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The Eschatological Aspects of the Monastic Life in St. Jerome's Letters

In the year 1953 a New Testament scholar named Charles Henry Dodd published his *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* – a book that revolutionised the idea of Christian eschatology². In his *opus vitae*, Charles Dodd argued based on the Gospel of John that apocalyptic realities are already realised through Jesus and Apostles' service. On this basis he coined the term “realized eschatology”, in which all announcements concerning the Kingdom of God have already been realized according to Dodd. Realized eschatology substitutes the saying that “the end is near” with words “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15, Matthew 3:2; 4:7; 10:7) and argues that we should emphasise the present and actual Kingdom of God and His current and complete presence in the world.

One can find multiple mentions of eschatology while reading the letters of Saint Jerome³, who indisputably, was one of the greatest practitioners,

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² See C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge 1953. Cf. B. Czysz, *Ojcowie Kościoła i pytania współczesnej eschatologii*, “Studia Nauk Teologicznych” 1 (2006) p. 133-149.

³ Generally on Jerome's letters see e.g.: N. Pronberger, *Beiträge zur Chronologie der Briefe des hl. Hieronymus*, Amberg 1913; R. Gründel, *Des Hieronymus Briefe: Ihre literarische Bestimmung und ihre Zusammengehörigkeit*, Leipzig 1958 (dissertation); F. Capponi, *Aspetti realistici e simbolici dell'epistolario di Gerolamo*, in: *Gerolamo e la biografia letteraria*, ed. A. Ceresa-Gastaldo, Genova 1989, p. 81-103; A. Canellis, *La Lettre selon saint Jérôme: l'épistolarité de la correspondance hiéronymienne*, in: *Epistulae antiquae*, v. 2: *Actes du IIe colloque 'Le genre épistolaire antique et ses prolongements*, ed. L. Nadjo – É. Gavaille, Louvain – Paris 2002, p. 311-332; A. Cain, *The Letters of*

supporters and propagators of monastic life⁴, as well as the one who repeatedly – often sharply and impatiently⁵ – encouraged if not almost coerced recipients to enter on the pathway of monastic perfection. No matter how strange it may sound, there is nothing abnormal in it – for what type of arguments one should use in order to convince someone to discard one’s life and devote it to Christ? Of course, it is best to assure of the reward that awaits in the undefined future, after death. And this argument can also be found in works by other fathers of Western monastic life – Paulinus of Nola or Augustine⁶. Nevertheless, delving over the letters of the grouchy monk from Bethlehem, and these letters were called by one noted scholar “the finest of Christian antiquity”⁷, one can discern yet another layer of argumentation regarding monks and fitting into the theory of the “realized eschatology” proposed by Charles Dodd. All Christians who lived righteously and piously on this world will receive a reward in Heaven, but only few are lucky enough to touch Heaven while on earth. The lucky ones, according to Jerome, are precisely the monks⁸. Hence, the purpose of this text is to introduce Jerome’s vision of eschatology realized in monastic life.

Jerome. Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity, Oxford – New York 2009; M. Wysocki – M. Pyzik-Turska, *O listach w listach Ojców Kościoła*, in: *Nadzieje upadającego świata. Nadzieja w chrześcijańskiej epistolografii łacińskiej IV i V wieku (Ambroży, Augustyn, Hieronim, Paulin z Noli)*, ed. M. Wysocki – J. Pałucki – M. Pyzik-Turska, Lublin 2019, p. 87-112; M. Wysocki, *Przesyłam ten list przez ręce mojego umiłowanego... czyli rzecz o kurierach w listach chrześcijańskich*, in: *Nadzieje upadającego świata. Nadzieja w chrześcijańskiej epistolografii łacińskiej IV i V wieku (Ambroży, Augustyn, Hieronim, Paulin z Noli)*, ed. M. Wysocki – J. Pałucki – M. Pyzik-Turska, Lublin 2019, p. 113-123.

⁴ On the monastic life in Jerome’s letters, see E. Coleiro, *Monasticism in St. Jerome’s letters and lives of the hermits*, “Melita Theologica” 4/1 (1951) p. 1-13 and “Melita Theologica” 5/1 (1952) p. 17-30; E. Coleiro, *St. Jerome’s Lives of the Hermits*, VigCh 11 (1957) p. 161-178.

