothing is seen beyond the body. Adrianos seems to be suggesting that any insight into the meaning of the text must inhere in the text looked at in its completeness. Now clearly this usually means that, as Adrianos puts it, the **dianoia** corresponds with the **hypothesis** of the wording so that interpretation is according to the **lexis** – examples of the application of this principle to prophetic texts, such as Jer 31:31ff., show that the prophetic meaning is the literal meaning. It is not that the Antiochenes eschewed deeper meanings, still less prophetic meanings. Rather they saw a closer relationship between such meanings and the shape of the text itself. Allegory took words as discrete tokens and by decoding the text found a spiritual meaning that often bore little relation to the construction of the wording or narrative. Antiochene exegetes embraced typology and prophecy, morals and dogma, but only by allowing that the sequence of the text mirrored or imaged the realities discerned by **theòria**. The whole **schéma** is important.

(2) Offense is taken, particularly, at the allegorization of a catalogue of key narratives that constantly reappear when charges against allegory are rehearsed.

This catalogue includes the narratives of creation and paradise, and the expectation of the → resurrection of the → body and the → kingdom of God. This challenge is evident not only in the Antiochenes, but also in → Epiphanius of Salamis and → Jerome. The reaction against Origen was to do with the perceived threat to the overarching narrative of the rule of faith that gave the scriptures their unity. This was not to be treated as a mirage or parable. The talking serpent was not, after all, fatal; for the speaker was, of course, the devil in serpent’s guise, as Diodore insisted. The Antiochenes cared more about the narrative logic of the whole biblical text than about historicity or literalism, as some modern scholars have assumed. This is demonstrated by their anxiety about the very aspects of the biblical story modern historians would be most disposed to treat as mythological.

→ Augustine of Hippo’s *De Doctrina Christiana* is not a doctrinal textbook, but a handbook for the formation of “experts” who will communicate the scriptures in the church. For, though written some 20 years after he began the project, Book 4 provides the ultimate clue to his aim – to enable a biblically based rhetoric to proclaim Christ, educate Christians, and change lives. He repudiates the schoolbook rhetorical tricks he had himself taught before his conversion, instead showing how the scriptures, by uniting wisdom and eloquence, provide the exemplary material the Christian teacher needs. Interpretation is about communication, not just ascertaining what the meaning is; for scripture is to be performed. This is an indication that the work is meant to provide an educational handbook analogous to those using the pagan classics to train rhetoricians. The Christian educators Augustine seeks to form replace that canon with the canon of scripture.

The work as a whole opens as if it were a system of rules for the interpretation of scripture, and certainly exegetical techniques, borrowing the established practices of explanation according to *to historikon* and *to methodikon*, occupy Books 2 and 3. Augustine is as skilled as anyone else in identifying and listing parable, metaphor, → catechesis, irony, and so on, and affirms logic and dialectics, mathematics and technology, the liberal arts, historical enquiry and chronology, natural science, astronomy, and so on, as providing important information for learned exegesis. Book 1, however, might appear to be doing something different, focusing as it does on exposition of the → Trinity and the → incarnation with few allusions to scripture. Yet even this is pertinent to his exegetical program. For what Augustine is doing is shaped by the distinction between subject matter and words, or in his terms, res and *signa*. The res of scripture is its essential subject matter, and this is what Augustine treats in Book 1, turning to the wording or “signs” that give expression to the subject matter in Books 2 and 3. He identifies as the fundamental res, and therefore the exegetical key to unlock obscure passages, the twofold dominical command: “Love God and love your neighbor.” With this as the criterion, he exercises on biblical narratives, such as David’s adultery, the kind of moral criticism perfected by his pagan colleagues with reference to the classics.

