

Alfons Fürst (Hg.)

PERSPECTIVES ON ORIGEN  
AND THE HISTORY OF HIS RECEPTION

ADAMANTIANA 21



Adamantiana  
Band 21

ADAMANTIANA

Texte und Studien zu Origenes und seinem Erbe  
Texts and Studies on Origen and his Legacy

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Edited by  
Alfons Fürst

In collaboration with  
Pui Him Ip, Karla Pollmann, Elena Rapetti

 **Aschendorff**  
Verlag

Münster  
2021



Funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program  
under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 676258.

**THE HISTORY OF HUMAN FREEDOM AND DIGNITY  
IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION**



*Cover image*

Origenes by Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652) courtesy of Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino

*Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek*

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;  
detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-402-13752-9

ISBN 978-3-402-13753-6 (E-Book PDF)

ISSN 2510-3954

DOI <https://doi.org/10.17438/978-3-402-13757-4>



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## Preface

The present volume contains papers which were presented at a series of workshops at the *Eighteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies* held at Oxford in August 2019. As they all relate to Origen and the history of his reception, the organizers of the workshops, Karla Pollmann, Elena Rapetti, Pui-Him Ip and myself, decided to publish them together in a special volume in the series *Adamantiana*.

Three of these workshops were an outcome of a project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 676258 on the *History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization*. Karla Pollmann (Bristol) organized a workshop on "Role Models for Human Freedom and Dignity in Origen" which included her own paper and those of Sara Contini (Bristol), Monnica Klöckener (Münster) and Ilaria Scarponi (Bristol). A workshop on "Perspectives on Origen in the History of his Reception" was set up by Elena Rapetti and myself (and I'd like to mention also that this workshop was originally suggested to me by Lenka Karfíková). The first session included the papers of Morten Kock Møller (Prague), Lenka Karfíková (Prague – Olomouc) and myself (Münster), the second the papers of Elisa Belucci (Halle), Marilyn Lewis (Bristol) and Elena Rapetti (Milan); both sessions were introduced by a paper by Theo Kobusch (Bonn). The fourth workshop on "Re-thinking Origen and Fourth Century Theology" was organized by Pui Him Ip (Cambridge) with, in addition to his own paper, contributions by Mark J. Edwards (Oxford) and Giovanni Hermanin de Reichenfeld (Rome), to which papers by Stephen C. Carlson (Melbourne) and Benjamin A. Edsall (Melbourne) were added. And finally, Anders-Christian Jacobsen (Aarhus) decided to offer his plenary lecture at the Oxford conference to the present volume, as did Peter W. Martens (St. Louis) with the keynote address he delivered at the University of Kent in Canterbury in August 2016 at the opening meeting of the above mentioned project on Origen's legacy in western theological and philosophical debates about human freedom and dignity.

I owe many thanks to all the contributors to this volume for their willingness to publish their papers in it, especially to Karla Pollmann and Elena Rapetti for organizing the workshops and to Pui Him Ip for suggesting the idea of publishing the papers from his workshop in this volume. These three colleagues were so kind as to entrust me with the editing of the book. Special thanks are due to Marilyn Lewis for her careful improvement of the English of the articles by non-native speakers; all remaining mistakes in the printed text are nevertheless the editor's

responsibility. And last but not least, I have to thank my team at the *Origen Research Center* at Münster University, where the series *Adamantiana* is housed, for their unfailingly reliable help: Anne Achternkamp and Felix Arens checked and corrected the formal style of all the contributions, and Dr. Christian Pelz and Lisa Rüschemschmidt prepared the indexes.

Münster, Easter 2021

*Alfons Fürst*

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# INTRODUCTION



# Perspectives on Origen – *Quondam* and Tomorrow Stimuli for the Future of Origen Studies in the New Millennium\*

ALFONS FÜRST, MÜNSTER

## 1. Starting Points: Some Well-Known Aspects of Origen's Thought

If one reads through the papers of the present volume from beginning to end – as I did several times in preparing it for publication – several insights become quite clear. These insights are well known, at least among Origen scholars. Nevertheless, I want to address them briefly, not in order to follow well-trodden paths of Origen research, but to take them as a starting point for some thoughts about possible future directions for the study of Origen and his legacy. This introductory essay is, therefore, not intended to present the outcome of research but to draw upon it as it is mirrored in the contributions to this volume, in order to identify possible follow-up questions for future studies in this field. Thus first, and briefly, the widely known insights:

(1) The enormous range of Origen's achievements finds expression in the multifarious topics which are dealt with in the particular contributions. Origen covers the whole field of the discipline which later came to be called theology: exegesis and hermeneutics, systematic theology (apologetics, dogmatics and ethics), practical theology (liturgy, homiletics and pastoral care); the only subject missing is history – Origen was simply not interested in history, apart, of course, from salvation history. The Christian teacher from Alexandria in Egypt, later a teacher and also a presbyter in Caesarea in Palestine, is really one of the major founders and builders of Christian ways of thinking and of life in the Roman Empire of Late Antiquity.

(2) His denigration and eventually condemnation as an heretic centuries after his death heavily damaged his reputation and the transmission of his works, but it did not prevent many Christian intellectuals, bishops as well as monks, from studying his writings and drawing inspiration from them. Origen became a widely read, but rarely cited and often not even acknowledged author. His legacy is as broad and manifold as his activities during his lifetime. Hence, the long series

\* I wish to thank Peter W. Martens (Saint Louis) for very fruitful discussions about this topic when preparing this essay. Together with Josef Lössl (Cardiff) he also helped to improve the English of the article.

of studies on his influence, whether direct and open, or more often, hidden and subcutaneous, in various ecclesiastical traditions and on different topics.

(3) Origen's influence on Christian exegesis with its core idea of several senses of Scripture lasted unabated until the end of the Middle Ages and even well into Early Modern times. The impact of Origen's Christian philosophy reached its apogee as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century among the Christian Platonists – or simply Origenists – of Cambridge. The papers in the present volume, which deal with manifold perspectives on Origen and his multifaceted reception in different epochs, cover this period from Late Antiquity to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

It is not by chance that this century marks the chronological limit of the present volume. From the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards, the Origenian tradition, like all theological and ecclesiastical traditions, became more precarious and contested. They had to face the challenges of new scientific findings, especially in the field of natural sciences, as well as concomitant new ways of thinking about the world, about human beings and especially about God or the divine. Neither within the general history of ideas nor within theological traditions was Origen an important figure. Even the remarkable exception, namely the revival of Origen in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was confined to theological and ecclesiastical concerns, and basically to the development of Catholic theology. It was Catholic priests, all of them Jesuits, located in a small area of central Europe between Lyon in France (Henri de Lubac, 1896–1991), Basel in Switzerland (Hans Urs von Balthasar, 1905–1988) and Innsbruck in Austria (the brothers Hugo, 1900–1968, and Karl Rahner, 1904–1984), who detected the spiritual depth of Origen and his exegetical genius and tried to derive benefit from these aspects of his thought to meet the ecclesiastical needs of those days, i. e. in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the cusp of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>1</sup>

This mainly Catholic revival of Origen gave a fresh impetus to Origen studies in the second half of the last century. Origen also gained popularity outside the domain of theology in other fields of academic studies, and even beyond the academy in cultural life.<sup>2</sup> This impetus endures, but nowadays, like so many as-

- 1 See the contributions to the thematic section about “The Rediscovery of Origen in Twentieth Century Theology: A Legacy for the New Millennium?” in Adam. 25 (2019) 6–146, furthermore Alfons Fürst, Hugo Rahner und die katholische Wiederentdeckung des Origenes, in: ZKT 141 (2019) 220–238. For an earlier account, see Monique Alexander, La redécouverte d'Origène au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, in: Christian Badiou/Charles Kannengiesser (eds.), Les Pères de l'Église dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, Paris/Bucharest 2006, 51–93. For Hans Urs von Balthasar, see the comprehensive study of Elisa Zocchi, The Sacramentality of the World and the Mystery of Freedom: Hans Urs von Balthasar, Reader of Origen (Adamantina 16), Münster 2021.
- 2 See the examples presented by Marco Rizzi in his “Introduction to the Thematic Section” in the above noted volume of Adam. 25 (2019) 6f., namely Carl Orff's (1895–1982) *De temporum fine comoedia* (1973), and id., The Revival of the Apokatastasis: Or, Three Ways

pects of modern life, these studies have been globalized. The life, works and legacy of Origen, the Greek Christian of Roman Alexandria and Palestine, are studied by many scholars with different cultural and religious backgrounds in many countries all over the world. Yet there is still a hub of Origen studies in Europe, as the list of contributors to the present volume shows – but with the notable exception of scholars from the United States and from Australia.

## 2. Recent Developments in Patristics and Classics

A crucial question in this recent development of Origen studies seems to be how this global research on Origen is connected to current fields of research in the sciences and humanities beyond the classic fields of theology or philosophy of religion. It is certainly instructive for our knowledge of the history of theology and of the Christian churches to study the giants of the past, like Origen, and their influence on different religious traditions. And although we already know quite a lot, there are still many understudied topics and uncharted territories, especially on the map of Origen's hidden *Wirkungsgeschichte*, which are worth investigating.<sup>3</sup> But the question is: Why should we do that? Or, to sharpen the problem which many institutions at which this kind of research is located are already facing: Why should any society or institution allocate money to projects about Origen and his legacy? In a contribution to the Patristics Conference in Oxford in 2019, Wendy Mayer from Adelaide in Australia gave a provocative lecture on this very topic related to Patristics in general.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, projects on Origen and his legacy still get funding, and sometimes it even happens on a large scale with an impressive output.<sup>5</sup> There is a vi-

to Read Origen Today, in: Alfons Fürst/Christian Hengstmann (Hg.), *Autonomie und Menschenwürde: Origenes in der Philosophie der Neuzeit* (Adamantina 2), Münster 2012, 275–283, with the examples of the Austrian-American mathematician and logician Kurt Gödel (1906–1978), the Austrian-American sociologist Peter L. Berger (1929–2017) and the Italian theologian Vito Mancuso (b. 1962).

3 Some suggestions are made in the round table contributions to “The Future of Origen's Theology” in: Adam. 25 (2019) 133–146.

4 Wendy Mayer, *Patristics and Postmodernity: Bridging the Gap*, in: Markus Vinzent et al. (eds.), *Studia Patristica*, Leuven (forthcoming). I thank Peter W. Martens for sharing this paper with me.

5 To mention one significant example: Within the Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, the European Union funded a project on “The History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization” (2016–2019) which consisted basically in research on Origen's legacy on this topic. Six universities in five European countries and nine non-academic partner organizations were part of this project, including 15 positions for PhD students and covering the whole range of Origen's *Wirkungsgeschichte* from Late Antiquity to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

brant community of Origen scholars in many countries, greater in number than ever before. When organizing a conference on Origen like the Origeniana, the mailing list of interested scholars contains around 700 addresses in countries all over the world, and when it comes to participation, over a hundred proposals are submitted (130 for the upcoming Origeniana XIII, a quarter of them from female scholars). Most scholars are still based in Europe, with the second largest group in both the Americas.<sup>6</sup> Origen scholarship is, hence, still an enterprise driven by the cultural and religious background of Europe and its global (or semi-global) spread. But even if this field of research grows in the future and spreads in other, non-European cultures – which seems doubtful, however –, the crucial point is not about quantity but about content, objectives and outreach. Again the same question is knocking at the door: Why study Origen and his legacy?

I do not want to answer this question here, but rather to raise additional issues that shape this query. We – i. e., the community of Origen scholars – have to think about how to connect research on Origen with other fields and disciplines. Lately, there has been an increasing tendency in departments of Classics to deal with sources and subjects which used to be in the domain of Patristic studies. Historians, philologists, philosophers and archaeologists – the last named group for some time now – have become more and more interested in the history and the literature of Early Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the ancient Christian heritage has become the subject of new questions posed from perspectives outside ecclesiastical and theological traditions. The broader context of this development is framed by the establishment of Late Antiquity as an epoch *sui generis* and thus as a distinct field of study from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, with a focus on the cultural and social circumstances of the literature produced in this epoch (notably through the works of Peter Brown, b. 1935).<sup>8</sup> A new multi- and interdisciplinary field of research has emerged in which well-known as well as lesser known or even new

6 To provide some rough figures: for the next Origeniana conference (nr. XIII), two third of the papers come from Europe, one third from the Americas, plus three from Japan and one from South Africa. Thus, Origen studies are not (yet?) really globalized – this is only true in one hemisphere of the world.

7 See the introductory essay by the editor: The Nature and Scope of Patristics, in: Ken Parry (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, Chichester et al. 2015, 3–11, and furthermore the contributions in: Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony/Theodore de Bruyn/Carol Harrison (eds.), *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Proceedings of an International Conference to Mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Association of Patristic Studies*, Turnhout 2015.

8 Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity A.D. 150–750*, London 1971 (<sup>2</sup>1989); id., *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge MA/London 1978. Among subsequent literature, I mention only Gillian Clark, *Late Antiquity: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2011; and Rita Lizzi Testa (ed.), *Late Antiquity in Contemporary Debate*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2017.

sources have been investigated by new approaches – for instance, sociological methods like network analysis or, currently, instruments provided by digital humanities – and by posing new questions from different perspectives.

These developments in Classics and especially in studies in Late Antiquity have opened up new opportunities for Patristics. This subject, which in modern times has become established as a specific area of research and teaching within theology,<sup>9</sup> is no longer only a part of theology and church history but also, and nowadays more than ever, one of the disciplines engaged in research on the broad field of Late Antiquity. In terms of institutions, Patristic scholars are involved in interdisciplinary centers and projects devoted to this field of research, and in Classics departments there are chairs dedicated, for instance, to Early Christian literature. The same holds true for Origen studies. To give only a rough sketch: Origen's writings are edited by philologists, and these scholars investigate his texts by applying their philological methods and perspectives. Historians who are interested in the religious, social, and political contexts of Origen's life, pose questions according to the methods of, e. g., social history, or history of mentalities or politics. Philosophers might be interested in Origen's thoughts and his legacy for the later history of ideas – and so forth.

### 3. New Perspectives on Origen

Within this current context of Patristic studies, Origen scholars not only encounter new perspectives but come up with new questions themselves. During the last century of Origen studies (the new perspective on Origen as a master of exegesis and spirituality started in the 1930s) we have learned a lot about these fundamental aspects of his work.<sup>10</sup> Most of his writings have been edited according to modern philological standards and translated in many of the languages dominating this field (although there are still some writings not translated). New texts have even been unexpectedly found which have enriched our picture of Origen significantly. At the turn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, scholars became more interested in the method-

9 See my article on Patristic Theology/Patristics, in: Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World. Classical Tradition IV (2009) 323–329.

10 As significant scholars after the abovementioned seminal Jesuit circle between Lyon and Innsbruck, the French scholars Jean Daniélou (1905–1974), Henri Crouzel (1918–2003) and Marguerite Harl (1919–2020) can be named. For the main ideas of this period of Origen scholarship, see Hugo Rahner, 'Das Menschenbild des Origenes', in: *ErJb* 15 (1947) 197–248; and Henri Crouzel, 'L'anthropologie d'Origène dans la perspective du combat spirituel', in: *RAM* 31 (1955) 364–385; id., 'Die Spiritualität des Origenes: Ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart', in: *ThQ* 165 (1985) 132–142. See also the brilliant review by Charles Kannengiesser, 'A Century in Quest of Origen's Spirituality', in: Luigi F. Pizzoni and Marco Rizzi (eds.), *Origene maestro di vita spirituale*, Milan 2001, 3–9.

ological aspects of Origen's exegesis and rhetoric in the context of the philological traditions of the Roman Empire.<sup>11</sup> Philological studies on Origen's texts will continue, and rightly so, because there are still open questions within this field of research. For instance, a *Biblia Origeniana* (like the *Biblia Augustiniana*) would be welcome because it would not only be a useful tool for in-depth studies of Origen's exegetical works but also improve our understanding of the early history of the biblical texts. A *Lexicon Origenis* (like the *Lexicon on Gregory of Nyssa*) would be more than welcome although it would be a huge challenge to include both the Greek and Latin vocabulary. A new *Clavis Origenis* is already in preparation that might serve as a basis for such projects.

Nevertheless, it seems that Origen research has entered into a phase of transition. In the context of the above described interdisciplinary research in the broader field of Late Antiquity, Origen scholars are also coming up with new questions from new perspectives. The so-called 'Münster School'<sup>12</sup> illustrates this new trend, where Origen (alongside Plotinus) is seen as a groundbreaking innovator of a metaphysics of freedom, thus placing him into the history of philosophy and inquiring into the impact of this way of thinking on a very broad scale, starting from Late Antiquity and looking for the reception of this specific aspect up to the present day. It is not yet clear in which direction this and other new approaches to Origen will develop. But this new perspective on Origen provides the opportunity to devote oneself to the study of Origen as part of a multidisciplinary community of scholars who are interested in early Christianity. Patristic or Origen scholars can contribute substantially to these studies and thus – if this becomes necessary – prove the relevance of their discipline not only in theology but also in the humanities more broadly. To achieve this, it is important to connect research on Origen with other fields and disciplines of contemporary scholarship beyond theology.