⁵ See G. lo Cascio, *Girolamo da Stridone, studiato nel suo epistolario*, Catania 1923; F.X. Murphy, *St. Jerome: The irascible hermit*, in: *A Monument to St. Jerome: Essays on Some Aspects of His Life, Works and Influence*, red. F.X. Murphy, New York 1952, p. 3-12; L. Viscido, *Atteggiamenti ironici nell’epistolario geronimiano*, Salerno 1978; F. Trisoglio, *La personalità di san Girolamo attraverso l’epistolario*, SC 120 (1992) p. 575-612.

⁶ See M. Wysocki, *Pewniejsza nadzieja? Zachęty do życia monastycznego w epistolografii IV i V wieku*, VoxP 70 (2018) p. 193-204.

⁷ S. Rebenich, *Jerome*, London – New York 2002, p. 79.

⁸ Such a way of regarding monks’ life – a minor escape from what is earthly and emphasizing the need to leave worldly matters, putting trust primarily in the otherworldly, were to some extent perhaps influenced by events of Jerome’s life, and above all the de-

The Stridonian, or rather one should say the Bethlehemite – for he led most of his monastic life over there – devoted a lot of his thoughts to the reality of a monastic life: he presented its highlights, illustrated with great examples of monks, reprovved for lapsing from the monastic ideal, but overall he encouraged to adapt this way⁹. In the West, above all in Rome, the lifestyle that Jerome promoted was not a novelty. For the model reached Rome long time before Jerome's time¹⁰. However, John N.D. Kelly noticed that it was Jerome who “instilled enthusiasm into the hearts of his pupils, tried to introduce order and a constant rhythm into their religious practices, and especially to give them a solid biblical basis”¹¹. At least since Jerome's time in Rome this enthusiasm and order had an eschatological dimension in his view.

1. Entering a monastic life – a way to Heaven

According to Jerome, the process of entering the path of a monastic life denotes getting on a path to perfection, on the way to Heaven, to eternal bliss, to being in God's presence¹². The way to achieve this is to follow path

feat of his “worldly life” in Rome alongside Pope Damasus. See J.N.D Kelly, *Hieronim. Życie, pisma, spory*, trans. R. Wiśniewski, Warszawa 2003, p. 127-135. Brian E. Daley emphasized: “the eschatology of Jerome (331-420), like all of his theology, is inextricably tied with his knowledge of the Bible, with his intense personal relationships, and with the turbulent external circumstances of his long life of study and asceticism” (B.E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church. A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*, Peabody 2003, p. 101).

⁹ About the monastic spirituality, see. B. Degórski, *Valori etici del monachesimo di San Girolamo. L'obbedienza/umiltà*, in: *L'etica cristiana nei secoli III e IV: eredità e confronti. XXIV Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma, 4-6 maggio 1995*, SEA 53, Roma 1996, p. 317-337; B. Degórski, *Spiritualità del monachesimo maschile nelle opere di san Girolamo*, VoxP 70 (2018) p. 119-150.

¹⁰ About the reception of the Eastern ascetic models in Rome and in Western Church, see G.D. Gordini, *Origine e sviluppo del monachesimo a Roma*, “Gregorianum” 37 (1956) p. 220-260; R. Lorenz, *Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert*, ZKG 77 (1966) p. 3-8; B. Degórski, *Peculiarità nel monachesimo del Mediterraneo latino secondo i concili dei secoli IV-VI*, in: *Cristianesimo e specificità regionali nel Mediterraneo latino (sec. IV-VI). XXII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma, 6-8 maggio 1993*, SEA 46, Roma 1994, p. 108-111.

¹¹ Kelly, *Hieronim. Życie, pisma, spory*, p. 111.

¹² In his *Commentary on Isaiah* (VI 14, 1), Jerome reinforces the idea of presenting monastic life as an eschatology, pointing out that entering monastic life is a voluntary participation in death.