**The Bible and Doctrine**

Doctrinal formation was fundamentally a process of arguing about the true meaning of scripture, using the same kind of exegetical techniques already observed. This will be illustrated by considering one particular debate in some detail, and another in brief.
The 3rd-century CE Monarchian controversies were provoked by reaction against so-called Logos theology. This conceptualization appears to offer a coherent picture of how the one transcendent God related to the material creation and became incarnate in Jesus Christ, but Justin’s use of the expression “second God” (Just. 1 Apol. 13.3) reveals its ambiguities. It was on biblical grounds that the Monarchians challenged what was itself forged out of scriptural texts.

In the Dial. 61–62, Justin quotes Prov 8:21–36 in full to justify the claim that before all creatures God begat a beginning, which is named in scripture, now the glory of the Lord, now the Son, now wisdom, now an angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos. He confirms this by reference to Gen 1:26 and 3:22: “Let us make humankind in our own image” and “Behold, Adam has become one of us.” Thus two were involved in the creation. Furthermore, the one named wisdom by Solomon was the Word found in the prologue to John’s Gospel. The genesis of the Logos concept from scripture needs emphasizing against the assumption that its principal background is Hellenistic philosophy. But it was scripture itself that raised questions about it.

This is clear from the sources, not least the picture given in → Novatian’s De Trinitate (Trin. 30): he couples together those who say Jesus Christ is the Father himself and those who turned him into a man only: noticing that it is written that there is only one God, some conclude that Christ is a man, while others argue that, if there is one God and Christ is God, then the Father is Christ; otherwise two gods are introduced, contrary to the scriptures. Like Novatian, modern accounts tend to bracket two different moves as Monarchian: the “dynamic Monarchianism” of Theodotus and his followers, which claimed Jesus was a mere man empowered by God, and the “modalist Monarchianism” of Noetus and Sabellius, which resolved the problems by speaking of the one God appearing in different modes, now as Father, now as Son, now as Holy Spirit. It seems likely, however, that the notorious → Paul of Samosata combined both viewpoints.

Be that as it may, the sources indicate that the arguments went beyond simple appeal to the fact that scripture affirms but one God. Extracts reproduced in Eusebius of Caesarea’s history of the affair (Eus. Hist. eccl. 5.28) accuse Theodotus of utilizing syllogisms and working with corrupt texts of scripture – clearly deductive argument and debate about the precise form and exegesis of particular texts was at work. This is confirmed by 3rd-century CE texts opposing modalism, such as the Hippolytan treatises, Contra Noetum and Refutatio omnium haeresium, and → Tertullian’s Adversus Praxeum. Scripture was central with exegesis and counter-exegesis, and appeals to proof texts from both Old and New Testaments.

Thus, Tertullian calls to witness 1 Cor 15:27–28, which speaks of the Son reigning until God has put all his enemies under his feet and then being subjected himself, so that God may be all in all – clearly there are two sharing the monarchy. Prov 8:22ff. and Gen 1 are woven into a description of God’s internal conversation and the agency of creation; while the latter part of Tertullian’s treatise works through the Gospel of John to demonstrate the “dispensation” or “economy” whereby there are two, yet “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

But what is clear – even clearer in the Contra Noetum – is the need to answer the Monarchians’ appeal to scripture texts. Most of them come from what Christians were already calling the Old Testament: “You shall have no other gods but me” (Exod 20:3); “I am the first and the last, and besides me there is no other” (Isa 44:6). Bar 3:15–37 seems to have been a particularly important testimony:

This is our God. No other will be compared to him. He found out the whole way of knowledge and gave it to Jacob his son and to Israel who is his beloved. Afterwards, he was seen on earth and conversed with men.

From this Noetus apparently deduced that the God who is the one alone was subsequently seen and talked with human beings, and so he felt himself bound to “submit to suffering” the single God that exists. Rom 9:5, which seems to describe Christ as Lord over all, clinched his argument.