Against this background, what follows is an attempt to identify topics of Origen studies in which traditional views can be connected with new approaches.

11 Main exemplars of this kind of research include the masterful study of Bernhard Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 2 vols. (SBA 18/1–2), Basel 1987, as well as several publications of Lorenzo Perrone (b. 1946). For research on Origen's spirituality, see his: *La preghiera secondo Origene: L'impossibilità donata* (Letteratura Cristiana Antica N. S. 24), Brescia 2011; and for Origen's exegesis, a volume in which some of his articles on the newly discovered *Homilies on the Psalms* are gathered is a revealing example of this perspective: id., "Meine Zunge ist mein Ruhm:" Studien zu den neuen Psalmenhomilien des Origenes, ed. by Alfons Fürst (Adamantiana 20), Münster 2021. In his introductory essay under the title: "Der Mann der Bibel: Das Origenesbild in den Psalmenhomilien," Perrone himself makes a strong case for the philological-exegetical approach.

12 Anders-Christian Jacobsen in his round table communication in: *Adam.* 25 (2019) 142, who mentions as the key figures Theo Kobusch, Christian Hengstermann and myself.

Wiley Blackwell's *Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*<sup>13</sup> illustrates the integration of these more traditional themes with recent developments. The methodological approach in this fascinating handbook, whose contributors cover the whole field of classical, historical and religious studies in Antiquity, is framed by current trends in ancient history. The first two (of three) parts deal with questions of geography in this epoch in a very wide sense, extending from the western and northern parts of Europe to India and China, and with traditions and identities in several religious strands, not only Judaism and Christianity, but also, e.g., different forms of Gnosticism and the religious dimensions of Late Antique philosophy (and it might be noteworthy that the editors speak of 'identities' where previously we would have thought about 'institutions'). The third part deals with themes and discussions, namely: life and death, the body, medicine and health, the scriptural 'galaxy' and the proscription of sacred texts, and, finally, art, architecture, music and dance. This list of topics is revealing for contemporary perspectives and interests, and it might be inspiring for more specialised fields of research in Late Antiquity like the study of Origen.

As this essay also functions as an introduction to the present volume, I will stick to issues which here and there occur in the contributions. It will turn out that these topics cover, if not all aspects of Origen's activities in detail, his work as a whole in its breadth and depth.<sup>14</sup> My aim is, if possible, to set the stage for future studies on Origen by posing, hopefully, innovative questions on traditional topics.

### *Rhetoric of Persuasion*

It belongs by now to the truisms of Origen scholarship that Origen himself often posed questions rather than giving answers. Of course, he suggested some answers, and in many cases he explicated and defended his opinion, but on the whole he did not proclaim doctrines but presented ways of thinking. It has been my long-held impression that his academic style of dealing with problems by drawing on many positions, even contradictory ones, is attractive for contemporary scholars who are not interested in formulating and defending Christian doctrine but in understanding the development of Christian ideas and practices from the beginning.<sup>15</sup>

13 Josef Lössl / Nicholas J. Baker-Brian (eds.), *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*, Hoboken NJ 2018.

14 There are many studies on all these aspects. For the purpose of this essay, however, it does not seem useful to add lengthy footnotes. I will note only very few examples to give a hint to the main direction of my thoughts about recent and possible future developments of Origen research.

15 Instead of the generally accepted formula "théologie en recherche," coined by Henri Croutel, *Qu'a voulu faire Origène en composant le *Traité des Principes*?*, in: BLE 76 (1975) 161–186. 241–260 (here 246), and id., *Actualité d'Origène: Rapports de la foi et des*

Notwithstanding this presentation of Origen's thoughts, he entertained a plurality of views, not because he was aloof or simply wanted to survey options, but because he was engaged with the problems at hand. He discussed different opinions and traditions to make a case for his own standpoint. His texts are 'littérature engagée', i.e., committed literature. Origen had an agenda when he taught in his schools in Alexandria and in Caesarea and wrote his commentaries and treatises, when he preached in the service of his community and published his homilies. This holds true for every text: each author has his objectives. But in the case of a religiously engaged author like Origen, these objectives were very high and far-reaching; he wanted to shape the minds and lives of his audience. By his lifelong work Origen contributed substantially to the formation of a Christian culture based on both biblical and ancient pagan traditions.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, he was convinced that his Christian belief was the truth. This attitude formed the concrete disposition of his texts: hence the vigour of his homilies, the address to each individual hearer, the repetition of the same basic convictions, the relentless effort to investigate every detail in the biblical texts. His was a rhetoric of persuasion. He explicitly wanted to form people's thoughts about themselves, their lives, their habits and their values.

These observations lead to various questions: Which techniques did he use to achieve his aims? How did he apply rhetorical methods, which were traditional and widespread in Roman imperial times, to the needs of Christian belief and the Christian community? Or more generally: How does Christian preaching proceed? These questions have already been posed in studies on Christian authors of Late Antiquity. As to Origen, my impression is that his homilies, especially, have not yet been investigated sufficiently from this approach, although they provide a huge amount of material for a whole range of in-depth studies.

### *Power and Authority*

By his activities, Origen became an influential figure in Christian history, and he himself wanted to be influential. He created a specific kind of power which is based on persuasion and attraction. In doing so, he acquired authority, and he

cultures: *Une théologie en recherche*, in: *NRTh* 102 (1980) 386–399 (here 394–398), I'd like to hint at an excellent book which is wrongfully widely ignored by the international Origen community (with the notable exception of Kannengiesser, *Origen's Spirituality* [n. 10] 16f.), although it is one of the best descriptions of this way of thinking with respect both to Origen's exegesis, spirituality and ethics and to his defense of freewill: Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Zum Fest der Freiheit: Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origenes* (TTS 33), Mainz 1990.

16 See Alfons Fürst, *Origenes – der Schöpfer christlicher Wissenschaft und Kultur: Exegese und Philosophie im frühen Alexandria*, in: id., *Von Origenes und Hieronymus zu Augustinus: Studien zur antiken Theologiegeschichte* (AKG 115), Berlin/Boston 2011, 81–111.

ascribed it to himself. He dealt with authoritative traditions, i. e. the biblical texts, and in studying them constantly and intensively, he ascribed to himself the task and the role of continuing the authority of the main figures of the biblical texts. He understood himself as a successor to the prophets and apostles and thus created a new kind of authority.

What does this mean for the establishment and the function of authority in a given society? What is the role of intellectuals like Origen within established structures of power and authority like the Christian churches? What about competing authorities – as Origen found in those thinkers or groups whom he rejected as ‘heretics’? What about the relationship with authorities in concurrent religious traditions like the Jewish rabbis? How is Origen’s academic way of thinking connected with this striving for power and authority? What were the formative elements of this discourse of power? What was its impact? And what still *is* its impact on Christians of today who basically share the convictions forged in this ancient discourse or on scholars who want to understand the mechanism of a historical discourse without sharing its implications? By questions like these, the traditional study of Origen’s exegesis and homiletics might be connected with contemporary research on these early Christian texts.

### *Social Impact*

These questions can easily be transferred to social aspects of Origen’s activities. We do not know the immediate effects of his commentaries and homilies, but it is a safe assumption that they had at least some impact. They transformed the mindset of his hearers – but in which direction? Can we detect in which sense common assumptions about human beings, about the world, about God or the divine, were moulded, modified or recast by Origen’s efforts? Drawing on biblical imagery, Christians created a host of new symbols for the world and for history, for birth and death, life on earth and beyond, of themselves and others. To what extent did they contribute to the transformation of individuals as well as societies? We usually look at later monasticism and mysticism when we ask for the impact of Origen’s often radical, ascetical ideas about daily life.<sup>17</sup> We could, however, apply these questions to a wider circle of concerns. How did Origen modify common assumptions about wealth and status, rank and pleasure? Do his thoughts about these everyday realities imply any consequences in terms of economy, especially when it comes to questions of social justice?<sup>18</sup>

17 The seminal contributions are Henri Crouzel, *Virginité et mariage chez Origène* (ML.T 58), Bruges/Paris 1963, and his article: *Origène précurseur du monachisme*, in: id., *Théologie de la vie monastique* (Theol[P] 49), Paris 1961, 5–38.

18 See the inspiring account of Benjamin Blosser, *Love and Equity: The Social Doctrine of Origen of Alexandria*, in: SCE 27 (2014) 385–403, esp. on the idea of distributive justice. For a broader Patristic perspective, see Johan Leemans / Brian J. Matz / Johan Vers traet ten

*Individuality and Diversity*

Origen's impetus to mould the minds and lives of his hearers (and students) becomes most obvious in a specific trait of his homilies: he very often addresses not his audience as a whole, but each individual hearer (and student). "Also you ..." – this is the constantly recurring appeal throughout his homilies by means of which he applies the message of a given biblical text (as he interprets it) to each individual. This goes hand in hand with a generally very high esteem for the individual in Origen's anthropology. We have only just begun to connect this observation with the currently increasing interest in the fashioning of the individual, the subject or the self in Antiquity. I strongly suggest that these themes in Origen's works be investigated, since they provide many insights, including on the important theme of 'the care of the self'.<sup>19</sup>

A crucial aspect of this issue is the problem of diversity. Individual human beings differ unmistakably from each other. What creates the difference? Is this only a matter of the 'inner man,' i. e., how mind and soul come to their decisions between spirit and flesh – to put the problem in Origen's terms taken from Paul? Or is diversity inevitably related to the body? The question of the status of the body in a human being is crucial in understanding Origen's thoughts about the origin and future of human beings and about how to spend life on earth.<sup>20</sup> It is obvious how intimately this new interest in the body is connected to the theoretical commitment to the body as socially constructed in studies on Late Antiquity.<sup>21</sup>

(eds.), *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for Twenty-First Century Christian Social Thought*, Washington D. C. 2011.

- 19 I have made a case for this view on Origen in two recent publications: Alfons Fürst, *Origenes über Individualität, Selbstbestimmung und Selbstsorge*, in: id. (ed.), *Freedom as a Key Category in Origen and in Modern Philosophy and Theology* (Adamantina 14), Münster 2019, 33–47; and id., *Individuality and Self-Agency: The Self in Origen's Metaphysics of Freedom*, in: Maren R. Niehoff / Joshua Levinson (eds.), *Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity: New Perspectives* (Culture, Religion, and Politics in the Greco-Roman World 4), Tübingen 2019, 505–522. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 3: *Le souci de soi*, Paris 1984, would have found a lot of material in Origen's texts for his masterly account of this topic.
- 20 For the recent debate on this topic, see the contributions to the thematic number "Some Body or No Body? Studies in Origen's Theological Anthropology," ed. by Anders-Christian Jacobsen in: *ZAC* 23 (2019) 1–48, and the discussion between Peter W. Martens, *Origen's Doctrine of Pre-Existence and the Opening Chapter of Genesis*, in: *ZAC* 16 (2012) 516–549, and Mark Edwards, *Origen in Paradise: A Response to Peter Martens*, in: *ZAC* 23 (2019) 163–185, to which again Peter Martens responded in: *ibid.* 186–200. For a comprehensive overview over all involved aspects, see Alfons Fürst, *Matter and Body in Origen's Christian Platonism*, in: Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony u. a. (eds.), *Origeniana Duodecima: Origen's Legacy in the Holy Land – A Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem* (BETL 302), Leuven/Paris/Bristol CT 2019, 573–588.
- 21 The most compelling studies are Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York 1988, and the recently published

### *Gender and Equality Issues*

Intrinsically connected to the question of individual diversity is the issue of gender. In most of his statements, Origen follows the common ancient patriarchal standards, regarding women as ‘weaker’ than men, with less intellectual capacity, less bodily strength, and more inclined to slip into misconduct and sin of every kind. On the other hand, however, he explicitly states that all human beings, women as well as men, are fully equal in the eyes of God. This is a corollary of the basic assumption of his anthropology, i. e., that each human being is created according to God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26f.). How can we deal with this antithetic heritage? Is it simply outdated – which is surely the case as to the deprecation of women – or is his core idea of equality of all human beings as God’s creatures still useful within current debates?

To widen the perspective, Origen clearly reveals the common Greek view on mankind consisting of ‘Greeks’ and ‘barbarians,’ so we must ask what he thinks about the equality of each human being in this respect? The problem can also be framed in terms of social rank. How does Origen think about social status, about rich and poor people? With this question I do not mean the moral aspect which is dominant when it comes to soteriology – the poor ‘in spirit’ are seen to be better off than the rich. But what about Origen’s not particularly friendly comments on the generally bad behaviour of poor people? What about his elitist attitude to education and knowledge which cannot be denied? How does this relate to the basic assumption that all humans are equal?

These topics are not new in research on Late Antiquity, if only to mention as an example Jerome’s complex relationships with women. Origen’s conviction that all human beings are capable of learning and changing their habits, his optimistic hope that all will end up in the best imaginable status (the return to the beginning in his concept of the world and of history) despite his pessimistic assessment of their behaviour in their actual lives – might this contribute to problems of gender and equality? Or even of human dignity? In some of his texts there are at least the rudiments of disconnecting human dignity from social and sexual status and of connecting it to the godlikeness of each created human being.<sup>22</sup> Recasting this line of thought might lead into the major questions of contemporary politics and society. Might Origen’s claim for universal values and the common features of all

<sup>4</sup>th volume of Michel Foucault (1926–1984), *Histoire de la sexualité: Les aveux de la chair*, posthumously edited by Frédéric Gros, Paris 2018 (2019) (German translation: *Sexualität und Wahrheit*. Bd. 4: *Die Geständnisse des Fleisches*, Berlin 2019). See also Guy G. Stroumsa, *Caro salutis cardo: Shaping the Person in Early Christian Thought*, in: *History of Religion* 30 (1990) 25–50.

22 I have highlighted a few passages in: Origenes, *Die Homilien zum Buch Josua*, eingeleitet und übersetzt von Marietheres Döhler /Alfons Fürst (OWD 5), Berlin/Boston 2020, 34–41, under the headline “Freiheitsdenken und Menschenwürde.”

human beings – namely their basic equality as beings endowed with the free ability of self-determination – be useful for countering current tendencies to confine individual and social identities to particularism and nationalism?

### *Determinism and Freedom*

Origen's way of speaking about the daily lives of his hearers (and students) and their prospects for the future is driven by a huge pedagogical impetus. According to the theory of ancient rhetoric, he really wants to move his hearers (or students); he calls them to action constantly to enlarge their knowledge and improve their behaviour. The presupposition of his educational effort is the conviction that human beings indeed have the ability to change themselves. Origen presupposes this all the time. Quite often he defends it against any denial from deterministic convictions – in his day, mostly Gnostic positions, but also the belief in astrology – and sometimes he explicitly explains his arguments about free will and self-determination. He offers many thoughts about the human condition between determinism and freedom. Although he believed in God's providence and grace as the basis of his worldview, at the same time he constantly upheld humans' ability to make decisions on their own and, in a fundamentally autonomous sense, to determine for themselves who they want to be and how they want to live. Between these poles he made a case for a libertarian concept of freedom – the first one in the history of philosophy, shortly before his fellow Platonist Plotinus – and defended it despite the problems in which he found himself entangled because of his belief in God's providence.<sup>23</sup>

From the third century on, this problem has been discussed in the history of ideas in the West. It is easy to see that, especially with his concept of freedom, Origen is up to date and relevant for contemporary discussions between concepts of determinism, which are promoted mainly by natural scientists, and the defense of free will. This aspect of Origen's Christian philosophy has been highlighted by several scholars during recent decades.<sup>24</sup> It is still disputed among Origen experts, but, according to my reading of Origen, it is essential for understanding his ways of thinking and therefore ought also to be considered more in the interpreta-

23 For a recent account of this problem, see Christian Hengs termann , *Christian Libertarianism and Theodicy: Models of Human and Divine Agency in Origen*, in: Alfons Fürst (ed.), *Freedom as a Key Category in Origen and in Modern Philosophy and Theology* (Adamantina 14), Münster 2019, 51–74.

24 The main studies are Theo Kobusch , *Die philosophische Bedeutung des Kirchenvaters Origenes: Zur christlichen Kritik an der Einseitigkeit der griechischen Wesensphilosophie*, in: *ThQ* 165 (1985) 94–105; id., *Christliche Philosophie: Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, Darmstadt 2006; Christian Hengs termann , *Origenes und der Ursprung der Freiheitsmetaphysik* (Adamantina 8), Münster 2016. See also Alfons Fürst , *Origenes: Griechen und Christ in römischer Zeit* (Standorte in Antike und Christentum 9), Stuttgart 2017.

tion of his texts. This kind of exegesis and theology is also highly relevant to current debates in Christian churches about issues of gender and sexual orientation, about power and authority, and, last but not least, about the value of each individual human being, especially in religious affairs. And of course we ought not to forget the dialectics of the quest for autonomy and free self-determination. How can we locate Origen's libertarian freewill defense within the modern postulate of freedom and self-determination on the one hand and the limits of autonomous self-determination set by the natural preconditions of human existence and the boundaries of social orders on the other? What are reliable sources and reference points for creating an authentic personal identity? How might it be possible to gain and maintain self-control?

