

# ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XII

HELSINKI 1978 HELSINGFORS

I N D E X

Jaakko Frösén	Le transport du blé et le rôle des ἐπίπλοοι.....	5
Paavo Hohti	Einige Bemerkungen über die Aischines-Papyri.....	19
Iiro Kajanto	The Hereafter in Ancient Christian Epigraphy and Poetry.....	27
Saara Lilja	Descriptions of Human Appearance in Pliny's Letters.....	55
Ulla Nyberg	Über inschriftliche Abkürzungen der gotischen und humanistischen Schriftperioden.....	63
Martti Nyman	On the Alleged Variation <i>dēlēniō</i> ~ <i>dēlīniō</i> .....	81
Teivas Oksala	Warum wollte Vergil die Aeneis verbrennen?.....	89
Tuomo Pekkanen	Critical and Exegetical Notes on Tac. Germ. ....	101
Leena Pietilä-Castrén	Some Aspects of the Life of Lucius Mummius Achaicus.....	115
Eeva Ruoff-Väänänen	The Roman Senate and Criminal Jurisdiction during the Roman Republic.....	125
Juhani Sarsila	Some Notes on <i>virtus</i> in Sallust and Cicero.....	135
Heikki Solin	Analecta epigraphica L - LVI.....	145
Holger Thesleff	Notes on the New Epicharmean 'Iatrology'.....	153
Toivo Viljamaa	Livy 1,47,1-7: A Note on the Historical Infinitive.....	159
Henrik Zilliacus	Euripides Medeia 214-221 und Ennius	167
De novis libris iudicia	.....	173

THE HEREAFTER IN ANCIENT  
CHRISTIAN EPIGRAPHY AND POETRY

I i r o    K a j a n t o

The eschatological ideas in Christian epitaphs, for all their importance, have been little explored. The standard handbooks of Christian epigraphy, C.M. Kaufmann<sup>1</sup> and F. Grossi Gondi,<sup>2</sup> give them only a summary treatment. R. Lattimore, it is true, discussed the problems in more detail.<sup>3</sup> But I hope to be able to prove that some of his views and interpretations are not tenable. A. Stuiber, a theologian, not an epigraphist, utilized epigraphical material in his monograph on the idea of the intermediate state in the ancient Church.<sup>4</sup> Part of his interpretations are likewise challengable.

The ideas of after-life found in epitaphs can be properly studied only in connection with the theological thought of the period. It is unthinkable that the writers of the epitaphs should have ventured radical innovations in a world as delicate as that of religious ideas. In addition to patristic literature, Christian poetry should also be considered. It is indeed one of the aims of the present paper to show that epigraphy may here have conformed with Christian poetry even more than it did with the Christian fathers.

---

1 Handbuch der altchristlichen Epigraphik, 1917, 198-209.

2 Trattato di epigrafia cristiana, 1920, 237-241.

3 Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs, 1962<sup>2</sup>, 304-316.

4 Refrigerium interim. Die Vorstellungen vom Zwischenzustand und die frühchristliche Grabeskunst, Theophaneia 11, 1957, 105-120.

Development of the ideas of the hereafter  
in Christian antiquity

In the New Testament, the basic eschatological ideas were the resurrection of the body, Christ's Second Coming, which was believed to be imminent, and the Last Judgement. As yet, little attention was given to the intermediate state between death and resurrection.<sup>5</sup> In Paul, there may be some allusions to it, but the interpretation of the relevant passages is far from certain.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, in late Judaism there had arisen the belief that the departed spirits were confined to the sheol or the Hades until the Day of Judgement. Originally there was no difference between good and evil souls. All shared the same shadowy existence. Before long, however, the Hades was differentiated into an interim place of reward or punishment, according to the merits of the soul.<sup>7</sup> This idea was echoed in the New Testament in the parable of the Dives and Lazarus, Luke 16,19-31. Here "Abraham's bosom", the place of rest for the beggar, represents that part of the Hades where the good were rewarded. A chasm separated it from the place where the Dives was being tortured. Yet nothing in the story suggests that it was only the souls of the rich man and the beggar that were carried off to the Hades.

In the subsequent period, Christ's Second Coming fading into ever more distant future, these somewhat vague ideas of after-life underwent elaboration at the hands of people schooled in Greek philosophical thought. The late Judaic idea about the sheol or the Hades and the Greek conviction of the immortality of the soul combined to produce the doctrine of the intermediate state. Body and soul were different entities. Upon a person's death, they were separated. The body was left in the earth, to be resurrected at Doomsday. The soul,

---

5 So in the crucial Paulinian passages on resurrection, I Cor. 15 and I Thess. 4,13-17. In the latter passage, the dead are claimed to be "sleeping". For the radical contrast between the Biblical belief in resurrection and the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul, see O. Cullman, *Unsterblichkeit der Seele und Auferstehung der Toten*, *ThZeitschr.* 12 (1956) 126-152.

6 Phil. 1,23 and II Cor. 5,1-5.

7 Stuiber (fn. 4) 17sqg.

stripped of the flesh, was carried off to the Hades to enjoy rest or to be subjected to retribution in anticipation of general resurrection and the reunification of the body and soul. Only then would Heaven and Hell be opened. The Christian idea of the intermediate state was thus dualistic. It was only resurrection that would put an end to this dualism.

The martyrs were an important exception.<sup>8</sup> Their souls were thought to ascend to Heaven immediately after their martyrdom. Even this idea came from late Judaism.<sup>9</sup> In the New Testament, the crucial passage is Rev. 6,9-11, "I saw under the altar (scil., in Heaven) the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held..." Their number was still to be increased by "their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were..." In the age of the Apostolic Fathers, Polycarp of Smyrna argued that the martyrs "have now reached a well-earned place at the side of the Lord whose pains they shared."<sup>10</sup> The Acts of the martyrdom of Polycarp record his prayer that he may be received the very same day in the presence of God.<sup>11</sup> In these writings, it was not yet clearly stated that it was the s o u l of the martyr that was taken to Heaven. From a somewhat later period, the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas report the dream of another martyr, Saturus, about Paradise to which he was due to be admitted. Here dualism is already explicit, *exivimus de carne*.<sup>12</sup> Paradise as described by him was a place full of light, a typical *locus amoenus*, where the souls enjoyed the Beatific Vision, the company of God and Christ.<sup>13</sup> But it was still the souls of only the martyrs that were

---

8 Ibid. 40-42.

9 Thus the famous Seven Maccabeans and their mother, victims of Antiochus' cruelty, went straight to God after their death, IV Macc. 16,25; 17,18; 18,23.