The response to these Monarchian proof texts was to accept that there is only one God in scripture, but neither Tertullian nor Hippolytus was prepared to scrap the “economy.” The texts must be put in context, they say, aduding indications in each passage that point to Jesus Christ. Both writers are deeply troubled by the notion that the transcendent God comes into being, suffers, and dies. It is the “economy” that allows the invisible and impassible God to become visible and passible in his Son. The peroration of the Contra Noetum sums it all up with evident echoes of scripture: the Word is at the Father’s side, and is the one whom the Father sent for the salvation of humankind. The Word is the one proclaimed through the law and
the prophets, the one who became the “new man” from the Virgin and Spirit, not disowning what was human about himself – hungry, exhausted, weary, thirsty, troubled when at prayer, sleeping on a pillow, sweating in agony and wanting release from suffering, betrayed, flogged, mocked, bowing his head, and breathing his last. He took upon himself our infirmities, as Isaiah had said. But he was raised from the dead and is himself the resurrection and the life. He was caroled by angels and gazed on by shepherds, received God’s witness (“This is my beloved Son”), changed water into wine, reprieved the sea, raised Lazarus, forgave sins. This is God who became man on our behalf – he to whom the Father subjected all things. “To him be glory and power as well as to the Father and the Holy Spirit in the holy church, both now and always and from age to age. Amen.” The arguments were demonstrably about articulating the implications of scripture.

The role of scriptural interpretation in the Arian controversy has been widely discussed. In brief, → Arius has been treated as a “literalist” on the grounds that Prov 8:22, “The Lord created me,” led him to insist that the Logos was a creature. What is noticeable, however, is that neither side ever questioned the by now traditional identification of wisdom personified as the one incarnate in Jesus Christ – hardly a literal interpretation in modern terms. Replies to Arius debated the meaning of ekptisen, which he took to mean “created from nothing,” appealing to its equivalence to “begat” in verse 25, or suggesting it meant something more like “possessed.” Another response was to suggest that the Logos was “created” when he became incarnate – the text was not after all about his genesis. But Athanasius’ major response was to adduce the sense of scripture as a whole, drawing in many other texts to illustrate the point that, although subject to weaknesses and passions when incarnate, he was in himself homoousios with the Father, an admittedly nonscriptural term now required to encapsulate scripture’s import.

Historiography

The traditional four senses of scripture were mapped out in the volumes of H. de Lubac’s Exégèse Médievale (1959), it being generally assumed that these had precursors in patristic exegesis. A hostile environment for these pre-modern techniques of biblical interpretation had been created by modern historico-critical approaches, as is clear in R.P.C. Hansons’ Allegory and Event (1959), a comprehensive yet highly critical study of Origen’s allegory. At the same time the Antiochenes were generally approved for their reaction against allegory and their focus on history, almost as if they were the precursors of modernity’s historical interests. On the grounds that history was respected, real correspondences being discovered between events in sacred time, typology was reclaimed and distinguished from allegory; J. Daniélou (1959) was highly influential in this regard. Allegory and typology were not, however, distinguished thus by the Fathers themselves, and subsequent detailed studies of both figural reading and allegorical methods gradually enabled more sophisticated understanding of patristic practices.

A new approach came with the “philological turn,” anticipated by R.M. Grant (1957), but really initiated by B. Neuschäfer (1987) and F. Young (in R. Williams, 1989), followed later by F. Young (1997).

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Frances Young
Zosimus (Historian)

Zosimus (fl. 450–500 CE) can be dated to the second half of the 5th or in the first two decades of the 6th century CE. Before writing his history, he had been a counsel to the crown (advocatus fisci), the highest position for a barrister, and he carried the honorary title of comes (“count”). He must therefore have been well trained in rhetoric and law. His history is entitled νέα ἱστορία/nea historia (New History), the meaning of which is unclear (contemporary history? history of a new kind?). It is the only work of history from late antiquity that expresses an anti-Christian vision of decline.