### *Cultural Transfer and Transformation*

Research on Origen is from the outset accompanied by questions of cultural transfer. Usually, this aspect does not come to the surface because it is hidden behind the question of the transmission of his texts. Roughly half of Origen's texts are preserved in Greek, half in Latin. Traditionally, the main question when it comes to this issue concerns the reliability of the translators (Jerome and Rufinus for most texts). But any translation implies a first interpretation of a text. Translation is always transformation and adaptation into a new context. To mention only one example, instead of complaining that, according to the famous phrase *traduttore – traditore*, Rufinus might have altered or even distorted Origen's thoughts, it might be more revealing to study in detail the terminological transformations of the technical vocabulary, for example of his concepts of free will and self-agency, by comparing the texts on this topic preserved in Greek in the *Philocalia* and in Latin in Rufinus' translation of *On First Principles* and the *Commentary on Romans*.<sup>25</sup> In doing so, we might get an idea of how the translator Rufinus adapted Origen's texts to the related debates in the Latin West of his day and thus transformed them without betraying Origen's original ideas. This aspect of Origen's legacy can easily be put into a wider context. Already the first translation of his Greek texts into Latin at the turn of the fifth century is more than a matter of philology – there has been a lot (and maybe enough) investigation into the related topics, i. e., the principles and techniques of translation in Late Antiquity and the reliability of the translators. What seems to be needed is to connect this with the issue of cultural transfer.

When we deal with the remains of Origen's works, specifically through translation, we are concerned with the larger question of transformation and transfer. The whole transmission of his texts and the legacy of his ideas can be understood

25 As has been done by John M. Rist, *The Greek and Latin Texts of the Discussion on Free Will in De principiis*, Book III, in: Henri Cr ouzel /Gennaro Lomient o/Josep Rius-Camps (eds.), *Origeniana* (QVetChr 12), Bari 1975, 97–112.

as a huge enterprise of cultural transfer and inspiration. Origen could be an excellent subject for studying the transfer of traditions in general, in his case with the peculiarity that his was a highly disputed legacy from the outset. Case studies on this question confined to specific regions or societies could be connected with related studies in other fields of research in Late Antiquity.

This issue can be combined with some thoughts about what usually is called 'exegesis.' Exegesis has never been just a backward oriented effort to understand texts of a long distant past. It rather consists of a continuing process of transmission, reception and construction of meaning, not simply of what might have been meant historically in a given text but also and much more in the sense of *creating* the possible meaning of a given tradition in dialogue with the present age of the interpreter – as the Alexandrian himself already did in his world. It might be pioneering to investigate Origen's exegesis within the framework of reception theories.<sup>26</sup> This has to be done in view of the recent developments in communication techniques in the digital age. How does the creation of meaning for the present out of the past work under the conditions of a world-wide web of electronic communication where all the local traditions of mankind are simultaneously drawn into a global discourse? How should we deal with a specific written tradition like the Bible in the context of virtually produced (and forgotten – but never deleted) expressions of opinions on nearly everything by everybody? We seem to be in a new period of uttering opinions, creating texts and discussing convictions. How does this affect our dealing with texts produced in a former period of communication under very different circumstances?<sup>27</sup>

### *A Voice from the Margin*

The hint on Origen's disputed legacy may lead to a final reflection. During his lifetime, Origen was not at all a marginal figure. Quite the contrary: he was a star in his church. Having risen to celebrity already during his younger years as teacher of Christian philosophy in Alexandria, he became one of the most renowned intellectuals of early Christianity. He was invited by bishops to synods as an expert on theological problems, he was even invited to the emperor's court, which might be seen as the apogee of his career. After his death, however, he was marginalized as a heretic, with the effect that for centuries he was not at the center of Christian traditions. But he remained present, as mentioned above, was often read, though rarely mentioned by name. Still today, he is a voice from the margin.

Does this imply any advantage? I would say yes, absolutely. New ideas often come from outsiders. At the margins, things can sometimes be seen more clearly

26 For this approach, see the suggestions on biblical hermeneutics by Anders-Christian Jacobsen in: *Adam*. 25 (2019) 142f.

27 For some reflections on this, see Dirk Evers in: *ibid.* 139f.

than from the center, and new ideas can be brought to the fore from the margins. Might this be a perspective on Origen which could be combined with other contemporary research on marginalized, repressed or suppressed peoples and traditions? How does this perspective shape our image of Origen? Is he, as a person and as a thinker, attractive not despite being a 'heretic' but precisely because he was a 'heretic'? He is not a representative of the mainstream of Christianity. His is a minor, but nevertheless powerful voice which engages with central ideas about core questions. These ideas could be all the more fruitful as they are coming from outside, from the underground of heretical rivulets flowing into the mainstream. And might his thoughts about the individual human being, his life and hope for the future, about universal values, about the power of persuasive rhetoric, about the strong belief in free self-determination within all kinds of deterministic frameworks – might these thoughts not be needed today more than ever before?

#### 4. *Vivant sequentes!*

The present volume is a testament to these different aspects of Origen's thought and the different perspectives on it, in history as well as in current research. Many of the above mentioned aspects can be found in the following contributions. Like a prism, the view on Origen through the lens of this book provides the divergent construals which can be laid out in order to present his manifold thoughts. At the same time, they provide starting points for future studies on Origen within the broader context of contemporary research in science and the humanities. With the achievements of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Origen scholarship in mind, it seems to be time to take a bold and resolute step forward in order to bring research on Origen up to date with current perspectives and questions which might turn out to be fruitful for the next generations of Origen scholars in the new millenium. In order to achieve this, it seems to be necessary to pose questions like the ones sketched out in the previous section of this essay, although they might be provocative and, in some instances, not consensual. But different views and assumptions are the fuel of scholarly debates in contemporary academic contexts. If the present reflections contribute to these debates, they have achieved their purpose.



ROLE MODELS FOR HUMAN FREEDOM  
AND DIGNITY IN ORIGEN



# Body and Freedom in Origen

ANDERS-CHRISTIAN JACOBSEN, AARHUS

Origen maintains that human beings are free and endowed with free will. These qualities, he insists, belong to the very substance or essence of rational beings; nor are they negated by the assumption of human flesh. Be that as it may, he also believes that freedom is limited by bodily existence, inasmuch as it allows irrational instincts to disturb our rational faculties. Even so, embodiment, as we shall see, is far from a pure negative, because embodiment is also a precondition for the rational beings' return to the Divine. According to Origen, there is an abiding tension between body and freedom. In what follows, I will explore this tension in his theology and philosophy. I will argue that, in the end, freedom is ultimately more important for Origen than the human body. While freedom is essential, embodiment is accidental. Consequently, the body is not a necessary and persistent element in the life of rational beings. This has important implications for Origen's theology in general and, in particular, for his creation theology and eschatology. I will begin by providing some brief definitions of Origen's understanding of human nature, freedom, and the body. Next, the main part of the lecture will discuss the body and freedom in relation to Origen's theology of creation, incarnation and eschatology. Finally, I will draw some conclusions.

## 1. Some Definitions

### a) What is a Human?

To be human is, according to Origen, to be a rational being – a *nous* – who has been transformed into an embodied soul. While it is clear he believes that rational beings possess individuality and freedom, it is not clear whether he thinks their rational natures must, in all circumstances, be fastened to a body. This is a crucial question which is probably impossible to answer with any kind of certainty. In any case, Origen is confident that rational beings derive their existence from their participation in God the Father, who is Being itself. Their rationality comes from the Logos, who is the source of all reason. Indeed, freedom and free choice are described in *On First Principles* as inherent to rationality, which all rational beings inherit from Logos: “God the Father bestows on all the gift of existence; and

a participation in Christ, in virtue of his being the word or reason, makes them rational. From this it follows that they are worthy of praise or blame, because they are capable alike of virtue and of wickedness.”<sup>1</sup>

Even so, human beings do not, for Origen, enjoy a life of consummate reason. Rather, various accidental qualities are added to the rational essence (under different conditions). Most important are those qualities associated with material embodiment which characterize all rational beings separated from God the Father and the Logos. For Origen, this distance is the result of a free choice to turn away from the source of being, such as was enacted by rational beings at the original threshold of time. To be human in this world is thus to be a divine creature distanced from divinity.<sup>2</sup>

### b) What is a Body?

So, according to Origen, material embodiment is a consequence of the free decision to forsake the source of being; namely, God the Father and His Logos/Wisdom. When rational beings (*λογικά*) strayed from their divine origin, they were clothed with material bodies.<sup>3</sup> For Origen, this transformation can be seen in both a positive and a negative light, revealing a basic tension in his understanding of human embodiment – and indeed all bodily existence. This tension arises from the fact that embodiment is God’s way of creating room for the diversity of free human choice – a diversity which, in turn, has diverse effects on the Divine-human relationship.<sup>4</sup> Among other things, the embodiment of rational beings allows for a wide spectrum of personal choices – good and bad, rational and irrational. Bodies, as platforms of free choice, are able to bring rational beings closer to God when used for rational and morally upright ends (thus increasing their holiness); but they can also lead rational beings further away from God if used for irrational and wicked ends (thus decreasing their holiness). In this way,

1 Origen, princ. I 3,8 (GCS Orig. 5, 60 f.): *Deus pater omnibus praestat ut sint, participatio vero Christi secundum id, quod verbum vel ratio est, facit ea esse rationabilia. Ex quo consequens est ea vel laude digna esse vel culpa, quia et virtutis et malitiae sunt capacia.* Translation: p. 38 But ter worth. Cf. also in Ioh. comm. II 2,13–3,20 (GCS Orig. 4, 54f.).

2 Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Genesis 1–3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen, in: VigChr 62 (2008) 213–232.

3 Concerning Origen’s complicated and not fully clear ideas about human bodies, see Lavinia Cerioni, Bodily Souls? Paradoxical Bodies in Origen’s Theology of Progress, in: ZAC 23 (2019) 21–35. Cerioni provides a very detailed and nuanced study of Origen’s concept of the human body in which she questions and corrects some of my previous conclusions in Jacobsen, Genesis 1–3 (n. 2). I tend to accept Cerioni’s interpretations including her corrections of my conclusions.

4 Cf. Origen, princ. II 9 (GCS Orig. 5, 166–172).

bodies operate as vehicles for the free movement of rational souls and so invite God's punishment and/or healing, which are always, for Origen, a form of *paideusis*.<sup>5</sup>

### c) What is Freedom?

In *On First Principles* III 1, Origen describes freedom as the ability to move and act on the basis of rational deliberation. Irrational beings, for their part, cannot move at all, or, at best, move only by blind instinct. Rational beings move and act because they decide for themselves – out of their own agency, as it were. If, to borrow an example from Origen, a man meets a woman who invites him to make love, he is not compelled by instinct to accept the proposition. He always has the option of stepping back and making a rational decision one way or the other. As Origen says:

“But if anyone should say that the impression from without is of such a sort that it is impossible to resist it whatever it may be, let him turn his attention to his own feeling and movements and see whether there is not an approval, assent and inclination of the controlling faculty towards a particular action on account of some specious attractions. For instance, when a woman displays herself before a man who has determined to remain chaste and to abstain from sexual intercourse and invites him to act contrary to his purpose, she does not become the absolute cause of the abandonment of that purpose. The truth is that he is first entirely delighted with the sensation and lure of the pleasure and has no wish to resist it nor to strengthen his previous determination; and then he commits the licentious act. On the other hand the same experience may happen to one who has undergone more instruction and discipline; that is, the sensations and incitements are there, but his reason, having been strengthened to a higher degree and trained by practice and confirmed towards the good by right doctrines, or at any rate being near to such confirmation, repels the incitements and gradually weakens the desire.”<sup>6</sup>

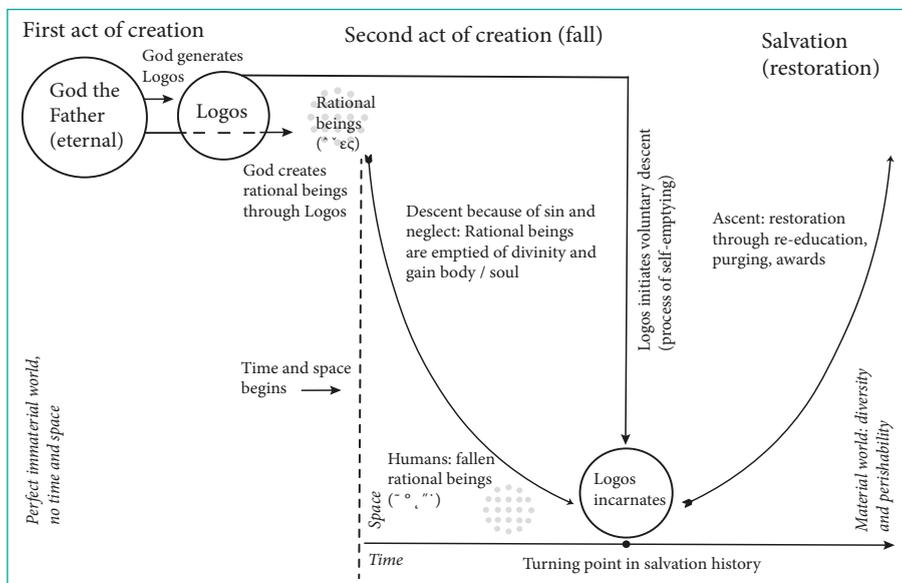
5 Concerning the function of the human body in the spiritual progress, see Stefan Nordgaar, *Body, Sin, and Society in Origen of Alexandria*, in: *ST 66* (2012) 20–40, and Gaetano Lettieri, *Art. Progresso*, in: Adele Monaci Castagno (ed.), *Origene. Dizionario: la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, Rome 2000, 379–392, here 390. For the topic of spiritual re-education and progress, see furthermore Anders-Christian Jacobsen, *Christ – the Teacher of Salvation: A Study on Origen's Christology and Soteriology* (Adamantina 6), Münster 2015, 142. 180. 227. 321. For Origen's own discussion of punishment as a necessary part of progress, see Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 37237 (GCS Orig. 4, 262); in *Rom. comm.* VII 7,4 (SC 543, 324–326); in *Hiez. hom.* 5,1f. (GCS Orig. 8, 371–373). See also Jonathan Bieler, *Origen on the Goodness of the Body*, in: Rebecca A. Giselbrecht / Ralph Kunz (eds.), *Sacrality and Materiality: Locating Intersections*, Göttingen 2016, 91–100.

6 Origen, *princ.* III 1,4(3) (GCS Orig. 5, 198f.): *Εἰ δέ τις αὐτὸ τὸ ἕξωθεν λέγει εἶναι τοιόνδε, ὥστε ἀδυνατῶς ἔχειν ἀντιβλέψαι αὐτῷ τοιῶδε γενομένῳ, οὕτως ἐπιστησάτω τοῖς ἰδίῳις πάθει καὶ κινήμασιν, εἰ μὴ εὐδόκησις γίνεται καὶ συγκατάθεσις καὶ ῥοπή τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ἐπὶ τὸδε*

The freedom to make rational decisions is, Origen admits, weakened when rational beings turn away from God. The further a human is from the Logos – the source of rationality – the weaker is his/her rationality. Lacking access to higher reason, instinct threatens to overwhelm human decision-making; one's choices are then liable to become blind and automatic rather than deliberative.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Origen's Theology of Creation, Incarnation, and Eschatology

These short definitions of Origen's concepts of freedom, the human, and the body, are most readily unfolded and explained when seen as parts of Origen's coherent theology of creation, incarnation and eschatology. I have tried to illustrate this coherence in the following diagram:



τι διὰ τὰςδε τὰς πιθανότητας. Οὐ γάρ, φέρ' εἰπεῖν, ἡ γυνὴ τῷ κρίναντι ἐγκρατεῦσθαι καὶ ἀνεχέιν ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ μίξεων, ἐπιφανείσα καὶ προκαλεσαμένη ἐπὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι τι παρὰ πρόθεσιν, αὐτοτελής αἰτία γίνεται τοῦ τὴν πρόθεσιν ἀθετήσαι· πάντως γὰρ εὐδοκίας τῷ γαργαλισμῷ καὶ τῷ λείψ τῆς ἡδονῆς, ἀντιβλέψαι αὐτῷ μὴ βεβουλημένους μηδὲ τὸ κεκριμένον κυρῶσαι, πράττει τὸ ἀκόλαστον. Ὁ δέ τις ἔμπαλιν, τῶν αὐτῶν συμβηκότων τῷ πλείονα μαθήματα ἀνειληφότι καὶ ἡσκηκότι· οἱ μὲν γαργαλισμοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐρεθισμοὶ συμβαίνουσιν, ὁ λόγος δέ, ἅτε ἐπὶ πλείον ἰσχυροποιηθεὶς καὶ τραφεὶς τῇ μελέτῃ καὶ βεβαιωθεὶς τοῖς δόγμασι πρὸς τὸ καλὸν ἢ ἐγγύς γε τοῦ βεβαιωθῆναι γεγεννημένος, ἀνακρούει τοὺς ἐρεθισμοὺς καὶ ὑπεκλύει τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν. Translation: p. 161f. But ter worth .