that “[...] lies among scorpions and adders, among snares and banes, let us go forward staff in hand, our loins girded and our feet shod; that so we may come to the sweet waters of the true Jordan, and enter the land of promise and go up to the house of God”¹³. As such, Jerome is depicting monastic life in eschatological terms, showing it as a pilgrimage to the promised land modelled on the one taken by the chosen people, many times interpreted by Jerome as a way to Christian perfection and as an illustration of a soul directing itself towards salvation¹⁴. For the Stridonian a monk’s life itself means reaching the promised land¹⁵. In his letter to Rusticus Jerome wrote “I begin thus, Rusticus my son, to teach you the greatness of your enterprise and the loftiness of your ideal; and to show you that only by trampling under foot youthful lusts can you hope to climb the heights of true maturity”¹⁶. As we can see, Rusticus and other similar to him, reach perfect age despite the fact that they are young. Not only do they – in the spiritual sense of course – pass the adolescent and mature age but become for what ordinary people strive their whole life – trueness¹⁷. Jerome collates the “ordinary” – who left this world for eschaton, by means of abandoning their temporal lives, “moved to a better one” where they “live more fully after renouncing the body of death and all stimulus to sin” – with those who “carry with them Jesus’ mortification bodily and live not according to the flesh but spirit” and “live within the one who is life, and Christ lives in them”¹⁸. Both, the dead who left this world, and the monks who left their temporal lives – live to the full. What is more, the monks live truly and it seems even more to the full through the presence of Christ and His power in them “because these live” as Jerome says “in whom dwells God’s power” and “in them lives the wisdom hidden in God, in them lives and works righteousness”¹⁹. This is precisely why abandoning everything and following Christ is worth it. Rejecting all that what is worldly the monk gives himself

¹³ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 130, 19.

¹⁴ Cf. M. Wysocki, *Hope Found, Hope Lost – Eschatological Aspects in the Interpretations of Israelites’ Wilderness Wanderings. Two Sides of One Story: Origen’s 27. Homily on the Book of Numbers and Jerome’s Letter 78*, *VoxP* 67 (2017) p. 727-742.

¹⁵ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 39, 5.

¹⁶ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 125, 1.

¹⁷ In Jerome’s 118th letter (to Julian), meanwhile consoling Julian after the death of his wife and daughters, he reproaches him for not wanting to become perfect. See Hieronymus, *Ep.* 118, 4.

¹⁸ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 119, 9.

¹⁹ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 119, 9.

up to the Kingdom of God and chooses a true life²⁰. Jerome explains this to monk Heliodorus: “perfect servant of Christ has nothing beside Christ”²¹, and therefore fulfils the perfectness of the future life with and in Christ now. A monk “[knows] the mystery of Christ and [shares] this mystery with the patriarchs”²² and partakes in the community of saints, becomes a house inmate of the Saviour²³. Christ, according to Jerome, assured that the one who would worship Him on earth would be glorified by Him²⁴, realising the restricted to eschatological happiness state here on earth. What is more, Jerome states that the promises and rewards announced to saints – i.e. future conveniences – are realised currently here on earth²⁵.

However, for this to be plausible, the monk must abandon the world as it was already said, give up, through a kind of death, the earthly things in order to ascend to the eschatological heaven, and therefore Jerome in a letter to the soldier Exuperantius, encourages him to abandon this service and take up monastic life, he wrote: “Cast from you the burden of the things of this world, and seek not those riches which in the gospel are compared to the humps of camels. Naked and unencumbered fly up to heaven; masses of gold will but impede the wings of your virtue”²⁶. A monk has to undertake this mission here, on earth, in order to, in the words of the Bethlehemite, “[have] no communion with darkness”²⁷. Such renunciation assures great rewards promised by Christ, that is why in his letter to Pammachius regarding Pauline’s death and the context of renouncing all worldly honours and beginning a monastic life, Jerome wrote: “The things we have renounced are small; the things we possess are great. All that Christ promises is duly performed and for what we

²⁰ See Hieronymus, *Ep.* 14, 6. It is worth noting that the rejection of the world had not only a spiritual but also a strictly legal dimension, especially in the later period, when monastic life was already developed and systematized. For example, in the time of Gregory the Great, entering a monastery was legally discharged from state obligations and forfeited property. See J. Lewandowicz, *Klasztory, mnisi, mniszki. Obraz życia monastycznego w „Registrum Epistularum” Grzegorza Wielkiego na tle prawa cesarskiego i kościelnego [Monasteries, Monks, Nuns. The image of monastic life in Gregory the Great’s Registrum Epistularum against the background of imperial and ecclesiastical law]*, Kraków 2018, p. 187-190.

²¹ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 14,6.

²² Hieronymus, *Ep.* 66, 9.

²³ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 108, 31.

²⁴ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 66, 7.

²⁵ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 66, 7.

²⁶ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 145.