10 Epist. 9.

11 The Acts of the Christian Martyrs, ed. by H. Musurillo, 1972, 14.

12 Musurillo's edition (see above), 11,2.

13 Ibid. 11,5 *Factum est nobis spatium grande, quod tale fuit quasi viridiarium arbores habens rosae et omnigenus flores, etc.*

raised there.<sup>14</sup>

The attitude of the Latin Fathers is important for us because most of them wrote in the very same period in which Christian epigraphy was flourishing. Dualism of body and soul was by now an established doctrine. Tertullian upholds the traditional ideas. Before resurrection, the souls stayed in the Hades, where they were either punished or rewarded. The place of reward was called *refrigerium interim*. Only the martyrs' souls were already in Heaven.<sup>15</sup> Similar ideas were advocated by the majority of the Latin Fathers. Lactantius argued that the souls would be judged only at Doomsday. Prior to resurrection, good and evil souls were kept in appropriate places.<sup>16</sup> Hilarius made use of the Biblical expression of Abraham's bosom to describe the intermediate state between death and resurrection.<sup>17</sup> In one passage, he recorded the descent of the souls *ad inferos* upon death.<sup>18</sup>

Augustine's position is not equally unambiguous, and scholars have often come to different conclusions as to his eschatology.<sup>19</sup> On the whole, however, and despite some hesitation in regard to the exact nature of the hereafter, he seems to stand by the traditional doctrine. Between death and the resurrection of the body, the souls were kept *abditis receptaculis*, having rest or suffering tribulation earned by their conduct in life.<sup>20</sup> Essential for Augustine was, however, the immense difference in quality between pre- and post-

---

14 Cf., however, 13,8 *et coepimus illic multos fratres cognoscere sed et martyras*, which may imply that not all the brethren were martyrs.

15 Cf. especially De anima 55 and 58 and the comments of J.H. Wasznik (1947). *Refrigerium interim* in monog. 10.

16 Inst. 7,21,7; cf. 7,7,13. For the old Judaic idea, adopted by Lactantius, according to which the sinners would be excluded from resurrection, cf. Stuiber (fn. 4) 74.

17 Tract. Psalm. 120,12.

18 Tract. Psalm. 138,22.

19 Cf. A. Portalié, Augustin, DTC I.1 (1931) 2444sg.

20 Enchir. 109; cf. civ. 12,9 *secretis animarum receptaculis sedibusque requiescit*.

resurrectional reward or punishment.<sup>21</sup> He is even occasionally uncertain whether the Saints were already in Heaven.<sup>22</sup> Later Fathers were explicit on this point.<sup>23</sup>

From the last century of antiquity, we may cite Cassiodorus as an exponent of the conventional ideas about the intermediate state of the souls between death and resurrection.<sup>24</sup>

In the Latin theological thought between 200-600, the traditional eschatological ideas were thus dominant. The souls of ordinary Christians had to await resurrection in a separate Hades. Only the Saints' souls were already in Paradise.

The idea of martyrdom, however, underwent a change of great consequence. The martyrs were thought to have wiped out all their sins by their death for faith.<sup>25</sup> Hence the very sinlessness of a soul could be held to guarantee its immediate ascent to Heaven.<sup>26</sup> One of the earliest advocates of the idea was Cyprian, who argued that though a man, who was prepared to suffer a martyr's death, should die prematurely, his faith would not be without its due reward.<sup>27</sup> But he continued in an even more liberal vein, *in persecutione militia* (i.e. martyrdom), *in pace conscientia coronatur*. Thus a good and virtuous Christian life could be claimed to suffice for an immediate enjoyment of celestial bliss. Especially after the discontinuance of the persecutions, when there were no longer martyrs,

---

21 Cf. sermo 283,5: *Sicut enim plurimum distat inter laetitias miseriasve somniantium et vigilantium; ita multum interest inter tormenta vel gaudia mortuorum et resurgentium; similarly in evang. Ioh. 49, 10 . Cf. Kari Elisabeth Børresen, Augustin, interprète du dogme de la résurrection, Studia Theologica 23 (1969) 151.*

22 *Retract.* 1,14,2.

23 Gennadius, *De eccl. dogm.* 79, *post ascensionem Domini ad caelos, omnium sanctorum animae cum Christo sunt; cf. Isidorus, sentent. liber primus, 14,16; Greg. Magnus, mon. 4.*

24 *Expos. Psalm. 24,12 quia iustis hominibus exutis corpore non statim perfecta beatitudo datur.*

25 Cf. Tertull., *apol.* 50,16 *omnia enim huic operi (i.e., martyrdom) delicta donantur.*

26 H.v. Camphausen, *Die Idee des Martyriums in der alten Kirche*, 1936, 140sqg.

27 *Epist. ad. Fortun.* 13.

this idea came to have considerable significance.<sup>28</sup> Yet the direct ascent to Heaven was still thought to be an exception, not a rule.<sup>29</sup>

#### Eschatological ideas in Christian poetry

I am not going to canvass here all the Latin Christian poets nor all the eschatological ideas. I shall consider only two representative poets, Paulinus of Nola and Prudentius, to ascertain what they have to say on the nature of the hereafter, especially during the period immediately after death.

Paulinus of Nola, a wealthy aristocrat who became an ascetic and was finally elected bishop, dealt with eschatological ideas especially in the poem xxxi, a poetic *consolatio* on the death of Cel-sus, the young son of his friends.

There is some inconsistency in Paulinus' ideas about the soul's fate upon death. The departed, a boy of eight, was not a martyr. He died of an ailment of the throat, probably of diphtheria.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Paulinus suggests that his soul was already in Paradise, *terra suam partem tumultata carne recepit / spiritus angelico vectus abit gremio* (39sq.), where "angels' bosom", modelled upon "Abraham's bosom", was a poetic expression for Heaven.

The dualistic conception suggested by the verse will meet us in a great number of varieties in Christian epitaphs. The body is confined to earth, to await general resurrection and the reunification with the soul (295sqg.) whereas the soul is raised to Paradise. Except for the fact that the sphere of the people admitted to the immediate Beatific Vision has been widened, there is nothing heretical here.

Towards the end of the poem, Paulinus seems to retrace his

28 Cf., e.g., Caesar. Arel. (Ps. Aug. sermo 303,2) *non solum martyribus praemia promittuntur caelestia, sed etiam integra fide et perfecta charitate Christum sequentibus.*

29 Cf. H. Koch, Kirche und Auserwählung beim hl. Kyprian, Intern. Kirch. Zeitschr., N.F. 12 (1922) 65sqg.

30 Cf. 35 *causa fuit leti suffusus faucibus umor.*



steps. After describing the resurrection of the body, he argues that at Christ's Second Coming, Our Father will raise to Heaven all who repose in faith,<sup>31</sup> which implies that between death and resurrection, Heaven was still barred, even to the righteous.

Paulinus suggests two alternatives as to the fate of the departed boy's soul. One is the traditional "Abraham's bosom", the place of interim rest different from Heaven.<sup>32</sup> But the other alternative is clearly Heaven, where the martyrs are already enjoying the company of Christ, *aut cum Bethlaeis infantibus in Paradiso...inter odoratum ludit nemus atque coronas / texit honorandis praemia martyribus. / talibus inmixtus regem comitabitur agnum (i.e., Christ) virgineis infans additus agminibus (584sq.)*.