7 Regarding this definition of free will, see also orat. 6,1–5 (GCS Orig. 2, 311–33), and further Hendrik S. Benjamins, *Eingeordnete Freiheit: Freiheit und Vorsehung bei Origenes* (SVigChr 28), Leiden 1994, 58–70.

I will now proceed to explore what can be said about the relation between freedom and the body when these are understood as elements within Origen's coherent theology.

### a) Creation, Freedom, and the Body

When were rational beings created? Origen's answer is complex. The *noes* were eternally in the Logos or Sophia as plans for what should 'later' become entities outside of Logos. At some point they were extrapolated from the Logos as individual rational beings. This genesis can be compared to a ship whose life begins generically in the mind of a ship builder and then, at a certain point in time, becomes a particular, external reality:

"For I think that just as a house and a ship are built or devised according to the plans of the architect, the house and the ship having as their beginning the plans and thoughts in the craftsman, so all things have come to be according to the thoughts of what will be, which were prefigured by God in wisdom, 'For he made all things in wisdom' (Ps. 103[104],24)."<sup>8</sup>

So rational beings, the *νόες*, are eternal as Logos and Wisdom are eternal.

One question, difficult to answer, is whether, and when, these eternal rational beings were embodied. Origen – at least in his surviving texts – is not clear on this point. There is one sentence in *On First Principles* II 2 indicating that none but the Trinity can exist without a body.<sup>9</sup> Many Origen scholars believe this sentence resolves the question, since it appears to suggest that rational beings were always or already embodied. My first response is that the sentence might well have been an interpolation by Rufinus. I will not, however, lay out this argument here. My second response is that, as Origen maintains, rational beings were conceived *in* the Logos. As such, they were included in the life of the Trinity and therefore could very well have existed without bodies. More importantly, it is not possible to decide whether the rational beings – once they had been extrapolated from the Logos – could still be considered part of the Trinity (and so bodiless) or whether at this point they were embodied in certain fine, ethereal bodies. The textual evidence is ambiguous, making it impossible to arrive at a conclusive answer. In principle this is an interesting question which I, and others, have often speculated about. But, in practice, it is not so important for the understanding of how Origen

8 Origen, in Ioh. comm. I 19,14f. (GCS Orig. 4, 24): Οἶμαι γάρ, ὡς περ κατὰ τοὺς ἀρχιτεκτονικοὺς τύπους οἰκοδομεῖται ἢ τεκταίνεται οἰκία καὶ ναὺς, ἀρχὴν τῆς οἰκίας καὶ τῆς νεῶς ἔχόντων τοὺς ἐν τῷ τεχνίτῃ τύπους καὶ λόγους, οὕτω τὰ σύμπαντα γεγονέναι κατὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ προτρανωθέντας ὑπὸ θεοῦ τῶν ἐσομένων λόγους. "Πάντα γὰρ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἐποίησε." Translation: I p. 57 Heine .

9 Princ. II 2,2 (GCS Orig. 5, 11A.).

understands human nature, embodiment, and freedom. What we *can* say for sure is that, according to Origen, prior to absconding from God and Logos, rational beings existed in one of two modes: either without bodies at all or in ethereal bodies, qualitatively different from the earthly variety of bodies.

Whether or not rational beings had bodies following their extrapolation from Logos, they now lived their lives as individual entities endowed with freedom of will, acquiring the capacity to make choices for themselves. Such freedom is, as we have seen, an essential part of rational existence. Rational beings were (and are) empowered to cleave to God and Logos or to distance themselves therefrom – to move or not to move. According to Origen, the original rational beings chose, in their freedom, to move away from God. This decision had enormous consequences. The *vóες* were distilled into souls and subsequently embodied – some adopting the human form.

#### b) The Rational Beings' Forsaking of the Divine and its Consequences

Origen is keen to distinguish between mind (*νοῦς*) and soul (*ψυχή*). According to his schema, rational beings are, first and foremost, minds (*vóες*). The fall of these noetic beings away from God transforms them into embodied souls. In *On First Principles* II 8, Origen uses the relationship between the hot and the cold to explain this 'fall'.<sup>10</sup> Incidentally, he probably assumes that there is an etymological relationship between 'soul' (*ψυχή*) and 'cooling' (*ψῦξις*).<sup>11</sup> During the fall, as the noetic beings move further and further away from the heat of the divine pres-

10 Ibid. II 8,3 (5, 155–16).

11 The idea of the fall as a movement from *νοῦς* to *ψυχή* is handed down by both Rufinus and Jerome and thus most certainly originates from Origen himself. Yet, according to Rufinus, Origen has some reservations regarding this idea. In Rufinus' text, it is thus pointed out twice that these thoughts are not meant as dogmas but are presented as suggestions for discussion: *ibid.* II 8,4 (5, 162). Epiphanius confirms that Origen used this etymology: *epist.* 51,4,3f. *int. epist.* Hieron. (p. 274 Gör gemanns /Ka r pp). The etymology is also found among several Greek philosophers, e.g., Aristotle, *De anima* I 2, 405 b 27–29, and the Stoics, SVF II 804–808, even though Franz H. Ketterer, *Der ursprüngliche Sinn der Dogmatik des Origenes* (BZNW 31), Berlin 1966, 20 n. 85, states that Origen has taken up the etymology from the Gnostics; cf. *Evangelium veritatis* 34, NHC I 3 (GCS N.F. 8, 41). Here, as in Origen, the cooling is seen as something negative. Regarding the movement from *νοῦς* to *ψυχή*, see also Georg Bürke, *Des Origenes Lehre vom Urstand des Menschen*, in: *ZKTh* 72 (1950) 1–39, here 19; Heinrich Karpp, *Probleme altchristlicher Anthropologie: Biblische Anthropologie und philosophische Psychologie bei den Kirchenvätern des dritten Jahrhunderts* (BFCT 44/3), Gütersloh 1950, 191–205; Hugo Rahner, *Das Menschenbild des Origenes*, in: *ErJb* 15 (1947) 197–248, here 205–207; Hermann S. Schibli, *Origen, Didymus and the Vehicle of the Soul*, in: Robert J. Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta* (BETL 105), Leuven 1992, 381–391, here 382.

ence, they grow colder and colder, eventually crystallizing into souls. Unlike some other ancient authors, Origen does not see the soul as equivalent to that which is good and god-like in the human; and the body, for its part, is for him a negative accretion resulting from the fall. Nor is the soul, as the inner human being, immune to the spatial effects of the fall and the increased distance from God.

In *On First Principles* II 9, there is a full account of how freedom was complicit in the fall of rational beings, and how it yielded a collateral differentiation between them. After having described the creation of rational beings and physical matter, Origen states that God created these beings with free will so as to enable them to choose the good for themselves.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, they did exactly the opposite; they turned away from God, which was, after all, their prerogative. The ensuing difference between rational beings, who were originally identical, arose from the fact that they did not fall away from Divinity in equal proportion. This is why God formed the material world as a unity of diversity and variety – so that it would fit the new multitude of rational beings.<sup>13</sup>

The rational beings' departure from Divinity is described as a fall, and thus negative. This, however, does not exhaust the truth of the situation. According to Origen, the fall and embodiment of rational beings is an expression of God's wish to create a framework for diversity. This diversity of embodiment is God's just punishment of fallen rational beings, corresponding to their free actions, but it is also the basis for the divine pedagogy (*paideusis*) by which they will be brought back to God. In this way, the embodiment of the rational beings reveals divine justice and goodness which, according to Origen, are one and the same thing – divine *paideusis*. I will develop this theme further.

### 3. Divine Pedagogy: the Body, Incarnation, and Salvation

Divine pedagogy has, for Origen, many aspects, of which freedom and embodiment are two of the more prominent. The pedagogical process is principally about seeing God in Logos, experiencing God's punishment and healing, and, subsequently, drawing nearer to Divinity. This inevitably involves the body and freedom.

#### a) To See – Revelation and Imitation

The cornerstone of the pedagogical process is the Incarnation of the Logos. It is, among other things, a clear sign of the importance of the body to divine *paideusis*.

12 *Princ.* II 9,1f. (GCS Orig. 5, 166–166).

13 *Ibid.* II 9,3 (5, 166 f.). Cf. also *ibid.* I 5,3 (5, 71–73); III 1 (5, 195–244).

One of the incarnated Logos' most important roles is to reveal or communicate God to humanity,<sup>14</sup> and his ability to fulfil this function is based on simultaneous participation in the Father's being, and in human being (which means embodiment). Origen describes the Logos' participation in the being of the Father in many ways. For example, he refers to Heb. 1:3 in describing Christ as a beam of light shining forth from God who is Light itself. As such, Christ brings God to humanity.<sup>15</sup> Origen also uses the idea of Christ as the 'image' of the Father to illustrate Christ's role as mediator between God and human beings. Christ is the image of the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:᠖). It is, of course, paradoxical to call something an image of that which is invisible. How can we understand this? Origen presents a possible explanation when he claims that Christ, insofar as he images the invisible God, is himself invisible.<sup>16</sup> If this were the full story, however, Christ could not reveal God to humanity. Origen therefore adds two additional passages from the New Testament to augment his interpretation of Col. 1:᠖. The first is Mt. 11:27: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." According to Origen, this passage is not about *seeing* the Father, but rather knowing or understanding<sup>17</sup> him. In other words, Origen interprets seeing as understanding. Revealing God to humanity is thus not about making the invisible God visible (in a physical sense), but about making him understandable. This interpretation of visibility as understanding, or knowing, indicates that the act of God's self-revelation through his image is understood by Origen as primarily intellectual, transcending physical sense perception.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the physicality of the embodied Logos does not, at first glance, play an important role for Origen.<sup>19</sup>

14 See Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du verbe incarné* (PatSor 2), Paris 1958, 73–85, on Logos' function as revealer of the divine to humanity in the theology before Origen and in philosophical traditions, mainly Platonism, in the time before and concurrent with Origen: *ibid.* 86–101.

15 Origen, *princ.* I 2,7f. (GCS Orig. 5, 37–39). See Henri Cr ouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène* (Theol[P] 34), Paris 1956, 83–90, who explains Origen's description of Logos as a beam of light which proceeds from God the Father. See also the paragraph above on Christ's preexistence.

16 Origen, *ibid.* I 2,6 (5, 34–37).

17 Rufinus: *cognoscimus*: *ibid.* (5, 36). The Greek New Testament has *ἐπιγινώσκει*.

18 Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice* (n. 14) 178: "Ces différents textes nous permettent d'affirmer la constance de ce thème: ce n'est pas la vision matérielle de Jésus qui permet de connaître Dieu. Le Verbe, présent en Jésus, n'était pas plus 'visible', matériellement, que Dieu lui-même. En plus de la 'vision', la foi est nécessaire, ainsi que la pratique des œuvres et, peut-être, l'illumination." Cf. also *ibid.* 183–189, where Harl shows that knowledge of Christ is obtained through a process from the more material to the more spiritual knowledge. This process has different steps: seeing Jesus with the eyes of the body, believing in Jesus and his teaching and understanding the glory of the Son through his bodily existence. These steps in the process of getting to know God through Christ are further connected

This, however, is not the whole truth. For, as mediator between God and humanity, the Logos must mediate the Divine in a way that human beings can understand and endure. While it would not be possible for humans to bear the direct light of the Godhead, when God's light is refracted through Christ, they can do so. We are here touching upon the theme of accommodation and Christ's many 'forms' or 'aspects' (*ἐπίνοιαι*). In the Logos' accommodation to the needs of humanity, the physical body plays an integral role. Where most ancient theologians treat the idea of incarnation in general terms, revealing what God through Christ does to save humanity, Origen adds an individuating aspect: incarnation is about God's (and Christ's) relation to the individual human being.<sup>20</sup> We can find many examples of this in his biblical commentaries. In the *Commentary on Matthew*, for example, Origen reflects on the story of Jesus' transfiguration on Mount Tabor (Mt. 17:1–8).<sup>21</sup> He surmises that the reason why only three disciples were taken to the mountain to witness Jesus' transfigured form was that they were the only ones *able* to see it. Because of their advanced spiritual level, these three could benefit from seeing Jesus in this way, whereas the other disciples could not. However, Jesus also addressed the needs of the others. He went down the mountain again to be with the less advanced disciples in his bodily form, thereby fulfilling their needs to see him in a physical shape.<sup>22</sup>

in Origen to Christ's double relations, which Origen can describe in different ways such as Jesus Christ being divine and human, being from above and coming below, or being an image which points to reality: *ibid.* 191–200.

- 19 I owe the first inspiration to writing this passage on the 'invisible God made visible' to Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu* (n. 15) 76–83. See further to this theme Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, Oxford 1994, 44–62. Widdicombe points out that even though there are similarities between Origen's and the Platonist concept of how human beings come to know God, there are also huge differences. The main difference is that, according to Origen, human beings cannot on their own obtain knowledge of God, but need a mediator who is Christ or Logos. Cf. Origen, *Cels.* VI 17 (GCS Orig. 2, 87f.); VI 65 (2, B5f.); VII 42–46 (2, 192–198).
- 20 Karen J. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (PTS 28), Berlin/New York 1985, 13, explains that the concept of Christ's accommodation and *ἐπίνοιαι* also influences Origen's understanding of the nature of the Bible. The Bible, according to Torjesen, is constructed in such a way that it accommodates Logos to human beings at different levels: "A central tenet of Origen's understanding of redemption is that [in] the teaching Logos accommodates himself to the need and level of the hearer. For this reason the teachings which belong to the contemporary pedagogy of the Logos (the spiritual sense) are arranged according to the stages of the soul's progress toward perfection."
- 21 Origen, in *Matth. comm.* XII 36–43 (GCS Orig. 10, 150–170).
- 22 *Ibid.* XV 24 (10, 419–422). On Origen's interpretation of the transfiguration on the mount, see Matthias Eichinger, *Die Verklärung Christi bei Origenes: Die Bedeutung des Menschlichen Jesus in seiner Christologie* (WBTh 23), Wien 1969, esp. 64–70.

In the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Origen adds another layer to the idea of accommodation. He states that when Christ accommodates to individual souls – being light for some, bread for others, and ointment for still others – the souls must reciprocate this approach by imitating Christ in like fashion. If Christ is the Way for one soul, this soul must answer by following the Way. If he is the Word for another soul, this soul must answer by listening to the Word and obeying its commands.<sup>23</sup> In this way Origen shows how the idea of accommodation is closely connected to the soul's reciprocal imitation of Christ. Salvation is understood as co-operation between Christ and the soul. Christ approaches the individual soul, and the soul must answer and react to Christ's approach. The Logos' accommodation towards individual human beings forces them to make a decision about whether or not to follow him.

For embodied human beings, this imitation includes not only spiritual imitation but also, and firstly, a moral transformation that focuses on bodily acts: one must choose to live a morally upright life in the body, just as the incarnated Logos did. This is the first step in climbing the mountain towards God. Moral choice, and the body through which it is expressed, are thus important in the pedagogical process of salvation.<sup>24</sup>

#### b) To Feel – Punishment, Purification, and Healing

There is another dimension in this process; namely, that the Logos punishes, purifies, and heals the fallen rational beings in order to facilitate salvation. In this purification and healing the body plays an integral role. According to Origen, the incorporation of souls leads necessarily to suffering from pain and desire. This can be understood as God's way of punishing the fallen souls, but it must be kept in mind that, for Origen, God's punishments are always remedial and, moreover, aimed at final restoration. Bodies, in experiencing pain, are taught to long for the redemption they require. The human will is decisive here in reacting positively to this difficult education and turning the soul in a new direction. Human beings must, for Origen, decide to purify themselves – first at the moral, bodily level, and then at the spiritual level. In his *Commentary on Matthew*,<sup>25</sup> Origen discusses the passage in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus drives the money-changers out of the temple in Jerusalem (Mt. 21:12–17).<sup>26</sup> This prompts him to speculate

23 Origen, in Cant. comm. II 9,10 f. (OWD 9/1, 282).

24 The paragraph above relies on my book Jacobsen, Christ — the Teacher of Salvation (n. 5) 307–318.

25 See *ibid.* 186 f.

26 Origen, in Matth. comm. XVI 20–23 (GCS Orig. 10, 543–55).

on the theme of purification, first at the historical level of the text,<sup>27</sup> and then at the allegorical level. At this latter level, he suggests that the temple which has to be purified is the Church,<sup>28</sup> or the bishops, presbyters, and deacons.<sup>29</sup> He ends by claiming that the rational beings (*λογικῆ φύσις*) are no less God's temple than the Church, and, as such, vessels of the glory of God (*δόξα θεοῦ*). This is an important expression that shows what the original and the future capacity of rational beings is; namely, to take up the glory of God within themselves. The immanent problem for rational beings is that they are filled with sin<sup>30</sup> and have therefore damaged their original capacity for God's glory. They must therefore be purified, as Jesus purified the temple in Jerusalem, so as to once again be able to absorb the glory of God and thus achieve perfection.