Methods Used

Originally Zosimus planned to narrate Roman history from → Augustus until his own time (see 4.37.1), but Book 6 breaks off just before the sack of 410 CE is to be narrated. Already Photius (Bibl. 98) knew the New History with this ending; it is thus likely that Zosimus never finished the work. After a brief overview of history until Augustus, Book 1 provides a potted history of the Roman Empire until 270 CE (1.6–46), before the narrative slows down to chronicle the reigns from Claudius II until the accession of Diocletian (1.47–72). Book 2 opens with a partially lost antiquarian description of the “Secular Games,” the celebration of which is linked with the good fortunes of the empire:

When → Diocletian had abdicated and the ceremony was neglected, the empire slowly crumbled and was stealthily barbarized for the greater part, as events have shown us. (Zos. Hist. 2.7.1)

The rest of the book chronicles the violent rise of Constantine, whose death is followed by a series of murders and usurpations. Constantius II is the last man standing (353 CE). He serves as the negative foil to → Julian the Apostate. Book 3 chronicles the accession of Julian as a Caesar, then as an emperor, before offering a detailed account of the Persian campaign of Julian. In the first part, Julian appears as the vanquisher of the barbarians. Although the Persian campaign ends in disaster and death, Zosimus still drives home his point by recording how the Roman army, ignorant of Julian’s death, defeated the Persians (3.29.2) in the last battle of the campaign. His death is such a blow that Zosimus depicts it as the only time in Roman history that the empire has failed to reconquer the lost territories (3.22). The fourth book narrates the reigns of Valentinian and Valens, and most prominently Theodosius I. Theodosius has a double nature: inclined to luxuriousness, he can get himself to decisive action if forced to (4.40.2). Even if he is credited with some good actions, the portrait is negative: his luxuriousness is the prime cause of Roman decline. This is then contrasted with the wars of the period, both against barbarians and against usurpers. Most damning, in Zosimus’ eyes, is the fact that Theodosius would have “barbarized” the army (4.30–32). The book closes on Theodosius’ exhortation to the Roman Senate to convert to Christianity and Zosimus’ note that paganism guaranteed the safety of the city for 1200 years – a clear hint at the sack of Rome in 410 CE. Book 5 opens with the strife between the two parts of the empire and the wars against barbarians in 395–404 CE. In particular the → Goth Gainas receives much attention (5.18–22). In the middle of the book, with the shift toward Olympiodorus as source (5.26), the focus is on the troubles in Italy and the West, which builds up toward the various sieges of Rome (408–410 CE). Book 6, finally, continues the narrative but, as said, breaks off shortly before the sack of 410 CE.

Historiography

The study of Zosimus has been put on a new footing by the edition, translation, and commentary of F. Paschoud (197–1989; 2003; for overviews of earlier scholarship, see Paschoud, 1989; 2003). With A. Baldini, he has formulated the standard view of Zosimus. Focusing on his use of sources, they insist on the derivative nature of the work and its low quality (Baldini, 1984; Paschoud, 2003; Baldini & Paschoud, 2014). Zosimus would have copied out Eunapius (fl. second half of 4th cent. CE) until 404 and from 408 CE onward Olympiodorus (mid-5th cent. CE). Both of these sources would have relied on a pagan senatorial history, by Nicomachus Flavianus (c. 334–394 CE), which would explain the presence of providentialistic, anti-Christian arguments throughout the narrative. The confusions in Zosimus’ account are, then, due to his failure to understand his sources properly and due to his muddled mind. This position is too rigid and should be rejected.

(1) There is clear proof that Zosimus, even when relying on Eunapius and Olympiodorus, has constructed his own narrative with its own particular
focus. For example, the providentialistic sections are clearly inserted by Zosimus himself and not a pagan senatorial source, as they occur in the parts ascribed to Eunapius and Olympiodorus. The sack of Rome in 410 CE is announced at the end of Book 4, in the part based on Eunapius, but the sack itself is narrated on the basis of Olympiodorus. See below section 4 for the thematic interests of Zosimus throughout his narrative.

(2) There are clear differences with the extant fragments of Eunapius and Olympiodorus. The providentialistic arguments found in Zosimus are absent in the excerpts of Eunapius and in his Lives of the Sophists (Hartmann, 2014). The fragments of Olympiodorus do not contain the aggressive anti-Christian tone of Zosimus. As this tone is present throughout the entire narrative of Zosimus, it must be his own (Nuffelen, 2004, 97, with further references).