Paulinus' suggestion that the dead child was already in Paradise, in the circle of the Holy Innocents, is understandable in a poem of consolation addressed to the grieving parents. Thus the poem illustrates the psychological motives behind the expansion of the original idea of the immediate Beatific Vision granted to martyrs. To the relatives, the conviction that their beloved departed was now enjoying all the joys of Paradise was naturally a great solace. But it was in poetry and in funeral inscriptions that the idea was prominent. Theological writers were no doubt more bound by the traditional doctrine. As shown above, according to the Latin Fathers, primarily only the Saints' souls were entitled to the pre-resurrectional ascent to Heaven, whereas the other souls had to await, in a separate Hades, general resurrection and the Last Judgement. Yet Paulinus did not modify the traditional doctrine quite without doubts. Hence his hesitation between Abraham's bosom and Paradise at the end of the poem.

The greatest of the Latin Christian poets, Prudentius, wrote a hymn of 172 lines on Christian burial (cathem. 10). Prudentius

---

31 *sic et eos quicumque fide vivente quiescunt / adducet Christo cum remeante pater, 565sq.*

32 *aut illum gremio exceptum fovit almus Abraham / et blandus digitorum Eleazar alit, 583sq.*

was one of the Christian intellectuals who were not overzealous to repudiate classical culture. This is evident in the hymn on burial, too. The primary theme of the poem is the dualism of body and soul and their different fates after death. According to Prudentius, the soul is of a fiery substance, originating from the ether.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly it rises up to the heavens<sup>34</sup> or to the stars<sup>35</sup> upon death. The dead body also reverts to its place of origin.<sup>36</sup>

So far, there is little that could be called specifically Christian. The conviction that the soul descends from the ether or from the stars, is imprisoned in the body, and returns to its native place upon a person's death, was a commonplace in the philosophical and religious thought of late antiquity.<sup>37</sup> Apart from the fact that Heaven was imagined to lie high up above the earth, the Bible gave no precise idea of its topology.<sup>38</sup> Augustine, for his part, argued

---

33 *si generis memor ignis (scil. est anima), 28; quae (scil. anima) germen ab aethere traxit, 24.*

34 *petit halitus aera fervens, 11.*

35 *pariterque reportat ad astra, 32; cf. 92, ad astra doloribus itur.*

36 *humus excipit arida corpus, 12.*

37 Cf. F. Cumont, *Lux Perpetua*, 1949, 142-188, and *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, 1966<sup>2</sup>, 373-388. For an example, see Macrobius, *Comment. somn. Scip.*, 1,12 *descensus vero ipsius, quo anima de caelo in huius vitae inferna delabitur, sic ordo digeritur, etc.*, representing the Neoplatonic point of view. Pagan epitaphs often report the ascent of the soul to Heaven, CE 1311 *nam mens aeterna profecto / pro meritis potitur sedibus Elysiis; 2152 spiritum [que]m tu ferebas corpore elabi sacrum, corpus ut terram manere, spiritum celum sequi*, where the dualistic conception of body and soul is patent; one epitaph even records eternal light, one of the distinctive qualities of Christian heaven (cf. p. 36), CE 591 *terrenum corpus, caelestis spiritus in me, / quo repetente suam sedem nunc vivimus illic / et fruitur superis aeterna in luce Fabatus*; the ascent to the stars was mentioned in an explicit contrast to the traditional ideas of the underworld, CE 569 *non tamen ad Manes sed caeli ad sidera pergis*; the journey to the stars was a reward of virtuous life, CE 1061,11 *hic posita: an superas convisit luminis auras / innocua aeternis condita sideribus?* Though the extracts may sound Christian, they were all from epitaphs of undoubted pagan origin. In contrast to Christian eschatological ideas, pagan dualism was, however, final, not only temporary. The body would turn into earth without a hope of eventual resurrection.

38 P. Bernard, *ciel*, DTC II (1939) 2475sqg.

that the location of Heaven was God's secret. Realistic ideas of the hereafter were superfluous.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, realistic ideas, largely drawn from contemporary pagan thought, proved unavoidable. Paul himself, II Cor. 12,2, told us how he had been "caught up to the third heaven", which meant Paradise.<sup>40</sup> Paul's description certainly suggests a primitive astronomy which not yet distinguished the planets from the fixed stars.<sup>41</sup> The identification of Heaven and the stars enjoyed, especially in poetry and epigraphy, great popularity. In the poem of Paulinus discussed above, references to the "stars" were still more frequent than they were in Prudentius.<sup>42</sup>

In Prudentius, these ideas of pagan origin had been imbedded in deep Christian soil.<sup>43</sup> Two ideas are of significance here. First, though the body has reverted to earth, it will before long<sup>44</sup> be reawakened and, in company of its former soul, be carried *volucres ... in auras* (43). We may here pass Prudentius' conviction of the nearness of Christ's Second Coming. What is important for us is the argument that the body, entrusted to the sepulchre, is not dead but given up to sleep (55sq.). Thus only the body was in sleep, not the whole man (cf. fn.5). All that are now in cold sleep will presently be alive. Hence the care shown by the Christians for the burial of their dead (61sq.). Whatever the condition of the dead body, God

39 Enarr. Psalm. 30,8.

40 Cf. I Thes. 4,17 (about Doomsday) "Then we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..."

41 Cumont, *Lux Perpetua* 185.

42 *pater ipse polo miseratus ab alto*, 81; *nostrum secum corpus in astra tulit*, 134; *Christus in astra vocat*, 190; *corporeum remeare ad sidera Christum / cernimus et gremio nubis in astra vehi*, 397sq.

43 Verses 9-16, where the pagan ideas were most obtrusive, were in later manuscripts replaced by new ones of more palatable Christianity, 9-13 *sic cuncta creata necesse est / obitum tolerare supremum / ut semina dissociata / sibi sumat origo resorbens*, were superseded by (from 14) *labefacta senescere tandem / compactaque dissociari / et dissona texta retexi*. Some editors ascribe the recast to the poet himself (cf. Cunningham, *Corp. Christ. Ser. lat.* 126, 1972, p.53). I leave the matter open here.

44 *spatium breve restat*, 35; *venient cito saecula cum iam...*, 37.

will recollect and resuscitate it (141-144), a traditional Christian doctrine.<sup>45</sup>

Near the end of the poem, Prudentius takes up a serious problem. Before the resurrection of the body, where does God order the pure soul to rest (151sq.)? His treatment of the theme may owe something to poetic licence. At any rate, he first proposes Abraham's bosom, following the traditional story in Luke (153-156). We may notice here a detail not found in the original story. According to Prudentius, Lazarus had flowers all about him. This detail came from the rich ancient traditions of earthly Paradise, the Golden Age, and the *locus amoenus*. But what is of primary importance is the fact that Prudentius identifies Abraham's bosom with celestial Paradise. After recording the well-known words of Our Lord to the malefactor on the Cross (Luke 23,43), he continues, *patet ecce fidelibus ampli / via lucida iam paradisi, / licet et nemus illud adire / homini quod ademerat anguis* (161-164). Paradise, described as the Garden of Eden, was accordingly open to the souls of the righteous even before resurrection. The soul, the servant of God, was to be consecrated to God in its original home, which it had left to wander in exile (165-168).