When Origen describes the Logos' purification and healing, he shifts between concrete and metaphorical uses of language about the body. However, there is not always a clear-cut distinction between these. This is, for example, the case when he employs the imagery of doctors removing cancerous tissue. This could be understood concretely, since having a human body (which can suffer from cancer) is a consequence of having fallen away from the divine. The concrete physical cure can be seen as the Logos' literal purification of the body. It is, however, evident that Origen mainly considers such images as metaphors for spiritual healing. In the *Homilies on Ezekiel*, Origen employs the cancer imagery to this effect:

“Experts in the art of medicine say that some bodily cures require not merely cutting with a knife but also burning. For to those who are deteriorating with an advanced cancer, they apply either a heated metal plate to a razor, or some kind of extremely sharp iron instrument, in order that by means of fire the roots of the cancer may be removed. Through the incision, the putrid flesh is cut out, and the way stands open for medicines to be introduced. Who among us, do you think, has a sin – dare I say it? – like cancer? Well, for him the simple edge of an iron instrument is not enough, nor a solitary burning with fire. Rather, both need to be applied, so that the man is both burned and cut into.”<sup>31</sup>

27 Ibid. 20 (10, 543–546).

28 Ibid. 21 (10, 546–549).

29 Ibid. 22 (10, 549–555).

30 Origen does, of course, in this context use trade metaphors to describe the nature of sin, *ibid.* 23 (10, 555): *Πεπληρώκαμεν οἱ ἁμαρτάνοντες πωλούντων καὶ ἀγοραζόντων λογισμῶν καὶ ἄλλων περὶ ἀργυρίου πάντα σκοπούντων διαλογισμῶν.*

31 In Hiez. hom. 5,1 (GCS Orig. 8, 371f.): *Aiunt studiosi medicinalis disciplinae ad quasdam corporum curationes necessarium esse non solum sectionem ferri, verum etiam adustionem. Nam ad eos, qui caucris veterno computrescunt, candentem sive novaculae laminam sive quodcumque acutissimi ferri genus adhibet, ut per ignem radices canceris evellantur, per incisionem autem et putrida caro truncetur et via pateat medicaminibus iniciendis. Quis, putas, nostrum canceris, ut ita dicam, habet simile peccatum, ut non ei sufficiat aut simplex acumen ferri aut sola ignis exustio, sed utraque adhibeantur, quo uratur et secetur?* Translation: Scheck, ACW 62, 79.

The Logos is here described as a physician who uses cutting and burning instruments that severely injure the patient in order to cure diseases (i. e. sins). While the treatment is painful, it is applied for the benefit of the patient. Punishments which might, on the surface, appear pointless can thus be used by God and Logos as instruments of salvation.

### c) To Move – the Body as Vehicle of the Soul

When addressing the human necessity of imitating the incarnated Logos so as to return to the divine, and when discussing the Logos' punishment, purification, and healing as ways of turning rational beings Godward, Origen is concerned with motion; that is to say, with moving the soul (or the rational being) from its present (fallen) condition towards its original divinity. Now, in order to move, the soul needs a vehicle. And this, Origen tells us, is a function of the human body. Insofar as it mobilizes the soul, the body is more than a negative. Indeed, it has an important, and positive, role to play. Origen frequently touches upon this idea when discussing the resurrection of the body. The reason he gives for why human bodies are resurrected (as opposed to just human souls) is that souls require a vehicle post-resurrection inasmuch as they have not yet attained perfection – which is, for Origen, a motionless condition. In the *Apology against Celsus* and in *On First Principles*, he says that bodies must be resurrected because the *paideusis* is long and still in effect after death and resurrection.<sup>32</sup> In the latter work, he further argues that resurrected bodies will be different because rational beings have not reached the same point of re-education in this world.<sup>33</sup> This reflects an idea we touched on earlier; namely, that God provides the necessary diversity to fallen rational beings in order to make it possible for all to be re-educated.

In his *Homilies on Judges*, Origen uses distinctive imagery in describing God's provision of bodies for the souls to move in. Here, he invokes the Platonic idea of the soul's 'vehicle' (*ὄχημα*). He is interpreting Judg. 5:9f. where the leaders of the people, who climb atop draft animals, are told to praise the Lord. What most interests Origen is the draft animals – the *iumenta*. He interprets them as bodies given to the souls as support, i. e. as 'vehicles.' Such bodies are provided to souls in order to facilitate their movement.<sup>34</sup> In the same passage he uses *vehicula*, which is a translation of the Greek *ὄχημα*, and *asina*, which means 'donkey.' It is enlightening that Origen uses these expressions, which so clearly indicate that the soul

32 Cels. V 19 (GCS Orig. 2, 19–21); princ. II 3,2f. (GCS Orig. 5, 114–119). For an interpretation of these passages, see Anders-Christian Jacobsen, *The Nature, Function, and Destiny of the Human Body: Origen's Interpretation of 1 Cor 15*, in: ZAC 23 (2019) 36–52.

33 Princ. II 10,2f. (GCS Orig. 5, 174–176).

34 In Iud. hom. 6,5 (GCS Orig. 7, 502f.).

makes use of the body for mobility's sake. This raises the question of whether the soul, or, as it were, the original *νοῦς*, can move itself without a draft animal, that is, without a body? I will return to this shortly. It is also important to notice that this image suggests that the soul might lose control of its draft animal. The animal can run wild. In order to avoid this eventuality, or to regain control, the soul needs to make the right choices to get its body back on track. Here, it is again clear that body and freedom are closely connected for Origen: the bodily condition demands and, at the same time makes it possible, for the soul to choose and will freely.

#### 4. The Last Things – Embodiment and Freedom

What does all this mean for Origen's eschatology? Will the last things – the final perfection – include embodiment and freedom? I have discussed this at length with colleagues and sought, as far as possible, to find an answer within Origen's corpus. Even so, after many years I have not arrived at a secure conclusion, even if I tend to favor the hypothesis that Origen imagines a bodiless freedom as the end and perfection of everything. The reason I suspect that there will be freedom is that, according to Origen, freedom is essential to rational beings as such. For the same reason I suspect that bodies will be absent from the final perfection, because bodies do not belong, essentially, to rational beings. As I said, I have not reached a secure conclusion. I will not, therefore, argue for one position against another but briefly draw some tentative conclusions from what I have said above.

##### a) Freedom and Perfection

Most of the material I have presented in this article ostensibly points toward the conclusion that rational beings are essentially free. Indeed, when rational beings were extrapolated from the mind of the Logos, they were free and able to make free choices. Nor, on this model, does essential freedom disappear once rational beings turn away from the Trinity, inhabiting bodies. At worst, it becomes limited and in need of support from Logos to be set in the right direction. In the Eschaton freedom will be fully restored. This, however, raises the question of whether the last things are really lasting. Could rational beings, being free, not make wrong choices again? I believe Origen's answer would be: yes! Rational beings could, in principle, make wrong decisions yet again, beginning a new fall and necessitating a new redemption. However, Origen is convinced that this will not happen. Not because it is theoretically impossible, but because when perfection has been achieved after many eons of *paideusis*, rational beings will have gained so much

experience of the pain of distance to God that they will never again use their freedom to turn away from him. The perfect love which restored rational beings receive and actualize will, for Origen, almost certainly guard against further sins.<sup>35</sup>

#### b) The Body and Perfection

It is more difficult to understand what Origen thinks about bodies at the time of perfection. There is, of course, the above-mentioned sentence in *On First Principles* suggesting that only the Trinity can exist without a body. However, as noted above, I do not, for various reasons, find this sentence decisive. The first question to ask is where in their development rational beings will return upon reaching perfection? Will they again exist in Logos/Wisdom, or perhaps in the stage at which they were extrapolated from Logos/Wisdom? As far as I can tell, Origen does not say anything explicit here. The most logical assumption, in my opinion, is that they will return to the condition wherein Logos/Wisdom had transformed them into free, individual beings. As long as the *vóες* existed as mere plans within Wisdom, they could not act out of their free will, for example in deciding whether or not to extrapolate themselves from the Logos/Wisdom. The concrete use of free will was only possible after the rational beings had been so extrapolated.

If this is true, the next question is whether the extrapolated rational beings were, or were not, here embodied. I will mention two points related to this: the first is that the rational beings were, at this stage, individuals. The second is that they were able to move using their free will. Is it possible to imagine individual beings without bodies? Is it possible to imagine disembodied *vóες* in motion? I am convinced that Origen *could* imagine individual rational beings without bodies, because bodies seem less essential to these beings than freedom. I am more doubtful whether he could imagine the *vóες* moving without bodily support, because he stresses that God provided their bodies for the express purpose of enabling them to move. Other arguments pro and contra could be presented, but I will leave it here.

35 Cf. in Rom. comm. V 10,15 (SC 539, 522). See Thomas P. Scheck, Origen. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Books 1–5, Washington D. C. 2001, 376; Riemer Roukema, “Die Liebe kommt nie zu Fall” (1 Kor. 13,8a) als Argument des Origenes gegen einen neuen Abfall der Seelen von Gott, in: Wolfgang A. Biener t/Uwe Kühne weg (eds.), Origeniana Septima. Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts (BETL 137), Leuven 1999, 15–25.

## 5. Concluding remarks

Before coming to an end, I will, however, ask one last question: does any of this make sense? Why rehearse these metaphysical arguments? I know that many of my colleagues studying Origen will dismiss the subject as pure speculation, concentrating instead on how Origen interprets the Bible and other more 'concrete' issues. To answer my own question, I believe that such 'speculations' are indispensable for understanding Origen. I am fully convinced that Origen developed a strict and coherent theological and philosophical program – a system, if you will. What Origen presents to us should be, and can only be, fully understood if it is interpreted in the light of the whole. If we want to understand Origen, we must therefore also grasp the basic structures of his thinking. These basic structures include, among other things, his thinking about freedom, the body, and how the final perfection relates to the beginning.

But is this of interest to anyone other than Origen nerds? Some would say no, since Origen's thinking is based on strong metaphysical notions which many see as unconvincing in our 'modern' world. For my part, I tend to think that one of the tasks of Origen scholars, and patristic scholars in general, is to present studies that challenge the idea that the world can be understood without some kind of metaphysical framework, whatever form it may take.



# Role Models and Soft Power in Origen

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As has been widely acknowledged by recent scholarship, Origen played a crucial role in turning Christianity into an intellectually acceptable religion. Apart from appealing to the pagan elite of his time, Origen was also keen to extend the relevance of the Christian message of salvation to other strata of society. Across many of his works, including his sermons, he therefore makes use of a wide range of examples taken from the Bible or from everyday life in order to illustrate major theological points. His rhetorical technique of persuasion can be described in terms of ‘soft power’ which is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals, i. e. in the case of Origen to follow Christianity. Soft power aims at shaping the preferences of others through appeal and attraction by involving the use of cultural influence. This chapter intends to demonstrate how Origen uses biblical role models as part of his ‘soft power strategy’ in order to influence his environment culturally. Using role models was a particularly suitable ‘bridging technique’ as Origen thus both imitates the biblical style itself as evident both in the Gospels and Paul, and also employs a pagan rhetorical approach where examples were a core feature in illustrating an argumentative point and therefore familiar to his pagan elite readership. This chapter analyses passages from a wide range of Origen’s works in order to illustrate how he drew on role models both of high rank and taken from everyday life as a strategy of soft power in order to support the counter-cultural claim that salvation as brought about by the Christian God was meant to be directed towards all human beings.

## 1. Introduction

‘Soft power’<sup>1</sup> is the ability to attract and co-opt, rather than using coercion or payment (‘hard power’). Soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. It is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals. A defining feature of soft power is that

1 For the following see the Wikipedia article on soft power, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft\\_power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_power) (last accessed 03/09/2020), and Naren Chit ty et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power*, London 2017.

it is non-coercive; the currency of soft power is culture, political values, and foreign policies. Recently, the term has also been used in the context of influencing social and public opinion through relatively less transparent channels and of lobbying through powerful political and non-political organizations, and of economic influence. Joseph Nye of Harvard University coined the term in a 1990 book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. In this book, he defines co-optive or soft power as the ability that one country gets other countries to want what it wants. It has the ability to establish preferences by using “intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions.”<sup>2</sup> He contrasts this with hard or command power of ordering others to do what one wants.<sup>3</sup> He further developed the concept in his 2004 book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. The term is now widely used in international affairs by analysts and leading politicians. For example, United States Secretary of Defense Robert Gates spoke of the need to enhance American soft power by “a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security – diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action and economic reconstruction and development.”<sup>4</sup> In 2014, Xi Jinping announced, “We should increase China’s soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China’s messages to the world.”<sup>5</sup> On 31/01/2020, I was the recipient of an email South Korea circulated to “foreign experts” in order to invite me to take part in a voluntary and confidential survey on “Soft Power (national image) recognition by major regions.” It was conducted by the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy which is a government-funded research institute under the Prime Minister’s Office in South Korea. It has been researching South Korea’s soft power (understood as national image) since 2018. The email included a definition of soft power: “Soft power, unlike hard power (military power), means the ability to get what one wants with power that attracts one’s heart and comes from a country’s culture, political values, and foreign policies,” clearly based on the concept of Nye. The purpose of the survey was that its responses would help South Korea to “collect information on soft power so that we can establish better policies and improve South Korea’s soft power (national image).”<sup>6</sup>

2 Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York 1990, 32.

3 Cf. *ibid.* 31–33. 188.91–95.

4 Robert M. Gates, Landon Lecture at Kansas State University, 26 November 2007 (Speech): <https://web.archive.org/web/20100801065608/http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=109> (last accessed 17/09/2020).

5 China’s film industry: The red carpet, in: *The Economist* (2013): <https://www.economist.com/news/christmas-specials/21591741-red-carpet> (last accessed 17/09/2020).

6 Unfortunately, I was not able to take part in the survey so cannot say what questions it entailed.

According to *Soft Power 30*, an annual index published by Portland Communications and the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, for 2018,<sup>7</sup> the United Kingdom is the leading sovereign state in soft power. Its soft power is described as being weakened by the ongoing uncertainty around Brexit. Other leading countries in soft power include France, Germany, the United States, Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia and Denmark. The 2016/17 *Monocle Soft Power Survey*<sup>8</sup> ranks the United States as the leading country in soft power. The *Elcano Global Presence Report 2018*<sup>9</sup> scores the European Union highest for soft presence when considered as a whole, and ranks the United States first among sovereign states. Soft power can be wielded not just by states but by all actors in international politics, such as NGOs or international institutions, or others such as wealthy tycoons or influencers controlling social media etc. Soft power resources are the assets that produce attraction which often leads to acquiescence, or coalition. Nye asserts that, “Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive.”<sup>10</sup> It needs to be borne in mind here that even such seemingly irresistible values are in need of constant re-enforcement through various factors, including soft power. Soft power tends to “work indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and sometimes takes years to produce the desired outcomes.” The book identifies three broad categories of soft power: “culture,” “political ideals,” and “policies.”<sup>11</sup>

In *The Future of Power* (2011), Nye reiterates that soft power is a descriptive, rather than a normative, concept. Therefore, soft power can be wielded for nefarious purposes. “Hitler, Stalin, and Mao all possessed a great deal of soft power in the eyes of their acolytes, but that did not make it good. It is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms.”<sup>12</sup> Nye also claims that soft power does not contradict the international relations theory of realism. “Soft power is not a form of idealism or liberalism. It is simply a form of power, one way of getting desired outcomes.”<sup>13</sup>

7 See Jonathan Mc Cl o ry, *The Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power*, Portland 2018: <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/story/hot-press-2018-soft-power-30> (last accessed 09/09/2020).

8 See Cesare Ser venti (ed.), *Soft Power Survey 2016/17* (video post): <https://monocle.com/film/affairs/soft-power-survey-2016-17/> (last accessed 09/09/2020).

9 See Iliana Olivie /Manuel Gra cia (eds.), *Elcano Global Presence Report 2018*, Madrid 2018: <https://www.globalpresence.realinstitutoelcano.org/media/1e7032b57492e684fa6a51dbef72ef9f.pdf> (last accessed 09/09/2020).

10 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York 2004, x.

11 *Ibid.*, also for the previous quote.

12 Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, New York 2011, 81.

13 *Ibid.* 82.