²⁷ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 11.

have given up we have received an hundredfold”²⁸. Renouncing the world is the basic quality of a monk: “But if for your part you desire to be a monk and not merely to seem one, be more careful of your soul than of your property; for in adopting a religious profession you have renounced this once for all”²⁹ – he wrote to monk Rusticus. Only the complete renunciation of the world, deprivation of the inheritance in the world, guarantees coinheritance with Christ³⁰. Giving up of one’s wealth is a death before death³¹. Those desiring perfection and participation in Christ’s life and rewards must despise the cities and withdraw to the desert³², depart as Abraham homeland, leave family heading into unknown directions, sell their wealth and give it away to the poor and only then – being deprived – follow Christ³³. Getting rid of everything and giving away the property, in an almost eschatological sense, makes the monk lose all these goods, makes them external to him, and at the same time they become truly his, “because they have become Christ’s”³⁴. Only total rejection of one’s own property guarantees participation in the eschatological community of saints already here on earth. In the letter to the mentioned Pammachius Jerome wrote: “If therefore you will to be perfect and desire to be as the prophets, as the apostles, as Christ Himself, sell not a part of your substance lest the fear of want become an occasion of unfaithfulness, and so you perish with Ananias and Sapphira, but all that you have”³⁵. Such abandonment of earthly property results in a reward that is destined for those who, after death, will receive and find the sole most important reward – Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, monks who despise property and follow Christ perfectly already receive it and the Lord becomes their heritage³⁶. So, they already participate in eschatological happiness here on earth. Renouncing the world is also associated with one more eschatological sign – the destruction of Satan’s power. A monk who surrenders himself to God and gives up the world a second time, after baptism, renounces Satan and his world³⁷.

²⁸ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 66, 7.

²⁹ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 125, 7.

³⁰ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 14, 6.

³¹ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 39, 5.

³² Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 155.

³³ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 125, 20.

³⁴ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 130, 14.

³⁵ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 66, 8.

³⁶ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 66, 8.

³⁷ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 130, 7.

2. The Desert – Heaven on earth

Nevertheless, this eschatological dimension of monastic life is most visible perhaps in the letters of the Monk from Bethlehem, particularly in the descriptions of monks' daily life and living conditions. In a letter to the monk Heliodorus, Jerome certainly rhetorically bloated³⁸, but also with theological thought, wrote:

O desert, bright with the flowers of Christ! O solitude whence come the stones of which, in the Apocalypse, the city of the great king is built! O wilderness, gladdened with God's special presence! What keeps you in the world, my brother, you who are above the world? How long shall gloomy roofs oppress you? How long shall smoky cities immure you? Believe me, I have more light than you. Sweet it is to lay aside the weight of the body and to soar into the pure bright ether. Do you dread poverty? Christ calls the poor blessed. Does toil frighten you? No athlete is crowned but in the sweat of his brow. Are you anxious as regards food? Faith fears no famine. Do you dread the bare ground for limbs wasted with fasting? The Lord lies there beside you. Do you recoil from an unwashed head and uncombed hair? Christ is your true head. Does the boundless solitude of the desert terrify you? In the spirit you may walk always in paradise³⁹.

This brief incentive to stay at the desert and visit Jerome is ripe with eschatological mentions and displays monastic life precisely in terms of the realised eschatology. Desert itself becomes a paradise garden full of flowers – that is monks of course⁴⁰. They are here on earth stones that will

³⁸ We have to remember that rhetoric was a vivid and important part of almost every early Christian piece and not otherwise with the works of Jerome, but elements of the realised eschatology, although covered with this rhetorical costume, are too important and too obvious to see in it only rhetoric element of his letters. About rhetoric in Jerome's letters, see J. Hritz, *The Style of the Letters of St Jerome*, Washington 1939; G. Stoico, *L'Epistolario di san Girolamo: Studio critico-letterario di stilistica latina*, Naples 1972; L. Viscido, *Atteggiamenti ironici nell'epistolario geronimiano*, Salerno 1978; F. Trisoglio, *Note stilistiche sull'epistolario di Girolamo*, VetCh 30 (1993) p. 267-288; B. Conring, *Hieronymus als Briefschreiber. Ein Beitrag zur spätantiken Epistolographie*, Tübingen 2001.

³⁹ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 14, 10.