Apart from the realistic details borrowed from the Biblical description of earthly Paradise, enriched by the pagan mythology of the Golden Age and the poetic tradition of the *locus amoenus*, which are all present here, celestial bliss was usually qualified as *requies* and *lux*.<sup>46</sup> These ideas were crystallized into the famous lines of Christian liturgy, *requiem aeternam dona eis, domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis*, due to Gregory the Great.<sup>47</sup> In Prudentius' hymn, there are references to them, *animam requiescere* (152) and *via lucida paradisi* (162).

---

45 Cf. Augustine, civ. 12,20.

46 Cumont, Symbolisme (fn. 37) 386sqq.

47 Liber antiphon., PL 78,722. According to Cumont, op.cit. 385 fn. 1, the idea of rest in celestial light came from the Orient, and was a commonplace in late antiquity.

In the eschatological beliefs of Paulinus and Prudentius, three points are of significance. Firstly, there is a clear dualism of body and soul. Upon a person's death, the body is left in earth, the soul raised to Heaven. Yet this is wholly within Christian orthodoxy. The body will not be abandoned for ever but will be resuscitated at the Last Judgement. This is decisively at variance with pagan thought, which admitted the immortality of the soul but denied physical resurrection. Even gnosticism repudiated the resurrection of the body.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, the right to the direct ascent to Heaven was extended from the Saints to all righteous souls. Here the departure from the traditional doctrine represented by the majority of the Fathers is noticeable. Especially in Prudentius, the old difference between the interim place of rest in "Abraham's bosom" and celestial Paradise was abolished, and the just and faithful souls were admitted to Heaven. Finally, celestial bliss was described as the Garden of Eden, as rest in light, and as the Beatific Vision.

#### The intermediate state of the souls

There is little epigraphical evidence of a belief in the intermediate state, of a sojourn of the souls in a subterranean place between death and the resurrection of the body. Stüber certainly cites as evidence the words *refrigerium*, *refrigerare*, in part also *pax*.<sup>49</sup> But his arguments are not quite convincing. He maintains that the reticence of the epitaphs about the precise nature of *refrigerium* is significant.<sup>50</sup> In contrast to this reticence, later epitaphs were quite explicit about the ascent of the soul to celestial bliss. Again, *pax*, *in pace* does not refer to celestial bliss.<sup>51</sup> Instead,

48 R.M. Grant, *Gnosticism and the Early Christianity*, 1959, 61.

49 Op.cit. (fn. 4) 105sqq.

50 "Es fällt auf, dass *refrigerium* ohne erklärende Zusätze als angebliche Bezeichnung für die himmlische Seligkeit unbestimmt und geradezu zaghaft wirkt; man würde bestimmtere und kräftigere Ausdrücke erwarten..." p. 111.

51 "So ist auch bei der *pax*-Formel der Grabinschriften kein Anzeichen dafür vorhanden, dass die abgeschiedenen Seelen nur im Himmel in *pace* weilen könnten."

it could suggest the intermediate state. Stuibler concludes, "Wägt man alle Gründe ab, die für die Deutung der refrigerium-Inschriften anzuführen sind, so kann man kaum mehr daran zweifeln, dass im allgemeinen refrigerium auf den Inschriften den Zustand der Ruhe der Gerechten im Zwischenzustand bedeutet..." (p. 113).

Now it seems to me that Stuibler's eagerness to prove his case has made him misconstrue evidence.

Firstly, *refrigerium*, *refrigerare* was not a very frequent expression in epitaphs, which certainly reduces its significance.<sup>52</sup> Further, most of the phrases are too brief to allow any decision between the alternatives of celestial bliss or rest in the Hades, e.g. *spiritum tuum deus refrigeret*;<sup>53</sup> *bene merenti in pace et in refrigerium*,<sup>54</sup> etc.

In some cases, a more positive interpretation may be possible. In one epitaph, overlooked by Stuibler, *refrigerare* seems to suggest the intermediate state. The epitaph commemorates an African bishop, *huius anima refrigerat, corpus hic in pace quiescit / resurrectionem expectans futuram de mortuis primam / consors ut fiat sanctis in possessione regni caelestis*.<sup>55</sup> The "first resurrection" is a reference to Rev. 20,4 and to the millennium promised there to the martyrs and other righteous people. The Biblical reference implies that the epitaph was written by a man versed in eschatological doctrines. Thus it is possible, though by no means certain, that *refrigerare* here suggests the rest of the soul in the Hades, from which it would be released at the first resurrection to join the company of the Saints.

In other cases, *refrigerium*, *refrigerare* suggests celestial bliss. A graffito from a Roman catacomb, *refrigeri Ianuarius Agatopus Felicissim(us) martyres*,<sup>56</sup> can only refer to Heaven, where the souls of the martyrs already were. A phrase like *cuius spiritum in refri-*

---

52 Material in ILCV 2304-2322A.

53 ICVR 15402.

54 ILCV 2722.

55 CE 1837

56 ILCV 2318.

*gerium suscipiat dominus*<sup>57</sup> implies Heaven. We cannot imagine God receiving souls in the Hades. Finally, since intercession is possible only in Heaven, *Ianuarina bene refrigera et roga pro nos*,<sup>58</sup> suggests celestial bliss. On the other hand, *refrigera cum spirita sancta*, a. 291, quoted as evidence of celestial bliss,<sup>59</sup> is ambiguous. The word *sancti* certainly later stood for the "Saints", the martyrs and others officially venerated by the Church. In epigraphy, however, *sancti* were often only the faithful, those who had obtained bliss.<sup>60</sup>

The fallacies of the general arguments advanced by Stuiber are equally obvious. They are *argumenta ex silentio*, which are always of a doubtful value. Now the epitaphs recording *refrigerium* were seldom dated. In general, however, acclamations, of which type *refrigerium*-formulas usually were, belonged more to the early than to the later period of Christian epigraphy. If the epitaphs were early, i.e. from the late 3rd and early 4th century, their reticence about the precise nature of *refrigerium* was not due to the fact "dass man die Seelen der Toten noch nicht im Himmel wusste" but to the general briefness of the early Christian epitaphic style.

The results of the review of the material and of Stuiber's arguments are accordingly, at best, inconclusive. I do not deny that *refrigerium*, *refrigerare* may have been used in the Tertullianic sense in some early epitaphs, though we cannot be very positive about this because of the briefness of the relevant expressions. On the other hand, there is evidence that *refrigerium* could suggest celestial bliss.

As to *pax*, one cannot dismiss this ubiquitous word as rapidly as Stuiber does. A proper analysis of the meaning and use of *pax*

---

57 ICVR 311.

58 ICVR 9913.

59 ICVR 13886; cf. A.M. Schneider, *Refrigerium I. Nach literarischen Quellen und Inschriften*, diss. Freiburg, 1928, 21sq. Stuiber, 111 fn. 15, erroneously considered *Spirita* a singular and argued that it "wahrscheinlich" referred to the soul of the departed. This is bad linguistics. *Spirita* is a common Vulgar neuter of *spiritus*, see ILCV III p. 409.