Thus, as a concept, it can be difficult to distinguish soft power from hard power. In cultural studies, the concept of soft power is often used for culture. However, Parc and Moon (2019) argue that soft power cannot replace culture; it is only a subset of “accumulable culture,” which is an opposite concept of “accumulated culture.” It needs to be emphasized that despite Nye’s efforts to define it, the usage of ‘soft power’ in policy discourses is slippery. This has the effect that both a successful fashion industry and the diplomatic role of the armed forces can be treated as ‘soft power.’<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this contribution, this is not seen as a problematic issue: as a concept, soft power offers a way of talking about non-coercive modes of influence in national and international politics; the idea is useful because it captures something about national and international politics that other concepts miss. The consequence of this position is that ‘soft power’ is likely to retain its grip on policy discourse unless researchers can offer alternative ways of conceptualizing and practicing influence. As this contribution intends to demonstrate, the concept can be fruitfully applied in further disciplinary areas, such as the field of early Christian studies. The cultural and the legal, political, economic are mutually reinforcing; this does not mean that the cultural is simply marketing. It is also about familiarity with language, culture, systems, ways of doing business and the relations with people that emerge from this process.

Soft power emerges from a particular, theoretically driven, understanding of world politics rather than from a historical account, where a material realistic and an idealistic position are often in conflict. Realism claims the permanent importance of material power while idealism looks for evidence of the importance of other factors in order to demonstrate societal transformation. The implications of the ‘cultural project’ and its history offer an alternative to both of these positions. World politics is indeed influenced and constituted by non-state actors but these actors still have national identities. This has been analysed in a collected volume on the importance of the Russian language in order to ensure cohesion and identity in the post-Soviet era: “Diasporic communities have grown exponentially since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In building new relations with them, there came a realization that Russia’s soft power to a large extent depends upon the use of the Russian language [...]”<sup>15</sup> The function of language is here regarded as a means to counterbalance military tensions, in combination with cultural and scientific activities, the usage of film and media in order to generate a shared positive memory, as well as developing policies related to migrant workers and their

14 See British Parliament (House of Lords), Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK’s Influence – First Report: Persuasion and Power in the Modern World, London 2014: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/ldsoftpower/150/15002.htm> (last accessed 09/09/2020).

15 Arto Mustajoki et al. (eds.), *The Soft Power of the Russian Language: Pluricentricity, Politics and Policies*, London 2020, 4.

integration: “[...] political ties of the three Caucasian countries with Russia may suffer due to military and financial risks, yet the influence of the soft power has recently intensified and is manifested by cultural and scientific ties, and memories of the ‘golden’ past.”<sup>16</sup> The point that deserves particular attention here is that soft power cannot successfully operate in a monocausal, isolated way, but will increase its lasting impact and effectiveness if various parts of societal activity corroborate it, such as diplomacy, political measures, financial decisions, etc.<sup>17</sup> But also the other way round: legal, political and economic arrangements will not be of lasting success and acceptance among a wider group of people or a nation if they are not supported, embedded, and perpetuated by various forms of cultural adaptation, i. e. activating means of soft power. This can explain while in some countries, even if the legal and political will is there to change certain social conditions for suppressed groups, this is not as successful and lasting as expected. Moreover, even habits, customs, or values that are taken for granted by a group that embraces them, need to be constantly reinforced through soft power activities (symbols, rituals, visual and other artistic adaptations) in order to remain stable.

If soft power represents a political theory of attractiveness, the term itself appeals to some and not others. Soft power, as a term, is a cultural artefact that represents a body of thought that is associated with resources invested in attraction-power as well as with strategies for using such resources to further the interests of certain actors. Like many cultural artefacts, soft power has had a mixed reception, especially in academia.<sup>18</sup>

To start this contribution, an understanding of the meaning of ‘culture’ is useful. Although culture is part of our daily experience and encounters, it does not have any single definition. The multiplicity of definitions demonstrates the diverse views of culture across lenses – shaped, as it were, by the cultural encounters of the various authors that attempt to define it. Anthropologists have tended to link culture to shared understandings of symbols. Clifford Geertz in his classic work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) sees culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms,” employed to communicate, perpetuate, and develop knowledge about and attitudes towards life.<sup>19</sup> Contemporary scholars of culture and intercultural communications such as Kathryn Sorrells have built on Geertz’s anthropological association of culture with meaning and symbols, seeing culture as a system of shared meanings passed from generation to generation

16 Ibid. 53.

17 On the limits of soft power, when its success and ‘attractiveness’ cannot be sustained, see also Eric Louw, Zimbabwe and South Africa as Case Studies of the Limits of Soft Power, in: Chitt y et al., *Handbook of Soft Power* (n. 1) 305–311.

18 See “Section I: Theoretical Considerations” in Chitt y et al., *ibid.* 7–72.

19 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York 1973, 89.

through symbols.<sup>20</sup> Critical to this view of culture are shared meanings of symbolic forms. Symbols are the core artefacts upon which human communication is built – words, images, slogans, colour combinations, etc.

The concept of soft power defined as the usage of culture as a means to influence and co-opt others has been applied also outside the context of international politics and diplomacy, for instance relating to the media industries,<sup>21</sup> higher education,<sup>22</sup> virtual reality,<sup>23</sup> and – particularly noteworthy for our purposes – religion as a post-secular political phenomenon.<sup>24</sup> So far it has rarely been used by scholars of antiquity as an investigative category. The only exceptions I am aware of are three contributions in ancient Roman history and archaeology.<sup>25</sup> To my knowledge, the concept has never been employed relating to early Christianity. Thus, this paper sees itself as pioneering such an endeavour: it aims at testing the fruitfulness of applying the notion of ‘soft power’ in order to enhance our understanding of the non-violent means and mechanisms that enabled the successful rise of Christianity in the early Roman Empire within a surrounding hegemonic culture that was in many ways at odds with the Christian core message and indeed hostile to it. In the following we make use of this concept in a demarcated way: first, we confine ourselves to one of Nye’s three categories of soft power, viz. the category of culture as the domain in which soft power was activated in Early Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Second, we see this as an activity that was, at the beginning of Christianity, not used as a political tool regarding other nations or peoples (which would be done later under the headings of mission and inculturation). Instead, in early Christianity it was employed first of all as a vital non-aggressive tool for establishing the ‘sub-culture’ of Christianity within the Roman Empire (seen as a culturally fairly homogeneous society) and making it increasingly acceptable to the surrounding

20 See Kathryn Sorrells, *Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice*, Los Angeles 2013, 4.

21 See Gerben Bakker, *Soft Power: The Media Industries in Britain since 1870*, in: Roderick Floud/Jane Humphries/Paul Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, Cambridge 2014, 416–447.

22 See Jian Li, *Conceptualizing Soft Power of Higher Education: Globalization and Universities in China and the World*, Singapore 2018.

23 See Angela Adrian, *The ‘Soft Power’ of Virtual Reality*, in: *International Journal of Liability and Scientific Enquiry* 1 (2007) 10–17.

24 See Jeffrey Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power*, London 2012; Ansgar Jödicke (ed.), *Religion and Soft Power in the South Caucasus*, London 2017.

25 See Claudio Vanti, *Pensare l’Italia, progettare Roma. Hard power, suasion, soft power: i tria corda della grande strategia romana tra III guerra sannitica e I guerra punica*, in: *Athena e Roma* 3 (2015) 129–162; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustus and the Seductions of Soft Power*, in: AA. VV., *Convegno Augusto: La costruzione del principato (Atti dei Convegni Lincei 309)*, Rome 2017, 211–222; Christina Luke/Morag M. Kersel, *U.S. Cultural Diplomacy and Archaeology: Soft Power, Hard Heritage*, London 2012.

26 A similar move was made by Adrian, *The ‘Soft Power’ of Virtual Reality* (n. 23).

culture within which it arose. It goes beyond the scope of this paper, but would be worth exploring, how far the techniques and arguments employed here will remain the same or would be bound to change once the focus shifted from intra-societal soft power to one directed towards other cultures.

## 2. Origen, Role Models, and Soft Power

Origen is the first prominent Christian who developed a comprehensive programme of establishing Christianity as an intellectual religion that could offer a systematized presentation of its belief tenets and an educational programme comparable to the best the ancient world had to offer in this respect.<sup>27</sup> The quantity and breadth of his output in order to achieve this groundbreaking endeavour are stunning by any standard, ancient and modern. Due to his later status as a heretic the transmission of his enormous output is complex, with presumably only around 30 % of his entire oeuvre extant, and some of it not in the original Greek but in the more or less reliable Latin translations by Rufinus and Jerome.<sup>28</sup> The following offers a few selected case-studies regarding the issue of soft power in order to explore some of its aspects. This contribution does not make any claims either to comprehensiveness or representativeness regarding this topic.

Origen himself offers in *Contra Celsum* some theoretical reflections that are worth bearing in mind for our topic. First, he starts his apologetic work against the second century, anti-Christian Greek philosopher Celsus by pointing out the seeming paradox that Jesus Christ, although without guilt and all-powerful, remained silent and did not defend himself against his accusers and enemies during his passion until his death. This could easily lead to the conclusion that true followers of Christ should remain silent as well. Thus, a work like the one directed against Celsus in order to defend Christianity against critics would have lost its legitimacy before it even started. Origen, however, elegantly circumvents this potential trap by emphasizing repeatedly that it was actually the disciples' brave behaviour and testimony which formed the most eloquent and efficient defence of Christ.<sup>29</sup> Although he does not spell this out explicitly, we can safely surmise that Origen sees his own works as defending the faith precisely in this tradition and thus as justified.

27 See Alfons Fürs t, *Origenes: Grieche und Christ in römischer Zeit (Standorte in Antike und Christentum 9)*, Stuttgart 2017, esp. 56–109. For Christian philosophy of late antiquity in general as a programme of enlightenment and persuasion without violence, see Theo Kobusch, *Selbstwertung und Personalität: Spätantike Philosophie und ihr Einfluss auf die Moderne (Tria Corda 9)*, Tübingen 2018, 29–32.

28 See Fürs t, *ibid.* 19–22.

29 Cf. Origen, *Cels. praef.* 1–3 (GCS Orig. 1, 51–53).

Second, Origen reflects on the conundrum that both sides of the argument represent different views or cultural traditions, i. e. push their soft power, and each side will of course insist that theirs is the right one. They both have their own authorities and methods in order to establish proof and arguments as agreed by their respective conventions that will help them to assert their positions. Origen freely admits this and thus confesses that ultimately an ideology or *Weltanschauung* cannot be justified by an ultimate reason that cannot be trumped: people accept an authority before they engage with the arguments offered by it, normally by associating themselves with a particular group holding these views:<sup>30</sup>

“As this matter of faith is so much talked of, I have to reply that we accept it as useful for the multitude, and that we admittedly teach those who cannot abandon everything and pursue a study of rational argument to believe without thinking out their reasons. But, even if they do not admit it, in practice others do the same. What person who is urged to study philosophy and throws themselves into some school of philosophers at random or because they have met a philosopher of that school, comes to do this for any reason except that they have faith that this school is better?”<sup>31</sup>

The method of allegoresis, for instance, can be adopted by both pagans and Christians to render potentially offensive or problematic texts acceptable.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, when facing their own authoritative texts people should use their discriminating faculty in order to decide what to believe, and how, and what not:

“Anyone who reads the stories with a fair mind, who wants to keep themselves from being deceived by them, will decide what they will accept and what they will interpret allegorically, searching out the meaning of the authors who wrote such fictitious stories, and what they will disbelieve as having been written to gratify certain people.”<sup>33</sup>

Third, Origen explicitly acknowledges the difficulty to change people’s ingrained habits; he emphasizes that it is even more difficult to change their opinions (i. e. the playing field of soft power) once they have made them their firmly held conviction:

“Quarrelling and prejudice are troublesome in that they make people disregard even obvious facts, preventing them from giving up doctrines to which they have somehow be-

30 Augustine argues explicitly along those lines against the Manichees, see Karla Pollmann, *Christianity and Authority in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of the Concept of *Auctoritas**, in: Carol Harrison/Caroline Humfréss/Isabella Sandwell (eds.), *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, Oxford 2014, 156–174, here 167–169.

31 Origen, *Cels.* I 10 (GCS Orig. 1, 62f.). Translation: p. 13 Chadwick, slightly modified.

32 Cf. *ibid.* I 17 (1, 69). See also further below *ibid.* IV 38 (1, 308–311).

33 *Ibid.* I 42 (1, 92f.). Translation: p. 39 Chadwick, slightly modified. Cf. Dio Chrysostom, *orat.* 11; §rabo I 2,7 ff.

come accustomed, which colour and mould their soul.<sup>34</sup> Indeed people would more readily give up their habits in other respects, even if they find it hard to tear themselves away from them, than in the case of their religious opinions. Nevertheless, people of fixed habits do not easily abandon even what is not connected with religion. Thus people who have become biased in favour of particular homes, or cities, or villages, or familiar friends, are not readily willing to abandon them. This was the reason why many of the Jews at the time disregarded the obvious fulfilments of the prophecies and the wonders which Jesus performed and the sufferings he is recorded to have endured. That something of this sort has been the natural experience of people will be clear to those who observe that people who have once become prejudiced in favour even of the most shameful and futile traditions of their ancestors and fellow-citizens, are not easily changed.<sup>35</sup>

a) *De oratione*<sup>36</sup>

Origen frequently deals with the issue of free will in his writings: first in order to refute deterministic beliefs, second because the concept of free will is particularly relevant in Christian thought. Underlying this endeavour is the conviction that if human beings had no free will, there would be no point in them being punished or rewarded for their conduct, as it is not “up to them,” not their responsibility. Christianity addresses the issue of free will in a spiritual perspective: people are punished or rewarded by God in the life to come, depending on how they act in their earthly life. It is a specific Christian moral-spiritual perspective that human conduct, which human beings are responsible for, can be judged not only by God at the end of times, but also by the human agents themselves as well as by other human beings during their lives and even postumously. This vital assumption justifies the existence of social institutions with the power of sanctioning human beings for their own actions. From this perspective, it is safe to say then that the existence of free will is critical for the functioning of society. Free will “is the necessary presupposition of responsible human action, especially when it comes to education and punishment. Our educational and penal systems depend on the assumption that we are responsible for what we are doing, and that we have the possibility to act otherwise.”<sup>37</sup>

34 Cf. for a similar statement Seneca, epist. 71,31.

35 Origen, Cels. I 52 (GCS Orig. 1, 108). Translation: p. 48 Chadwick, slightly modified.

36 I am following here Ilaria Scarponi, her chapter on “Origen on Human Freedom” (PhD Bristol, forthcoming).

37 Alfons Fürst, Origen’s Legacy to Modern Thinking about Freedom and Autonomy, in: Anders-Christian Jacobsen (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (BETL 279), Leuven 2016, 3–28, here 3f. See also Kobusch, *Selbstwertung und Personalität* (n. 27) 205–216.

In his *On Prayer*, Origen illustrates this with three examples, namely a slave blamed for doing wrong, a child chided for not giving due respect to their parent, and an adulteress censured for her behaviour:

“Who does not strike a slave when one forms the impression that the slave has done wrong? Who is there who does not accuse a child who does not give due respect to their parents? Or who does not blame and censure the adulteress as one who has done something shameful? The truth forces itself upon us; [...] it compels us to act and to give praise and blame, on the assumption that our autonomy is preserved and that its exercise by us is subject to praise or blame.”<sup>38</sup>

The fact that the three above-mentioned human categories (slave, child, adulteress) are blamed because of their conduct presupposes that they are responsible for their conduct and have the ability, power, and choice to act better. If these examples are meant to serve as an argument in favour of the existence of free will, they are to some degree perplexing. Blaming a slave, a child, and an adulteress presupposes that they can act better, but this presupposition does not prove that they are actually able to act better, or, in other words, that they are endowed with free will which would enable them to act better in an autonomous and responsible way. It is noteworthy that Origen focuses on the two categories of slaves and adulteresses, socially marginalised groups at his time. In Western antiquity slaves were regarded as objects, mere property of their masters; adulteresses are a sub-category of the category of women, a socially ‘weak’ group *par excellence*.