⁴⁰ The desert as heaven-on-earth is some kind of the *locus classicus* in the picturesque description (given e.g. in *Vita Antonii* 44) and the idealistic conception in ancient monastic literature (see S. Gasparro, *L'ermetismo nelle testimonianze dei Padri*, in:

construct the eschatological city – the construction has already started. In a monastic community everyone enjoys close relations with God and His presence. In the desert, the monks are free – almost free of their bodies and can fly high like angels to heaven – where they can receive rewards⁴¹. They are not bound to the flesh and its rules and desires; therefore, it is in a monastic desert where effectuates the thing that conditions eschatological fulfilment – Christ becomes the head and truly present. Similarly, monastic life is presented by Jerome in a letter to Praesidius, where he additionally refers to monks as “the angelic family” and “heavenly choirs”. The monks are the garden of paradise again, spiritual jewels, garlands crowning the Lord⁴². Monks “while they are on earth live the angelic life and speak only of the praises of God”⁴³.

Even a monk’s cell is, in the terms of eschatological completeness on earth, a special place for Jerome. Encouraging the mentioned Praesidius to arriving at the desert Jerome presents to him the blissful conditions in which he is to live:

You will have a cell that will host you alone. You will not be alone at all, there will be a crowd of angels with you; as many companions as there are saints. You will read the Gospel, Jesus will talk to you, you will unfold the books of the apostles or prophets. Will you be able to have another such companion in your discussions?⁴⁴

Papers presented to the Fifth International Conference on Patristic Studies 1967 Oxford, ed. F.L. Cross, *Studia Patristica* 11, Berlin 1972, p. 58-64; A. Guillaumont, *La Conception du désert chez les moines d’Égypte*, RHR 188 (1975) p. 3-21; D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism*, Oxford 1993; A. Cain, ‘*Vox clamantis in deserto*’: *Rhetoric, Reproach, and the Forging of Ascetic Authority in Jerome’s Letters from the Syrian Desert*, JTS NS 57 (2006) p. 500-525; Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*, p. 20), but here we see it as a part of “the system” of the eschatological understanding of the monastic life.

⁴¹ Andrew Cain in his brilliant work on Jerome’s letters truly says about this eschatological dimension of the desert: “For the Oriental hermits, the desert was a redemptive *locus* where the paradise that had been lost through sin could be regained through spiritual perfection, and Jerome was consciously inscribing himself into their hallowed tradition” (Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*, p. 23), but there is something more in Jerome’s letters and in his perception of the desert than only tradition and its penitential dimension.

⁴² Hieronymus, *Ep.* 155.

⁴³ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 130, 14.

⁴⁴ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 155.

Hence, again one can discern the eschatological terms employed in order to depict the daily life of a monk, especially the cell which will be far from being only a solitary but in fact the eschatological community with God, angels and saints. Meanwhile writing about the nun Asella, Jerome clearly described her: “shut up in her narrow cell she roamed through paradise”⁴⁵, whereas to the monk Rusticus he wrote that he should treat his cell like paradise⁴⁶. For Jerome the loneliness that he experienced was paradise⁴⁷.

Those who have already given up themselves to Christ in a likewise manner, renouncing the world, ceasing to exist for it, belonging to the angelic family of monks, can serve as a great illustration of eschatological fulfilment on earth. For this reason, Jerome refers to different monks as examples – some of the deceased ones and some living – showing the said “already/now” that has come to fulfilment in their lives. Most clearly it is discernible in the life of a praised by Jerome monk Bonosus, in his letter to Chromatius, Jovinus, and Eusebius:

Bonosus, like a true son of the Fish, has taken to the water. [...] [He] has his heel already on the serpent's head [...]. He can scale already that ladder of which the psalms of degrees are a type [...]. Amid the threatening billows of the world he is sitting in the safe shelter of his island, that is, of the church's pale, and it may be that even now, like John, he is being called to eat God's book [...]. [He] looks already for a crown⁴⁸.

Most important here is the employing of the particle *iam*, with which Jerome tries to emphasize the reality that “has already” started, but also to show that the fulfilled in Bonosus' life activities which relate to the eschatological reality, such as: presence in heaven, defeat of Satan, perfection and presence in the Lord's temple, security that is salvation, reward – are all also important. All this is already available to those who lead a monastic life. He addresses the monk Rusticus in a similar way, showing him the greatness of the monastic vocation he fulfils, which is communing with the saints and seeing God, which is the announced reward for the pure-hearted. However for some, it will only be available after death, and for some – clearly monks – it is already available. Jerome writes:

⁴⁵ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 24, 3.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 125, 7.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 125, 8.

⁴⁸ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 7, 3.