60 H. Delehaye, *Sanctus* (*Subsidia hagiographica* 17), 1927, 30sqq.

would require a monograph. Here I can only discuss a few points relevant to the present theme.

In Christian epitaphs, *pax* was found in almost any position, from acclamations like *te in pace, pax tecum*, to combinations with the different elements of an epitaph. It was included in age records, *vixit in pace*, in the phrases signifying dying, *decessit/obiit in pace*, or repose in the grave, *dormit/iacet/quiescit/requiescit in pace*, burial and dedication, *depositus in pace, fecit/posuit in pace, benemerenti in pace*. In a great number of cases, *in pace* simply followed the name of the defunct or was syntactically unrelated to the rest of the epitaph.<sup>61</sup>

Clearly *pax* cannot have been used in quite the same sense in all these contexts. Blaise distinguishes 11 different meanings for the word.<sup>62</sup> In a phrase like *vixit in pace*, it probably suggested the "peace" due to the reconciliation of man with God through Christ's mediation, "salvation", the reward of faith; cf. the phrase *in pace fidelis*, common in African epitaphs. In the phrases signifying dying, a similar meaning is also conceivable, whereas in the expressions for "burial" and "dedication", *in pace* may suggest "peace of the grave".<sup>63</sup> Admittedly, the meaning of "salvation" is equally possible in many of the cases.

For us, the most significant meaning is that of "celestial peace". As stated, *requies* and *lux* were general qualities of life in Heaven. Now *requies* and *pax* are closely related. Hence it is natural that the latter word should also have been used in describing celestial life.<sup>64</sup>

61 Cf. P. Bruun, SICV I.2, 1963, 77sq.

62 Dictionnaire Latin-Français des auteurs chrétiens, 1954, s.v.

63 Cf. the corresponding Jewish phrase ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἢ κοίμησις αὐτοῦ. and Bruun, op.cit. 79. An example of this meaning is found in ICVR 10183, quoted on p. 44.

64 Cf. Augustine, civ.19,20 *summum bonum civitatis dei cum sit pax aeterna atque perfecta*. In this sense, *pax* was found in liturgy, too, in the Gregorian sacramentary, *locus lucis refrigerii et pacis*, quoted by Schneider (fn. 59) 25.



Though the general briefness of the Christian epitaphic style often makes it difficult to establish the exact meaning of a word, in some cases *pax* certainly represents celestial bliss, thus in the epitaph dedicated to a bishop from the late 5th century, *qui pace perenni / mysticus antistes paradysi sede locatus*,<sup>65</sup> where the reference to Paradise excludes the possibility of interpreting *pax* in any other sense. Again, *recessit a seculo, ingressa in pace*,<sup>66</sup> must suggest Heaven because of the contrast to the "present world". *Laurentius ad deum in pace*;<sup>67</sup> *aeternam in pacem unde erat et rediit*,<sup>68</sup> are also unequivocal. There are some other cases on p. 50sq.

It is also possible that a number of phrases, in which the soul is reported to be *in pace*, suggest celestial bliss, *dulcis anima in pace* or *anima dulcis in pace* or *in pace animae dulcis*,<sup>69</sup> and still more clearly *q(uius) an(i)ma in pace (Christi) quiescit*, from the 6/7th century,<sup>70</sup> which already anticipates the Medieval formula *cuius anima in pace requiescat*, where *pax* cannot have a meaning other than "celestial peace", the doctrine of the intermediate state having been abandoned.<sup>71</sup>

The analysis of the material has accordingly revealed that *refrigerium* and *pax*, especially the latter, more readily referred to "celestial bliss" than to the intermediate state in the Hades.

Clearer evidence of the belief in the intermediate state may be the references to "Abraham's bosom". Unluckily, there are only a few of them, even they often fragmentary. The most unequivocal is the epigram of a youth buried in the church of St. Felix at Nola. Though the beginnings of the lines are lacking, the sense is restorable, *cum tuba terri]bilis sonitu concusserit orbem / [humanae-*

---

65 CE 705.

66 ICVR 9410.

67 ILCV 3337.

68 CE 1431,12.

69 ICVR 2420; 2618; 3314.

70 ILCV 1543.

71 I shall discuss the problem in my forthcoming book on the Medieval and Renaissance epitaphs of the City of Rome.

*que ani]mae rursus in sua vasa redibunt / [Felici merito?] hic sociabitur ante tri[bunal / interea?] in gremio Abraham [...].*<sup>72</sup> Despite the uncertainty due to the fragments, it seems clear that the departed was imagined as lying "in Abraham's bosom", i.e. in the Hades until the Last Judgement. On the other hand, in the epitaph of a virgin, it is unclear whether *in sinus iam requiescis Abraham Iacob adque Isaac*,<sup>73</sup> suggests Heaven or Hades.<sup>74</sup> In one epitaph, the meaning of Heaven is probable, *suscipiat te Christus qui vocabit te, in sinum Abrahae angeli deducant te.*<sup>75</sup> Christ receives the souls in Heaven, not in the Hades.

Though epigraphical evidence of a belief in the pre-resurrectional stay of the souls in the Hades is scanty, this does not imply that there was no such conviction among the rank and file of Christians. But epigraphical evidence begins to flow more abundantly only since the early 4th century. From the crucial third century, usable material is regrettably meagre. Moreover, early epitaphs are usually brief, which makes the interpretation of single words and acclamations arduous or downright impossible. At any rate, *refrigerium* and "Abraham's bosom", which have been argued to suggest the intermediate state, were rare, and still rarer in this meaning.

#### Purgatory in epitaphs

The doctrine of Purgatory came slowly into being during the last centuries of the ancient Church. Before Augustine, there is evidence of a belief in purifying pains, in concrete terms fire, at the Last Judgement, which would eventually lead to the salvation of all who believe in Christ. In this doctrine, Augustine made two major innovations. Firstly, he rejected the belief in the eventual salvation of all who profess the Christian faith. Mortal sins would

---

72 CE 684.

73 CE 749,5.

74 Stuiber, 119 fn.45 argues that these epitaphs imitate Greek liturgical prayers.

75 S. Aurigemma, *L'area cimiteriale cristiana di Ain Zāra*, 1932, 131.

be punished by eternal fire in Hell, only the venial ones could be atoned for by Purgatory. Secondly, he placed the purifying pains between death and resurrection.<sup>76</sup>

In epitaphs, references to Purgatory are few and uncertain. Perhaps because of natural piety, the relatives were reluctant to suggest that the departed, dear to them, was suffering pains. Moreover, this would reflect upon the defunct's conduct in life. In my material, there is in fact only one relevant case, the epitaph of a priest, significantly enough, probably composed by himself, *O deus altipotens de caelis proflue rorem / ut animam satiet gutta beata meam.*<sup>77</sup> These words suggest a soul in pain below the heavens. The possibility that the writer was alluding to Purgatory is increased by the next lines, which express the hope that at Doomsday the defunct may be counted among the saved, *efflue astrigeros de caeli conclave nimbos / et recrea cineres protinus inde meos, / ut iudex veniens cum tu discusseris omnis / dextram optineam effugiamq(ue) levam.* Though the epitaph is undated, a late date is more probable than an early one.