Using marginalised groups such as slaves and adulteresses as examples in a philosophical discussion of human free will is provocative, to say the least. They are particularly familiar to pagan audiences from New Comedy; in terms of soft power Origen can tap here into a pool of characters featuring in the context of comic entertainment, in order then to surprise his readers by pointing out their moral autonomy. It is perhaps less surprising that Origen refers to the category of children; children are a ‘weak’ category due to their age, but contrary to slaves and adulteresses they are not a socially marginalised group, at least not if they belong to a high social class, and more over will eventually grow up into fully developed adults. Origen’s usage of these ‘weak’ social categories as examples in order to substantiate the existence of human free will implies for the argument to work a logic *a minore ad fortio*rem, i. e. that ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ categories are

38 Origen, *orat.* 6,2 (OWD 21, 122): *τίς δὲ οὐκ ἐπιπλήττει, φαντασίαν ἀμαρτήσαντος οἰκέτου λαβών, τῷ θεράποντι; καὶ τίς ἐστίν, ὃς μὴ αἰτιᾶται υἷὸν τὸ πρὸς γονεῖς καθήκον μὴ ἀποδίδόντα ἢ μὴ μέμφεται καὶ ψέγει ὡς αἰσχρὸν πεποηκυῖαν τὴν μεμοιχευμένην; βιάζεται γὰρ ἢ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἀναγκάζει, [...] ὀρμᾶν καὶ ἐπαινεῖν καὶ ψέγει, ὡς τηρουμένου τοῦ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, καὶ τούτου ἐπαινετοῦ ἢ ψεκτοῦ γινομένου παρ’ ἡμᾶς.* Translation: von Stritzky, OWD 21, 123 (English: K. P.). See also Plato, *nom.* I 639c.

intrinsically equal; in other words, that there are no differences between children and adults, slaves and free human beings, adulteresses and virtuous human beings, men and women, with regard to the exercise of their free will. Hence, Origen uses biological differences and sociological inequalities to claim anthropological equalities among social groups and classes. A similar mechanism can be observed in a passage in his *Homilies on Genesis*, where Origen uses biological and sociological inequalities to claim anthropological equalities between the genders by suggesting that the female component of the inner person of both men and women needs to obey the male component.<sup>39</sup>

Origen's third example of the adulteress is even more peculiar. First, it is noteworthy that he focuses on adultery as specifically committed by a female human being. Based on various passages in the New Testament (in particular 1 Cor. 7), Christianity was keen to emphasize the mutual obligation of both spouses to be sexually faithful. Therefore, Origen could well have used a male adulterer as an example. His general preference for male types and examples makes the switch to a female one all the more pronounced. Second, free will is postulated here to act within a given moral or ethical framework characterized by the adjective *αἰσχρὸς* ("causing shame," or "shameful").<sup>40</sup> Put differently, Origen suggests that while exercising free will one needs to behave so as not to incur shame. Thus, the existence of free will is in Origen linked to a moral code, whose existence is not questioned but it is "up to us" as human beings to adjust to it. This adjustment is in itself is purely determined by these exterior frameworks which are bound to be subject to historical change and subject to a specific cultural framework. In other words, Origen links human free will and responsibility to a shame culture rather than a guilt culture.

All three examples given by Origen are far removed from the status of Origen's primary readership, well-educated elite males. Apart from the already mentioned logic *a minore ad fortiorem* one could surmise that Origen employs this range of examples to emphasize the anthropological universality of human free will as a capacity that is given to all human beings. All human beings are thus postulated as being able to exercise their free will within their specific biological, social, or cultural conditions. These conditions themselves are not questioned by Origen. This positions his tactics of persuading his readership by means of soft power between the idealistic values he wishes to convey and the material or historical framework he partly accepts.

39 Cf. Origen, in Gen. hom. 1, 5 (GCS Orig. 6, 19).

40 For *αἰσχρὸς* as "causing shame," see LSJ p. 43, referring to Homer, Il. III 38, for the meaning "shameful," see *ibid.*, referring to Herodotus, hist. III 155 etc.

b) *Contra Celsum*

In *Contra Celsum*, the sociological category of adulteress occurs as well, here in the context of a disparaging anti-Christian polemic against the Virgin Mary who is claimed by hostile pagans, including Celsus, to be in fact an adulteress who conceived a child not from her husband Joseph but from a soldier named Panthera.<sup>41</sup> She was convicted of adultery and, cast out by her husband Joseph, disgracefully gave birth elsewhere to her illegitimate son Jesus.<sup>42</sup> In line with the moral code of his time, Origen is unrelenting in condemning such a birth – if it were actually true – as vile and disgraceful,<sup>43</sup> and as irreconcilable with the divine nature and miraculous deeds of Jesus Christ as son of God. This position forms a strong and non-reflected tension with the general Christian conviction as formulated repeatedly by Origen that all sinners have the potential to improve. This is also emphasized later on by him,<sup>44</sup> where Origen is happy to confirm that Jesus chose as his disciples not persons of high birth and noble conduct, but precisely such with deficiencies.<sup>45</sup> The reasons for this choice are, first, that Jesus came into this world precisely to save sinners, and, second, that the disciples' conversion to a good life would be particularly strong evidence of the transformative power of Jesus' salvific mission.<sup>46</sup> Here Origen wants to emphasize the countercultural force inherent in Christianity but undercuts this in other places where he still relies on societal stereotypes and established moral categories and power relations, rather than going the whole way. So we observe here the same pattern of his tactics of persuasion by means of soft power as already in *De oratione*. It deserves further reflection as to where he does what for which reasons. However, this would go beyond the scope of this contribution.

Beside the complex mechanism of both moral adaptation and refutation, we can in Origen also encounter an intellectual fight about truth and authority regarding cosmic order. In *Contra Celsum IV* he defends the biblical book of Genesis and in particular its creation narrative against pagan criticism.<sup>47</sup> Follow-

41 Cf. Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum*. Translated with Introduction and Notes, Cambridge 1953, 31 n. 3: The title Jesus ben Panthera is not uncommon in the Talmud."

42 Cf. Origen, *Cels.* I 28 (GCS Orig. 1, 79f.); I 32f. (1, 83–85); I 38f. (1, 89f.).

43 Cf. esp. *ibid.* I 32 (1, 83f.).

44 Cf. *ibid.* I 63f. (1, 115–118). In *ibid.* I 64 (1, 116), Origen also refers to well-known "bad" pagans (such as Plato's pupil Phaedo, or Xenocrates' successor Polemo) who then "converted" to the study of philosophy which improved them morally; see the references in Chadwick, *Contra Celsum* (n. 41) ¶ n. 1.

45 I. e. sinners above all others, a statement Origen, *ibid.* I 63 (1, 115), surmises Celsus got from Barn. 5,9 (FC 72, 86).

46 Cf. Origen, *ibid.* I 63 (1, 115f.).

47 Cf. *ibid.* IV 36–40 (1, 306–314).

ing Robert Cialdini,<sup>48</sup> who is sometimes called the “father of influence,” and his identification of six techniques of persuasion, Origen employs here two of them, viz., the techniques of “social proof” and of “commitment and consistency” in his attempt to persuade his readership that pagan criticism of Christian views (as crystallized in Celsus)<sup>49</sup> is unfounded. According to Cialdini, social proof is an important category to influence people’s behaviour.<sup>50</sup> This is due to the fact that in any given situation people view a behaviour as more correct to the degree that they see others enacting it. This is why in situations which are awkward or difficult, people tend to look across the room at others before behaving, in order to ensure their reaction is socially acceptable and/or ‘correct.’ After all, no one wants to be the “odd one out.” Social proof is important to people because they might make fewer mistakes, hypothetically, when they go along with the crowd. Origen through most of *Contra Celsum* Book IV uses pagan authoritative proof texts to demonstrate that the account in Genesis is not so different from what pagan authorities teach. Here his tactics of soft power consists in alignment and a postulated convergence between Christian and pagan thought.

For instance, Origen points out similarities between Genesis and Hesiod’s *Theogony*,<sup>51</sup> between Genesis and Plato’s *Symposium*,<sup>52</sup> between Genesis and Plato’s *Timaeus* (one Creator God),<sup>53</sup> the biblical flood and the flood linked to Deucalion,<sup>54</sup> and that the shocking idea that Lot’s daughters slept with their father in order to create new progeny has got an equivalent in Stoic thought which justifies such normally unacceptable behaviour in a situation where no other human beings are left to secure the further existence of humankind.<sup>55</sup> The method to allegorize seemingly offensive passages in the Bible in order to make them acceptable

48 See esp. Robert Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Port Harcourt 1987. For a discussion of Cialdini’s influential concepts see Douglas Kenrick et al. (eds.), *Six Degrees of Social Influence: Science, Application, and the Psychology of Robert Cialdini*, Oxford 2012.

49 See Peter Marrens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, Oxford 2012, 70–72.

50 See for this and the following Cialdini, *Influence* (n. 48) 14–166.

51 Cf. Origen, *Cels.* IV 38 (GCS Orig. 1, 308–311).

52 Cf. *ibid.* IV 39 (1,311–33). For Plato in Egypt, see Chadwick, *Contra Celsum* (n. 41) 216n. 1.

53 Cf. *ibid.* IV 54 (1, 326–328).

54 Cf. *ibid.* IV 41f. (1,344f.). For Noah as Deucalion, cf. *ibid.* IV 11(1,281); Chadwick, *Contra Celsum* (n. 41) 217 n. 2, offers further parallels: Philo, *praem. et poen.* 23 (V p. 341 Cohn/Wendland); Justin, *apol.* II 6(7),2 (SC 507, 334); Theophilus, *Autol.* III 19,2 (PTS 44, 19). For ancient criticism of the inadequacy of Noah’s ark, see Chadwick, *Contra Celsum* (n. 41) 217 n. 3.

55 Cf. Origen, *Cels.* IV 45 (GCS Orig. 1,317–319). The Stoics held that it was the motive which determined whether an action was good or bad, cf. references and parallels in Chadwick, *ibid.* 221 n. 1: SVF III 743–756; Epictetus, *diss.* III 10,18; Clement of Alexandria, *strom.* II 66,1 (GCS Clem. Al. 2<sup>4</sup>, 148); IV 1B,6 (2<sup>4</sup>, 298). Origen follows Philo, *quaest. in Gen.*

by revealing a deeper and hidden true meaning, is a method the pagans employ themselves in order to salvage otherwise problematic or unethical passage (see also above).<sup>56</sup> Origen can even point out that there are also some pagan philosophers who allegorized the Bible.<sup>57</sup> One could go on, and this list is not comprehensive.

This technique aims at creating consistency between pagan and Christian thought which in terms of soft power is meant to diminish resistance to the seemingly new and revolutionary Christian message by suggesting that pagans are already committed to a large part of it anyway. As a by-product as it were, this strategy of argumentation elicits commitment. According to Cialdini, generally, once people consent to something, they are much less likely to back out, because keeping one's word is a noble quality, and allows people to function well as a society. One can use this principle to influence others by getting them to say yes to something small, preferably through a public declaration, then gradually making larger requests. This is also known as the "foot-in-the-door" technique.<sup>58</sup> Another way to profit by the use of the commitment and consistency principle is to remind someone who is hesitant to side with what is proposed, of decisions they have made in their past. Highlighting how this proposal or request is similar, indicates that the decision they are currently facing should be consistent with one they have made in the past. This in turn can make it easier to goad people into commitments that go beyond what they are actually used to or are in fact already committed to. This is done by Origen by emphasizing (almost as an aside) the superiority of the Christian message in comparison to very similar pagan messages and ideas. For instance, after having highlighted similarities between Genesis and Plato's *Symposium*, Origen concludes that the ideas about the human soul hidden in the Genesis account are superior to those by Plato.<sup>59</sup> Origen points out that the biblical stories are of superior value in comparison with the ostensibly similar Greek myths.<sup>60</sup> In terms of his tactics of soft power Origen lures his readers here into seeing the similar but superior Christian thought as a next logical step for them in terms of educational progress and development.

As a final consequence of this gradual "technique by stealth" it should come as no surprise that occasionally, in particular in the later parts of this book, Origen feels comfortable simply to use a biblical proof-text flatly to claim that the pagan

IV 56 (p. 290 f. Aucher ); Irenaeus, haer. IV 31, ff. (SC 100, 788–792). Origen, in Gen. hom. 5,3f. (GCS Orig. 6, 60–63), rejects the allegorical interpretation of Irenaeus.

56 Cf. Origen, Cels. IV 48–50 (GCS Orig. 1, 320–324). See Chadwick, *ibid.* 223–226 with footnotes.

57 Cf. Origen, *ibid.* IV 51 (1, 324).

58 See Cialdini, *Influence* (n. 48) 57–1B, esp. 71–7A.

59 Cf. Origen, Cels. IV 39f. (GCS Orig. 1, 311–330).

60 Cf. *ibid.* IV 50 (1, 323f.).

opinion is wrong and the Christian one right. Thus, he can refer to Gal. 4:21–31 where Paul allegorizes the Old Testament figures Sarah and Hagar as representing the Old and the New Covenants, as an authoritative justification for allegorizing *real historical* events.<sup>61</sup> Later on, Origen defends his notion of a free human will against Celsus' deterministic world view which Origen deems to be misguided.<sup>62</sup> Here Origen is performing a double-act in terms of soft power, as he does not only have to convince deterministic pagans but also Christians that could be tempted by the idea of a deterministic universe.<sup>63</sup>

By commanding such an impressive, elitist knowledge of a wide array of pagan classical authors and philosophies Origen establishes himself as an intellectual authority.<sup>64</sup> However, this could backfire as he could be regarded by some as a 'fallen' authority knowing the right proof-texts, but arriving at the wrong conclusions.

### c) *Commentary and Homilies on the Song of Songs*

In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Origen explains a tricky passage in the Song of Songs: "For your breasts are better than wine and the fragrance of your ointments is better than all spices" (Song 1:2f.).<sup>65</sup> Against stereotypical expectations, it is here the bride who utters these words about the breasts of the bridegroom. This text which is only extant in Rufinus' Latin translation follows the Septuagint version which is not in accordance with the Hebrew original.<sup>66</sup> Origen first offers a literal reading of this verse and explains that the bride is so carried away by the bridegroom's kisses, his beauty, and his scent, that she utters these words.<sup>67</sup> Origen indicates that this is done in the form of a play, i.e. a dramatic love story to be put on stage (*in historiae dramate; amatorium [...] drama*).<sup>68</sup> However, Origen operates on the clear understanding that the Song of Songs is not intended as an earthly marriage song or as depicting dramatic physical eros,

61 Cf. *ibid.* IV 44 (1, 31f.).

62 Cf. *ibid.* IV 67f. (1, 33f.).

63 Kenneth M. Wilson, *Augustine's Conversion from Traditional Free Choice to "Non-free Free Will": A Comprehensive Methodology* (STAC 111), Tübingen 2018, demonstrated though that before Augustine this was a small minority. For his analysis of Origen's thought, see *ibid.* 65–77 where he categorizes Origen's notion of free choice as "traditional free choice," a notion the young Augustine also adhered to.

64 See Cialdini, *Influence* (n. 48) 208–236; Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, Oxford 1966; Pollmann, *Christianity and Authority* (n. 30) *passim*.

65 Origen, in *Cant. comm.* I 2,1 (OWD 9/1, 132).

66 See Fürst/Strutwolf, *OWD* 9/1, 136 n. 141.

67 Cf. Origen, in *Cant. comm.* I 2,2 (OWD 9/1, 134).

68 *Ibid.* I 2,1.6 (9/1, 132. 136).

but is a bodiless total allegory.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Origen swiftly moves on to the allegorical level (*intellectus interior*),<sup>70</sup> in order to mitigate the daring expression. By using extensive parallel verses from the Old and the New Testaments, he points out that breast(s) can denote the human heart, both as the seat of affection and as the rational seat of knowledge and holy teaching.<sup>71</sup> He can then conclude:

“On the analogy of the foregoing, therefore, let us understand the leading part of the heart (*principale cordis*) as being denoted by the breasts in the passage before us, since it is evidently a drama of love; the words spoken will then mean: Your heart, o bridegroom, and your mind – that is the teachings that are within you, or the grace of your teaching – surpass all the wine that is wont to gladden a human heart. [...] The bridegroom’s breasts are good, therefore, because treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed in them.”<sup>72</sup>

The final sentence echoes Col. 2:3. Moreover, Origen uses in this context twice the term *principale cordis*,<sup>73</sup> a Latin equivalent for the Greek *ἡγεμονικόν*, the rational leading part of the soul.<sup>74</sup>

After having established this general allegorizing mechanism, Origen can then go further and reconfirm his interpretation by referring to other passages where breast(s) can refer to the wisdom and knowledge in Christ as the central hero of the New Testament,<sup>75</sup> but also in other Old Testament figures such as Solomon and the sons of Jonadab.<sup>76</sup> In this way the general, ostensibly erotic statement in Song of Songs 1:2f., in Origen’s view directed at the anonymous bridegroom, is linked typologically to Christ (as the bridegroom often is) but also to other Old Testament figures. Thus, the allegorizing interpretation is made more robust by being firmly embedded in a wider biblical typology and anthropology.

In the *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (extant in the Latin translation by Jerome) the bridegroom’s breasts (*ubera*) are very briefly declared to be a synonym for *pectus*, and the erotic context is declared to have a spiritual meaning.<sup>77</sup> The fol-

69 See J. Christopher King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture*, Oxford 2005, 40. 62.

70 Origen, in Cant. comm. I 2,2 (OWD 9/1, 134).

71 Cf. *ibid.* I 2,3 f. (9/1, B4–136).

72 *Ibid.* I 2,6–8 (9/1, 136–138).

73 *Ibid.* I 2,3,6 (9/1, 134. 136).