(3) In order to reduce Zosimus to a bad copy of only two sources, one has to argue that the first edition of Eunapius’ history started with Augustus (Baldini, 1984). This requires an acrobatic interpretation of Photius’ comments on Eunapius’ history (Phot. Bibl. 77), who states clearly that Eunapius’ history started with Claudius II. It remains most plausible that Zosimus relied on a set of various sources up until the starting point of Eunapius in 270 CE (Blockley, 1980).

(4) The view on Zosimus’ intellectual capacities is too dim (see already Speck, 1991). He cites various sources he has used, such as Polybius (1.11; 1.57.1; 5.20.4), the Neoplatonist philosopher Syrianus (4.18.4), Herodotus (4.20.3), Asinius Quadratus (5.27.1–2), and Psander (5.29.3). Some of these could indeed be cited second hand through Eunapius and Olympiodorus, but one should not forget Zosimus was a barrister and thus had received a rhetorical and legal training. He therefore had a certain literary culture, and it is not unreasonable to expect an aspiring historian to be acquainted with, for example, Polybius and Herodotus.

(5) The attribution of all anti-Christian, senatorial elements to Nicomachus Flavianus, mediated through Eunapius and Olympiodorus, leads to a series of problems that then need to be solved by constructing hypothesis upon hypothesis, such as the existence of an extended version of Nicomachus Flavianus (Paschoud, 2003, lxx). This goes beyond what is methodologically acceptable (see Cameron, 2011, 627–690). When freed from the restrictive view of F. Paschoud, Zosimus will appear as an original voice in late ancient historiography. He relied on two main sources, Eunapius and Olympiodorus, but the first part of Book 1 (1.1–46) relies on other, unknown sources. He made his own selection of the material, inspired by his own ideas.