#### Epitaphs referring to resurrection

The number of the epitaphs referring to resurrection but ignoring the fate of the soul in the intervening period, is not very considerable.<sup>78</sup> This is naturally no argument to the effect that the soul too was thought to lie dormant before resurrection. The epitaphs are sooner interpretable so that the postmortem fate of the soul, which was well-known, was passed in order to save space, or for some other secondary reasons.

In one relevant epitaph, the soul's fate is certainly referred to but not clarified. The epitaph is lengthy, the language Vulgar, and the metre defective. It recorded the building of an arcisolum

76 A. Michel, *Purgatoire*, DTC XIII (1936) 1212sqg.

77 CE 1562.

78 A collection of cases in ILCV 3458-3480.

by the deacon of Pope Marcellinus (a. 296-304).

3 *fecit mansionem in pace quietam*  
 4 *... quo membra dulcia somno*  
 5 *per longum tempus factori et iudici servet.*  
 6 *Severa dulcis...*  
 7 *reddidit VIII februarias virgo kalendas*  
 8 *quam dom(inu)s nasci mira sapientia et arte*  
 9 *iusserat in carnem donec resurgat ab ipso*  
 10 *quique animam rapuit spiritu sancto suo*  
 11 *castam pudicam et inviolabile semper*  
 12 *quamque iterum dom(inu)s spiritali gloria reddet.*<sup>79</sup>

The epitaph gives good insight into the acceptance of the Christian doctrine by a man on the lowest rung in Christian hierarchy and, to judge from the quality of the language and metre, of little education. The following points are worth notice. The body was thought to lie in peaceful sleep in the grave awaiting the Last Judgement (3-5). The Second Coming was, however, a thing of the distant future (5). Resurrection was described in 9sqg.

The Christian doctrine of the soul is of an equal interest here. L. 7 *reddidit* is an elliptical expression for (*animam/spiritum*) *reddidit*.<sup>80</sup> The soul was created by, and returned to God. God had caused the *virgo* to be born into a body of wondrous qualities (8-9). Yet the fate of the soul upon death is not explained. God carried off the soul of the dead girl (10), but it is not stated whether to Heaven or to the Hades. At any rate, God will return her soul, full of spiritual glory (12), to be reunited with the resurrected body. One could argue that the idea of resurrection was of such importance to the writer of the epitaph that he did not give equal attention to

---

79 ICVR 10183.

80 For documentation, see ILCV 3314sqg.

the fate of the soul in the interim period.<sup>81</sup>

In other cases, only the resurrection of the body was recorded.<sup>82</sup> One epitaph briefly states the doctrine of the resurrection, *credite victuras anima remeante favillas / rursus ad amissum posse redire diem*.<sup>83</sup> A Spanish epitaph from a late period is the first example of the quotation from the Vulgate rendering of Job 19,25-26, which became of some popularity in Medieval epitaphs, *credo quod redemptor meus vivet et in novissimo die de terra sussitabit pel(l)em meam et in carne mea videbo dominum*.<sup>84</sup> The quotation is not quite literal, but the inaccuracies are of minor interest.<sup>85</sup>

#### Epitaphs referring to Heaven and resurrection

More frequent are the epitaphs which certainly speak of resurrection but which simultaneously record the ascent of the soul to Heaven after death. The earliest of the dated cases is from a. 382, the epitaph of a young lady, who

2 *fecit ad astra viam, Christi modo gaudet in aula...*

6 *inde p(er) eximios paradisi regnat odores*

7 *tempore continuo vernant ubi gramina rivis*

81 ICVR 3847 also records the Last Judgement and mentions the soul but does not explain its pre-resurrectional fate, *redditus in terra corpus cui vita herebat, sp(iritu)s animaque mea expecta(t) die ultimo causa(m)*, probably late. Cf. CE 1435, *hic iacet hinc anima in carnem redeunte resurget*, which is likewise silent about the soul's fate before resurrection.

82 CE 1477 *suscipe terra tuo corpus de corpore sumptum / reddere quod valeas vivificante deo*, has a phrase which seems to have been common property; it reappears in the epitaph of Gregory the Great (fn.89). CIL X 7972 *hic situs...expectat Christi ope rursus sua(m) videre carne(m) et gaudia lucis nobae ipso dominante videre*, probably very late, qualifies celestial bliss as light. There were often local varieties, so in Gallia Narb., where *resurrecturus in Christo* was popular, ILCV 3468Asqq.

83 CE 902.

84 Vives 151.

85 In Rome, the first case is from the 9th or 10th century, A. Silvagni, *Monumenta epigraphica christiana saeculo XIII antiquiora I*, 1943, tab. xxxix.2.

- 8 *expectatque deum superas quo surgat ad auras*  
 9 *hoc posuit corpus tumulo mortalia linquens.*<sup>86</sup>

The epitaph actually contains most of the eschatological ideas found in epigraphy. The soul journeys to Heaven immediately after death (2). Heaven, Christ's palace, is located in the stars. Because of her contempt of the present world (3), her righteousness and faith (4), the defunct was taken to Paradise, described as a *locus amoenus* with eternal spring, good odours, grass-bordered brooks (6-7). Yet she was still without her body, which was left in the grave to await resurrection (8-9).

There is a number of other epitaphs recording both resurrection and the soul's immediate ascent to Heaven. Singularly many of them were Papal epitaphs, Celestinus I (d. a. 432), who is claimed to enjoy the Beatific Vision;<sup>87</sup> Pelagius I, a. 561;<sup>88</sup> Gregory the Great, a. 604, with an epitaph composed of trite phrases;<sup>89</sup> Bonifacius IV, a. 615, with a more detailed description of the physical resurrection.<sup>90</sup>

The souls of the Popes, even when they were not martyrs, were accordingly thought to go straight to Heaven, an indication of the spread of the more liberal interpretation of the soul's pre-resurrectional fate. All the cases are, however, late, which somewhat reduces their significance. In the epitaph of an unknown Pope, possibly from the 4th century, the right to the direct journey to Heaven was limited to patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs, *sancti*

86 CE 669.

87 U. Montini, *Le tombe dei papi*, 1957, No. 99 (p. 43) *corporis hic tumulus, requiescunt ossa cinisque / nec perit hinc aliquid d(omi)no, caro cuncta resurget. / terrenum nunc terra tegit, mens nescia mortis / vivit et aspectu fruitur bene conscia Christi.*

88 ICVR 4155 *vivit in arce poli celesti luce beatus... surgere iudicio certus.*

89 ICVR 4156 *suscipe terra tuo corpus de corpore sumptum / reddere quod valeas vivificante deo, / spiritus astra petit, etc. Cf. fn. 82.*

90 ICVR 4159,12 *mittere ad astra animam, reddere corpus humo, / saucia multiplici siquidem nam membra dolore / rursus in antiquo / pulvere versa manent, / quae coniuncta animae stabilito in corpore surgant / ad vitam aeternam, etc.*

in the proper sense of the word (see p. 39), quite in accordance with the teaching of the Church.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to the Papal epitaphs, there are only a few others recording both the soul's ascent to Heaven and resurrection, the epitaph of a nun from a. 449;<sup>92</sup> an epitaph from a. 491;<sup>93</sup> the epitaph of a bishop, undated;<sup>94</sup> another of a boy of eight.<sup>95</sup>

The frequency of this type of references in Papal epitaphs may be ascribable to the fact that in regard to the head of the Church, the eschatological doctrine had to be stated in unequivocal terms.