For through the mercy of God you have already put your hand to the plough; you have already gone up upon the housetop like the apostle Peter. [...] Once more, this fair white sheet which in his vision was taken up again was a symbol of the church which carries believers from earth to heaven, an assurance that the Lord's promise should be fulfilled: "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"⁴⁹.

It may seem unsurprising then that the greatest of the monks perform, almost as in eschatological times, miracles at the time of attacks on Rome, when accepting monastic vocation brings onto the terrorized ruined country and city peace and transformation, as shows Jerome praising Demetrius:

Then Italy put off her mourning and the ruined walls of Rome resumed in part their olden splendour; for they believed the full conversion of their fosterchild to be a sign of God's favour towards them. You would fancy that the Goths had been annihilated and that that concourse of deserters and slaves had fallen by a thunderbolt from the Lord on high⁵⁰.

The acceptance of virginity and monastic life brings about eschatological effects – the renewal of the world, end to wars, coming of God's mercy. This conviction of eschatological victory is also the belief of all those living in monasteries and dedicating themselves to God, who experience problems of earthly life and the instability of the world. These men believe that ultimately it is they, together with God and with His grace, who will overcome the world and the devil⁵¹. This belief can be even more justified as they are already conquering the world and Satan. They are also convinced that by acting in this way in the world, they will also prepare better themselves for the final meeting with the Bridegroom and will not miss the moment of His coming⁵², because they already commune and keep watch with Him.

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One can notice the present at multiple instances vision of a monastic life as the realization of eschatological reality promised to perfect men after death in the views of one of the greatest Western eulogists of the monas-

⁴⁹ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 125, 2.

⁵⁰ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 130, 6.

⁵¹ Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 103, 2.

⁵² Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 155.

tic life, i.e. Jerome. By means of dying to the world and living for Christ, monks can experience eschatology already here on earth. Indisputably, this was a very important argument for leading a monastic life, besides being a very interesting theological view on monks' life in this, and the other world.

The Eschatological Aspects of the Monastic Life in St. Jerome's Letters

(summary)

In the year 1953, a New Testament scholar named Charles Harold Dodd published a book titled *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* which revolutionized the way of thinking about Christian eschatology. In his *opus vitae*, Charles Dodd argued based on the Gospel of John that apocalyptic realities are in fact already realised through Jesus and His Apostles' ministry. On this premise, he coined the term "realized eschatology", in which all announcements concerning the Kingdom of God had already been realized according to Dodd. This "realized eschatology" can be seen through various realities of everyday life of the community of believers. In the case of Saint Jerome of Stridon, he saw the eschatological reality in the monastic lifestyle, in entering the monastic life and in being in the desert. This article aims to show what eschatological signs are present in the description of the monastic community found in the letters of Saint Jerome. For in his letters many times he refers to eschatological realities already present in monastic life, which is for him a kind of paradise on earth and the fulfilment of Christ's eschatological prophecies.

Keywords: Jerome of Stridon; eschatology; monastic life; realized eschatology; letters

Eschatologiczny wymiar życia monastycznego w listach św. Hieronima

(streszczenie)

W roku 1953 badacz Nowego Testamentu Charles Harold Dodd opublikował swoje dzieło *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, które zrewolucjonizowało myślenie o chrześcijańskiej eschatologii. W swym *opus vitae* Dodd wskazywał, na podstawie Ewangelii według św. Jana, że apokaliptyczne rzeczywistości są już rzeczywistnie w posłudze Jezusa Chrystusa i Jego Apostołów. Na tej podstawie ukuł termin „eschatologia zrealizowana” rozumiany w ten sposób, że wszystkie eschatologiczne zapowiedzi o Królestwie Bożym już zostały wypełnione. Tę zrealizowaną eschatologię można dostrzec w różnych rzeczywistościach życia wspólnoty wierzących. W przypadku Hieronima ze Strydonu dostrzegaliśmy on eschatologiczną rzeczywistość w życiu mnichów. Niniejszy artykuł ma za zadanie ukazać, jakie znaki eschatologiczne obecne są w opisie mniszej wspólnoty zawartej w listach św. Hieronima. Wielokrotnie bowiem w swych listach przywołuje rzeczywistości eschatologiczne jako już obecne w życiu monastycznym. Jest ono dla niego z pewnością swoistym rajem na ziemi i wypełnieniem zapowiedzi eschatologicznych Chrystusa.

Słowa kluczowe: Hieronim ze Strydonu; eschatologia; życie monastyczne; eschatologia zrealizowana; listy

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Studies

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