Main Ideas

Zosimus’ history can be termed “pagan apologetics of history” and has been compared to Christian texts such as De civitate Dei of → Augustine of Hippo and the Historiae of Orosius (Paschoud, 1975; Cracco Ruggini, 1976; 1977). So much is evident from the preface. The history opens with a reference to Polybius, who had cast himself as the chronicler of the rise of Rome. Zosimus, then, appears as the witness of the demise of the empire (1.1.1 and 1.57.1; see also 1.58.4, 2.7, 3.32.6, 4.21.3, 4.59.3). The reference also serves another purpose: Polybius is said to have demonstrated the course of history by the events themselves (1.1.1). Zosimus equally maintains a strict focus on events (see 1.1.2). This explains the sometimes very detailed nature of his narrative: history itself is to bear out the truth of his bleak view on the current state of the empire. To this end, Zosimus marshals some traditional opinions. Military defeat is the consequence of moral failure of the leader, and, conversely, the presence of a good emperor like Julian leads to success (see 4.21). Blame is shifted to bad emperors and officials, in particular Constantine and Theodosius I. Zosimus seems to entertain the idea that there is an innate strength in the Romans that can still assure victory and valor, even if it has to battle against the bad influences of their leaders. For example, he attributes the initial victories over the barbarians of Theodosius I to his generals (4.27.1) and sets their virtue against the luxuriousness of Theodosius. The story of the valor of → Geronius, who inspires ancestral valor in his soldiers (4.36.4), is again contrasted with Theodosius. In 2.51, Zosimus notes how Roman soldiers fought with republican bravery. Although the history of the republic is not discussed, it forms the implicit, positive foil against which the imperial decline is measured. This becomes explicit in the negative view on monarchy expressed in 1.5: it is a constitution that makes the fortune of the state dependent on the qualities of a single individual. Such “republican” sentiments were not uncommon in late antiquity (Kaldellis, 2005; Roberto, 2003–2005). It also becomes visible in antiquarian digressions, linking the decline of republican institutions to the
military decline of the empire (e.g. secular games: 2.1–7; pontifex maximus: 4.36; sacrifices: 4.59; see also 5.27.1, 5.29.1–3). For Zosimus, the most visible aspect of the decline is the influx of barbarians. Good emperors succeed in keeping them out, while a bad one like Theodosius I allows the barbarization of the army (4.30–32). Zosimus’ view on barbarians is bleak: they are disorderly and dangerous (4.57–59), greedy (5.13.1), and tempestuous (5.14.4). Zosimus often uses the expression “barbarian” simply to designate enemies of Rome. The New History is, in fact, the ancient basis from which the modern trope of the barbarization of the army in late antiquity has developed. Occasional exceptions of barbarians who are pagan and virtuous (Generidus: 5.46) only confirm the rule. The survival of the empire is explicitly linked to adherence to paganism (4.59.2), and the narrative is littered with oracles and signs (e.g. 4.36.5; 4.18.1–2, 4.21, 4.59.3; a full list in Paschoud, 2003, lxxii–lxxiv). These demonstrate that the gods are still alive and capable of influencing events: Athens, depicted as a pagan city, is miraculously saved (4.18.2, 5.6); statues of the gods survive destruction (5.24.8); Serena and Stilicho die violent deaths as a punishment for their hatred of the gods (5.38). In a famous episode, Zosimus hints at the consciousness that even Christians have of the power of the gods: the promise that Etruscan diviners can ward off Alaric during the first siege of Rome (408 CE), on condition, however, of the restoration of pagan cult (5.41.1–3). The argument is, obviously, anti-Christian, and Zosimus makes clear that he has a low opinion of that religion and its followers: a striking episode is the conclusion of Book 5, where Christian officials are said to be willing to violate oaths to God but not to the emperor (5.31.2). Nevertheless, there is little detail on anti-Christian measures taken by emperors or on ecclesiastical history. Zosimus also offers little information on Julian’s → pagan restoration or the anti-pagan policies of Theodosius I (but see 4.37.3; 5.8.2; 5.23; 5.46.3). Throughout, the narrative remains politico-military, and Zosimus thus pursues clearly his Polybian focus on the military demise of the empire due to the abandonment of traditional cult. This is also evidenced in the fact that he has left out digressions and material on other topics he found in Eunapius and Olympiodorus. Zosimus writes from an Eastern, Constantinopolitan perspective. This is reflected in attention to the history of → Constantinople. He depicts it as having been founded by Constantine when wanting to avoid the blame for having killed his son Crispus and his wife Fausta (2.30–32). One could be tempted to notice here the Romulus and Remus theme: in both cases, the foundation of the city goes hand in hand with a family feud. Zosimus digs up an oracle that supposedly announces the rise of Constantinople and its oppressive taxation (2.37). On a positive note, its expansion by Julian is noticed (3.2–3). As indicated above, none of these elements is unique to Zosimus. Exceptional is their confluence into a work of history and the single-mindedness with which such a reading of the past is pursued.

History of Reception

Notwithstanding its clear anti-Christian tone, Zosimus seems to have been assured an immediate reception. He was probably used by the Eustathius of Epiphaneia in the early 6th century CE. The first certain use is by the church historian Evagrius Scholasticus, at the end of the 6th century CE, who refutes the anti-Constantinian arguments of Zosimus (Eva. Schol. Hist. eccl. 3.40–41). He was used by John of Antioch (early 7th cent. CE) and is well known in the 9th century CE (Excerpta constantiniana; Photius; Suda). Nevertheless, only one manuscript is preserved: the Vaticanus graecus 156. In modern Europe, Zosimus was first and foremost perceived as an enemy of Christianity, and hence little value was attributed to his account. Only slowly has its value as a historical source been appreciated. Zosimus is now seen as a key source for the history of the 3rd–5th centuries CE, even if one has to remain attentive to errors and polemical distortions (Paschoud, 2003, lxxv–ci).

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