#### Dualism of body and soul

The epitaphs referring to resurrection were few in comparison with the great number of inscribed stones recording the different fates of the body and soul upon death but making no mention of resurrection. The body is left to decompose in earth, the soul reverts to Heaven. The very frequency of these cases, as well as the fact that they were found in the epitaphs of the clergy, proves their unchallengable orthodoxy. Lattimore certainly maintains that these epitaphs suggest a dualistic conception of man: "the body dies and the soul lives on". According to him, only those epitaphs "which speak of depositio, of sleep, of resurrection and judgement" were orthodox. The epitaphs expressing the dualistic point of view were heretical, due to "the carrying over into Christian doctrine of a strain of Greek thought."<sup>96</sup>

I think the material discussed in this paper proves the vulnerability of these arguments. The body was certainly left in earth, but not for ever. All the Christians *qua* Christians believed in the

91 CE 787,42sqq.

92 ICVR 942, fragmentary.

93 ILCV 1587 *anima ad autorem d(ominu)m remeante terrena membra terris reliquit...resurgit in (Christo) d(o)m(in)o nostro.*

94 CE 778.

95 CE 756: *he is now virginio...in cetu.*

96 Op.cit. (fn.3) 304-311.

eventual resurrection of the body. Because this was taken for granted, it was needless always to record it, especially as space in epitaphs was limited, and many other things had to be commemorated there.

Though there is a considerable number of dated cases, the earliest of them is as late as a. 363. This could be taken to suggest that the belief in the soul's immediate ascent to Heaven became popular only since the mid-fourth century. Though this view cannot be offhand rejected, we should remember that longer verse epitaphs, the usual vehicle for recording eschatological ideas, were uncommon in early epigraphy. Consequently, though there might have been belief in the immediate Beatific Vision before the mid-fourth century, we have little epigraphical evidence of it, largely because of the brevity and ambiguity of early prose epitaphs, acclamations, etc. A few early cases will, however, be quoted below on p. 49. But references to the intermediate state were fewer and more ambiguous. Hence it may be warrantable to conclude that for all the uncertainty of evidence, the belief in the immediate Beatific Vision was more widespread even in the early period than the dogma of the intermediate state.

This was due to the fact that the sphere of the people whose souls were entitled to the direct ascent to Heaven was gradually enlarged from the Saints to other righteous people. Piety and affection on the part of the members of the family help to explain the certainty expressed in epitaphs of the presence of the defunct's soul in Heaven. His or her special merits to earn celestial bliss were certainly occasionally recorded, thus in the epitaph from a. 363 *tu]us spiritus a carne recedens / [est sociatus?] sanctis pro meritis et opera tanta;*<sup>97</sup> one soul was raised to Heaven *pro casto santo [vitae proposito?];*<sup>98</sup> another *meritis*, a. 475<sup>99</sup> and a. 551;<sup>100</sup> *merito*, after

---

97 ICVR 1426.

98 ICVR 4921.

99 CE 1359,3.

100 CE 2100,14.



a. 573;<sup>101</sup> *pro meritis*, undated.<sup>102</sup> Once it is faith that assures the ascent of a priest's soul *ad caelos et super astra*, a. 529.<sup>103</sup> In one epitaph, the departed is boldly put on a par with the just.<sup>104</sup>

On the whole, the number of the relevant cases was inconsiderable. To claim that the defunct had lived a virtuous life in actual fact amounted to naive praise. There may have been natural reluctance to go too far in this direction.

One of the most interesting problems suggested by the material is the description of Heaven. Here genuinely Christian features co-existed with the pagan ones, or entered into various combinations with them.

Most unequivocally Christian are the cases in which the soul is claimed to have ascended to God, Christ or the Saints. There may be a case as early as a. 217, *Prosenes receptus ad deum*.<sup>105</sup> But it is not certain whether the inscription is Christian. The epitaph of a suffete consul from 4th century is explicit, *terrenos terrenis sedibus artus / reddidit inque sinum summi genitoris apertum / aethera pervolitans levibus se sustulit alis*,<sup>106</sup> where the last line is a Virgilian reminiscence.<sup>107</sup> In an epitaph from a. 475, partly classicizing *regna beata poli* is followed by genuinely Christian *Christi imperium*.<sup>108</sup> Again, *siderea omnipotentis aula* is clearly classicizing,<sup>109</sup> *innupte virginis aula* only Christian.<sup>110</sup>

Describing the soul's rise to the Saints was somewhat commoner, e.g. *Procula d(ei) famula a terra ad martyres*.<sup>111</sup> Here, as well as

101 CIL XIII 2399.

102 ICVR 8453; CE 2099,5; CIL XII 2114.

103 CE 1371,7.

104 CE 781 *quisquis post mundum aetherias conscendere plagas / posse putat iustos Marcellinum quoq(ue) credat / presbyterum caeli sedes habitare quietas.*

105 ILCV 3332.

106 ICVR 307.

107 Aen. 6,57 and 9,14.

108 CE 1359.

109 CE 667,2.

110 CE 1442

111 ILCV 3353.

in a number of other cases,<sup>112</sup> there can be no doubt that Heaven, not the intermediate state in the Hades, was meant. A number of other cases are somewhat harder to classify, due to the ambiguity of the term *sancti* in epigraphy (see p. 39).<sup>113</sup>

The Beatific Vision, seeing God or Christ face to face in Heaven or simply being in their company, was not often explicitly referred to.<sup>114</sup> Paradise was usually described as the Garden of Eden or as the classical *locus amoenus*. One case has been quoted on p. 45. In another, from a. 449, Paradise, equated with *astra* and *aurea regna* of classical traditions as well as *tua limina, Christe* and *angelicas domos* of authentic Christianity, was described as a place with fragrant grass and flowers and gardens, well above the earth, from which the departed *subiectasque videt nubes et sidera caeli*.<sup>115</sup> Similar descriptions of Paradise were well-known in Christian literature.<sup>116</sup>

I have already observed that peaceful rest and light were the main qualities of life in Heaven. In epitaphs, these qualities were sometimes referred to, *caeloque et terris placida sic pace repostus /*

112 CE 703,6 a. 528 *corpores hanc requiem meruit pro munere vitae / commendans sanctis animam corpusque fovendum*, referring to the practice to have one's grave near the sepulchre of a Saint as a guarantee of protection in Heaven; ICVR 17106 *caelo tamen animam cum iustis credo receptam*; 14076, an intriguing combination of astral ideas and Christianity, *Bassa caret membris vivens per saecula (Christo) / aeterias secuta domos et regna piorum... stelliger accepit polus hanc et sidera caeli*. ICVR 396, the ascent to *caelorum regna* is called *sanctorum iter*.

113 ICVR 8716 a. 268 or 279, *vibas inter sanctis*; ILCV 2232 *in pace cum spirita xanta*, probably old, see De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea* III, 1877, 132; ICVR 13886 a. 291, quoted on p. 12; other cases, ICVR 2692 *ispiritus tuus cum sanctis*; 9613 *spiritum tuum inter sanctos*; 15829 *habes requiem in numerum iustorum*; ILCV 3361 *accepta ad spirita sancta*; 3349 *pergens ad iustos et electos*, etc.

114 In addition to the epitaphs quoted on p. 46 and 49, another from a. 472, *viventemque deo (scil., cum deo) credite flere nefas*, ICVR 4964.

115 CE 688,14sqq.

116 Cf., e.g. the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas quoted on p. 29; Paulinus of Nola, p. 32; Prudentius, p. 36; Dracontius, Poet. Lat. Min. V p. 8sq., etc.

*felix luce nova saeculorum in saecula gaudet*, from the 4th century,<sup>117</sup> where *pax* implies both the peace of the grave and the rest in Heaven. There is a number of other cases.<sup>118</sup>

Finally, the Biblical phrase of the Kingdom of Heaven was not rare. The usual expression was *caelestia regna*;<sup>119</sup> other varieties, *celica regna* a. 579;<sup>120</sup> *celes sedes*;<sup>121</sup> *regnum melius* a. 630, which implies devaluation of the present world,<sup>122</sup> or simply *caelum*.<sup>123</sup>

It is more problematic whether the epitaphs which record the return of the defunct's soul to Heaven were specifically Christian. The descent and ascent of the soul was a doctrine shared by many philosophies and religions in late antiquity (see p. 34). Though an expression like *anima Christo reddita est*<sup>124</sup> is naturally only Christian, *tradedit anima(m) d(omin)o* a. 454,<sup>125</sup> *deo [anim]am reddidit*<sup>126</sup> could be possible in some non-Christian epitaph as well, not to speak of *dans animam superis* a. 512?<sup>127</sup> which is clearly classicizing, or *caelebem...spiritum caelo refudit almo* a. 518;<sup>128</sup> *revehens caelo...animam*.<sup>129</sup> In pagan epitaphs, there were similar, though rarer, expressions, thus *hic corpus vatis Laberi, nam spiritus ivit / illuc unde ortus* (CE 1559,13).

117 ICVR 307.

118 ICVR 13289 a. 567 *anima tua in luce et in pace aeternam*; 1857 ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ εἰς εἰρήνην; 8574 and CE 755 (but cf. p. 857: borrowed from Nemesianus) *lux celestis*; CE 782,2 *lux perpetua*; CIL V 6729 a. 520 *lux* juxtaposed with *vita perennis*; cf. fn.82 and 88; CE 781 *aetherias conscendere plagas...caeli sedes habitare quietas*; CE 1407 *quem inter astra tenet alma quies*.

119 ICVR 1477 a. 565; CE 772; 788.

120 CE 1389,8.

121 CE 795,4 *liquit mundum celitem sed scandens ad sedem*.

122 Vives 285.

123 CE 782,9 *composuit corpus caelum cum laeta petivit*; ICVR 7205 ἡ ψυχὴ σου εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς.

124 ICVR 1673.

125 CIL XIII 2359.

126 ICVR 16997.

127 CE 1366,4.

128 ILCV 2440.

129 CIL XII 2114 (genuine?)

In a great number of cases, the destination of the soul was stated to be high up in the skies, *sublimia caeli*;<sup>130</sup> *superna*;<sup>131</sup> *superas domos*.<sup>132</sup> The commonest expression was *astra*, the earliest dated case being from a. 381.<sup>133</sup> The way to Heaven was *astrigera via*.<sup>134</sup>

There were some other, though less frequent expressions for the starry heavens, *sidera*, recorded as the abode of Christ in an epitaph from a. 392;<sup>135</sup> *polus*, a. 440-461.<sup>136</sup> Besides in the stars, Heaven was thought to lie in the ether, *ae]therias domos*, etc.<sup>137</sup> The classical name for Heaven, *Olympus*, was not quite unknown in Christian funeral poetry.<sup>138</sup>

The origin of the astral theology has been discussed on p. 34. Though of pagan origin, it had been incorporated into Christian thought. Placing Heaven in the stars was scarcely felt to be an un-Christian feature, witness the fact that in many an epitaph genuinely Christian features, such as the abode of Christ or God or the Saints, were combined with astral ideas.

### Conclusion

The distinction between pre- and post-resurrectional state of the human soul was not observed in funeral inscriptions. There is

130 ICVR 8453.

131 CE 1394,22.

132 CE 1447,4.

133 CE 668 *corporeos rumpens nexus qui gaudet in astris*; CE 692 a. 476 *membra solo posuit, celi perexit ad astra*; CE 1362,5 a. 501 *astra fovent animam, corpus natura recepit*; cf. CE 2100,14 a. 551; Vives 273 a. 641; ICVR 5568; 5569; CE 1433; 1836; CIL X 8174.

134 CIL V 6202.

135 ICVR 4827 *no]n tamen haec tristes habitat po[st l]imine sedes / [proxima?] sed Cristo sidera celsa tenet*; another case of *sidera celsa*, CIL XIII 2399, post a. 573.

136 ICVR 15842 *sedibus en propriis mens pura et membra quiescunt / ista iacent tumulo gaudet at illa polo*; another case CE 2099.

137 CE 1340; cf. CIL V 6266 *aetherias graderis sine carne per arces*; ICVR 13549 *aetheria sedes*.

138 CE 758 *hoc tumulo Baioli conduntur membra sepulti / sed pollens anima praeclaro manebit Olympo*.

little evidence of belief in the intermediate stay of the soul in the Hades before the resurrection of the body. Eschatological ideas were usually spoken of in the verse epitaphs after the mid-fourth century. The usual notion was one of the body left in earth, the soul raised to Heaven. There was no pagan or gnostic dualism in this. Though the resurrection of the body was seldom explicitly mentioned, it was tacitly assumed.

Clearly the fine distinction, elaborated by the Fathers, between the intermediate state and the ultimate celestial bliss, was too subtle for the ordinary Christians. The souls of martyrs, later on even of people who lived like martyrs, were always thought to go straight to Heaven. It was not difficult to extend the concept of the martyr until it eventually encompassed all the righteous. The way had here been paved by the Fathers themselves.

Christian poets, such as Paulinus of Nola and Prudentius, represented quite the same ideas. There is little in funeral epigrams that is not found in Christian poetry as well.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- CE = *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, conlegit Fr. Buecheler (*Anthologia Latina* II. 1-3), 1895-1926.
- DTC = *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 1903-1950.
- ICVR = *Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae*, ediderunt A. Silvagni & A. Ferrua, 1922-.
- ILCV = *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres I-III*, edidit E. Diehl, 1925-1931.
- SICV = *Sylloge Inscriptionum Christianarum Veterum Musei Vaticani*, (*Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae* I), 1963.
- Vives = Vives, J., *Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda*, 1969.