74 See Fürst / Strutwolf, OWD 9/1, 134 n. 139. King, *Origen on the Song of Songs* (n. 69) 40 n. 18, mentions as a parallel the Odes of Solomon 20,3 (p. 41 Bauer): “Because his breasts were full and it was undesirable that his milk should be ineffectually released.” Christoph Blönnigen, *Der griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistischen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrinischen Patristik*, Frankfurt a. M. 1992, 223–228, highlights Origen’s positive attitude towards pagan philosophy in his ethical allegoresis.

75 Cf. Origen, in Cant. comm. I 2,11 (OWD 9/1, 138).

76 Cf. *ibid.* I 2,16 (9/1, 140).

77 Cf. Origen, in Cant. hom. 1,3 (OWD 9/2, 74–76).

lowing allegorical interpretation does not focus on the specific meaning of *ubera*, but concentrates only on *vinum* as indicating the divine, spiritual, and thus “sober drunkenness” (*sobria ebrietas*) linked to the true understanding of Jesus’ teaching, and on the bridegroom’s ointments and their scent.<sup>78</sup> While the interpretative emphasis regarding the explanation of the *ubera* is significantly more detailed in the ‘elitist’ commentary than in the ‘popular’ homilies, it is striking that in both genres Origen shies away from the provocation contained in the biblical formulation, and makes it more acceptable to his readers by allegorical means. In terms of soft power here Origen gives in to the surrounding cultural mode of thinking which in other instances he is keen to challenge, as in the next example.

#### d) *Homilies on Joshua*

The New Testament mentions repeatedly that Jesus ate or had contact with sinners (Mk. 2:15–17; Mt. 11:9), including female sinners (esp. Lk. 7:36–50 where exegetes have often identified the “sinful woman” with a prostitute, but this is not said explicitly in the text). Thus, he included them in the salvific possibility of redemption and change for the better. Origen uses this New Testament principle of the universal application of the Christian promise of salvation<sup>79</sup> in order to illuminate difficult passages in the Old Testament by demonstrating them as being in accordance with the universal and dynamic principle of salvation in the New Testament. In his *Homilies in Joshua* he interprets the prostitute Rahab from Jos. 2:1 as meaning “breadth” and as symbolizing the “church of Christ which is gathered together from sinners as if from prostitution:”<sup>80</sup> “The prostitute who receives them (sc. those sent by God) becomes, instead of a prostitute, a prophet. [...] You see how that one who was once a prostitute and impious and unclean, is now filled with the Holy Spirit [...]”<sup>81</sup> In the next chapter, Rahab is called a “wise prostitute,”<sup>82</sup> a person who was once a prostitute and who now represents the church as the only means for all people to achieve salvation.<sup>83</sup> This shift in how to evaluate the worth of a human being is facilitated by the New Testament where Rahab is referred to as a prostitute and simultaneously called a person of faith (Heb. 11:31) and of good works (Jas. 2:25).

78 See Fürs t /Str ut wolf , OWD 9/2, 76 n. 31.

79 See the discussion in Kobusch , *Selbstwerdung und Personalität* (n. 27) 45–54, of the universal claim of early Christianity.

80 Origen, in Jos. hom. 3,4 (SC 71, B6). Translation: Bruce /White , FaCh 105, 47.

81 Ibid. 3,4 (71, B8–140). Translation: ibid. 48.

82 Ibid. 3,5 (71, 140). Translation: ibid. 49.

83 Cf. ibid. (71, 142–144). Translation: ibid. 49 f.

e) *Homilies on Luke*

In the *Homilies on Luke*, Elizabeth (mentioned in Lk. 1:5–20.24f.40–45.57–61) who in her old age became unexpectedly pregnant with John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, is commented on. Origen explains the statement in Lk. 1:24 that Elizabeth kept herself hidden for five months with the reason that she found it embarrassing that her pregnancy was testimony to her still having sexual intercourse despite the high age of both parents:

“If the husband and wife are both aged, it is a disgraceful thing for them to yield to lust and turn to mating. The decline of the body, old age itself, and God’s will all inhibit this act. But Elizabeth had relations with her husband once again, because of the angel and of God’s dispensation. She was embarrassed because she was an old and feeble woman, and had gone back to what young people do.”<sup>84</sup>

Today we would call this ageism. There is also a clear tension in this statement here, as first Origen explains that it is God’s will that old people do not engage in sexual intercourse anymore, while already in the next sentence pointing out that this was precisely God’s plan for the salvation of humanity.

In the following this becomes even more intricate as Mary’s virginity is at odds both with the fact that she is pregnant and that she has already been given to a man. Origen asks himself why God once he had decided the Saviour should be born of a virgin, had not chosen a young woman who was not yet betrothed but precisely one that was already betrothed.<sup>85</sup> He comes to the conclusion that the reason for this was to cover up Mary’s virginity before the outside world which would naturally assume that the baby was Joseph’s.<sup>86</sup> First, Origen offers a social consideration, as this served to save Mary the disgrace of being a single unwed mother. Second, Origen argues that this was also meant as cheating the devil who would otherwise immediately have recognized the special status of the child as born of a virgin and therefore as a direct danger to him.<sup>87</sup> The latter is a cosmic category and embeds Mary’s virginity in the all-permeating battle of good versus evil. By combining a social and a cosmic framework in his attempt to make his readers accept the specific circumstances of the virgin birth, Origen’s soft power tactics tries to mitigate its provocation and make it more palatable to them.

In another homily on Luke, the humility of Mary, mentioned by her in the Magnificat as being looked upon by God (Lk. 1:48), is a problem for ancient mo-

84 Origen, in Luc. hom. 6,1 (FC 4/1, 96). Translation: Lienhard, FaCh 94, 23.

85 Cf. *ibid.* 6,3 (4/1, 98). Cf also Ambrose, *expos. in Luc. II 1* (CSEL 32/4, 99).

86 Cf. Origen, *ibid.* 6,4 (4/1, 98).

87 Cf. *ibid.* (FC 4/1, 98–100).

rality where humility was not regarded as a virtue.<sup>88</sup> Here Origen becomes very bold by turning ancient morality and values on their head: if Mary carried in her womb the Saviour of humankind, what was humble and despised in her? Origen innovatively equates humility with justice, temperance, fortitude and prudence, i. e. nothing less than the four cardinal virtues.<sup>89</sup> If someone still found it difficult to understand how the Lord could “look upon,” i. e. be in favour of humility, Origen adds the explanation: “The one who asks such questions should consider that, in the Scriptures, humility is declared to be one of the virtues,”<sup>90</sup> summoning up in the following other parallels from Scripture to underpin this point.<sup>91</sup> This was hard to accept for a pagan audience for which the term *ταπεινότης* from Lk. 1:48 could only have had negative connotations such as morally “baseness, vileness,” or socially “lowness of position.” Thus, we observe here a clear reversal or reevaluation of values which Origen tries to camouflage by linking it to an established virtue system while at the same time bolstering this new concept of humility as a (Christian) virtue in the following with scriptural parallels such as Mt. 11:29 where Jesus calls himself gentle and humble (*ὅτι πραῦς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ*). Moreover, Origen tries to smooth over the offensiveness of *ταπεινότης* by glossing it with far less negatively associated terms such as *ἀτυφία* and *μετριότης*, which were characteristic of Stoic sages.<sup>92</sup> As in the case of the virgin birth, we can observe here a combination of various soft power tactics, in order to transform the value system of his readers.

### 3. Conclusions

The few examples that have just been analysed here are meant to illustrate some of the soft power techniques Origen employs in order to co-opt his readers to his position, readers who consist mainly either of educated pagans who are critical of but also interested in Christianity, or of Christians who are not yet entirely settled in their views and need a boost of their conviction. He uses the pagan cultural capital all around him and of which he had an impressive knowledge, in order to make the Christian worldview (as Origen sees it), in particular some of its more provocative points, easier to accept for a (culturally) pagan readership. The resulting compromise is a mutual rapprochement where both sides have to give to

88 See Lienhard, FaCh 94, 35 n. 15.

89 Cf. Origen, in Luc. hom. 8,4 (FC 4/1, 120).

90 Ibid. Translation: Lienhard, FaCh 94, 35.

91 Cf. ibid. 8,5 (4/1, 120–122).

92 See Lienhard, FaCh 94, 35 n. 17. See also Julia Annas, Ethics in Stoic Philosophy, in: Phronesis 52 (2007) 58–87, and John Sell, Stoic Practical Philosophy in the Imperial Period, in: Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement 94 (2007) 15–40.

some degree. Origen's soft power strategy is characterized by an intricate pattern of activating different authorities and using various interpretative methods in order to convey core messages of the Christian faith without pushing his readers too hard. If one is critical one could accuse Origen of contradictions, tensions, and short-comings in pushing the Christian message to its ultimate consequence. If one looks at it from a more constructive angle, one can regard this pattern as an overall strategy which is open to being reworked, reactivated, and reconfigured in numerous modifications and transformations. Origen's own enormous output is a striking demonstration of this.

Overall, Origen's method of enacting soft power is in essence a two-way street: either the countercultural statements of the Bible are paraphrased or allegorized in a way that their offensiveness is mitigated (breasts of the bridegroom, Mary's humility as a virtue, wise prostitute). Thus, Origen established a countercultural, biblically based set of new, Christian role models. Or, alternatively, Origen argues and tries to 'prove' a point by using stock examples from the surrounding pagan morality which is thus introduced in a relatively uncritical fashion into the Christian way of thinking, without explicitly reflecting on the fact that the examples used risk potentially to go against the grain of the 'new' Christian message (adulteress, slave). A further technique is to compare pagan authoritative prooftexts or role models unfavourably to what Origen establishes as Christian equivalents, without however eliminating this pagan body of thought altogether (Hesiod, *Theogony*; Deucalion; Plato). The latter can sometimes even be used to justify seemingly shocking behaviour described in the Bible (Lot's daughters). The overall result of this way of arguing is a dynamic interplay between the established tradition and the challenging new Christian way of thinking, in which neither of the two completely gains the upper hand nor is abolished or lost altogether. To integrate rather than to discontinue opposing worldviews generates a powerful tension that leaves a legacy for all future times, as these two intertwined poles of the traditional and the challenging are in need of constant fresh renegotiations by each generation: as a consequence, potentially the virtues of today can become the vices of tomorrow, and the vices of today can become the virtues of tomorrow.

In a fluid and changing world such as ours (similar to that of the late Roman Empire), communicating values, decisions, directions in an effective way to a large and heterogeneous audience is a task that cannot be solved by military, economic, and political means alone. This task needs to be enhanced, stabilized and perpetuated by various means of soft power. Here early Christians have a lot to offer to us.

# The Samaritan Woman in Origen's *Commentary on John* Seen from a Modern Perspective of Human Dignity

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## 1. Introduction

This paper deals with Origen's interpretation of the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (Jn. 4:1–42) in the *Commentary on John*.<sup>1</sup> It analyses the image that Origen draws of the woman who is often presented as a sinner because she has had five husbands.<sup>2</sup> Origen, however, does not present the woman as a sinner but reads the biblical text allegorically and takes “drawing water” and “having five husbands” as images. On the one hand, he uses the pericope in a spiritual interpretation in order to present a process of understanding, of gaining knowledge. First, the woman is considered as a heretic, but then receives Jesus' teaching that leads her to true understanding and real knowledge.<sup>3</sup> She thus becomes a role model for Origen's readers who are also supposed to turn away from the bodily towards the noetic. The woman makes the townspeople participate in what was bestowed upon her. This is what Origen's readers are supposed to do as well. Even though the Samaritan woman represents the heretics, she is worthy to receive Jesus' water.

The biblical passage in Jn. 4 shows that Jesus, asking for water, doesn't take into account the woman's origin, social status or religion nor the role that society attributes to her as a woman and to Jesus as a man, in modern gender terms. Legally, he is not allowed to talk to a woman without witnesses or use the same vessel as the Samaritans.<sup>4</sup> Also the disciples' reaction indicates that Jesus acts irregularly. When they come back to the well, they are amazed that Jesus is speaking to

1 Book XIII of Origen's *Commentary on John* is quoted from the edition of Cécile Blanc, SC 222, Paris 2006. The translations used are the French translation in SC 222 and the English translation of Ronald E. Heine, FaCh 89, Washington D. C. 1993.

2 Cf., e. g., John Chrysostom, in Ioh. hom. 32,2 (PG 59, 185).

3 Heinrich Karpp Einführung, in: Herwig Gör gemanns /Heinrich Karpp Origenes. Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien (TzF 24), Darmstadt 1992, 1–32, here 18, emphasises Origen's strong urge to gain knowledge. See also Wolfgang A. Biener t, ἈΝΑΓΩΓΗ im Johannes-Kommentar des Origenes, in: Gilles Dorival /Alain Le Boull uec (eds.), Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible (BETL 118), Leuven 1995, 419–427, here 427.

4 See Gebhard Maria Behler , La source en quête de l'assoiffée: L'entretien de Jésus avec la Samaritaine (Jean 4,1–42), Paris 1980, 34.

a woman (Jn. 4:27). At the literal level of his interpretation, Origen takes up these aspects. He neither presents the woman as sinful nor is bothered by gender roles, but he even augments the Samaritan woman's role compared to the way in which she is portrayed by the evangelist. John writes that she would have asked for the living water if she had known to whom she was speaking (Jn. 4:10); in Origen's interpretation, she receives the water. In Jn. 4:29, the woman asks the townspeople, "This is not the Messiah, is it?" Origen writes that Jesus uses the woman as an apostle, and she preaches Christ. The role Origen attributes to this woman goes beyond antique or Jewish roles, that, for example, didn't allow women to be witnesses. Origen inserts that the woman is poor and that the disciples are amazed that Jesus talks to a *Samaritan* woman. He states that each person is created according to God's image and likeness. The woman is considered worthy of talking to Jesus, receiving Jesus' water and preaching to the townspeople irrespective of her social status, sex and gender, religion or previous history. This is what in modern terms is regarded as human dignity (even though, of course, it is obvious that human dignity is a modern topic and gender is not Origen's issue): value and dignity are attributed to the Samaritan woman without previous requirements.

It is not possible to divide these different strands – neither the spiritual interpretation of the woman as a heretic from the literal interpretation nor the different aspects of the literal interpretation from each other, i. e. social status, religion, sex and gender. Rather, they are intrinsically tied to each other which makes particularly apparent the multidimensionality of Origen's exegesis. Nevertheless, this article tries to retrace the individual strands that are focussed in the different passages. All these can bring us to the statement that in Origen's interpretation – seen from a modern perspective of human dignity – Jesus ascribes dignity to the Samaritan woman both as an image of heretics and for persons of other religious views, sex, gender and social status.

After some introductory remarks, this paper presents Origen's interpretation of the encounter at Jacob's well, demonstrating how Origen focuses on knowledge and how he presents the Samaritan woman as an example of gaining knowledge and as an image of the heretics. The concluding passage presents the results and tentatively tries to place Origen's interpretation of the Samaritan woman within the modern concept of human dignity.

## 2. The Samaritan Woman Progressing from Heresy to True Knowledge

In the 13<sup>th</sup> book of his *Commentary on John*, Origen deals with Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (Jn. 4). His interpretation begins with Jn. 4:13; book 12 and the interpretation of Jn. 4:1–12 are lost. Book 13 was probably

written before 235 in Caesarea,<sup>5</sup> to which Origen moved sometime between 231 and 234.<sup>6</sup> Origen was requested by Ambrose to rebut Heracleon's commentary on the fourth Gospel that is handed down to us in fragments in Origen's commentary.<sup>7</sup> Heracleon had argued in his commentary that people remain throughout their lifetimes at the same level of knowledge and are incapable of gaining further knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Against this position, Origen argues that it is possible to learn and advance,<sup>9</sup> which is what the Samaritan woman does during her conversation with Jesus at Jacob's well.

The following passages focus on the woman's process of gaining knowledge and interpret the woman as an image of the heretics. They thus follow the first strand of the spiritual interpretation: the woman represents the heretics, but in the course of the conversation she is considered worthy to receive Jesus' water. Jesus invites the Samaritan woman to ask him for living water when he says that anyone drinking from the well will be thirsty again, and the woman complies with his request.<sup>10</sup> From this, Origen infers that nobody receives a divine gift without asking for it. He then interprets the Samaritan woman as an image (*εικόνων*)<sup>11</sup> for the thoughts of heretics when they study the divine Scriptures. He is going to take this image up again later, e. g., when he uses the Samaritan woman as an image of those who understand the Scripture wrongly.<sup>12</sup> Jean-Michel Poffet comments: "Dès les premiers mots d'introduction au commentaire de cette scène le ton est donc donné: Origène va polémiquer avec les hérétiques sur divers fronts au sujet de l'interprétation des Saintes Ecritures."<sup>13</sup> It certainly is right that the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well gives Origen the opportunity to discuss the question of reading the Scriptures. It probably is even more than this. Within this discussion, or as a meta-topic, Origen focuses on the question

5 See Heine, Introduction, in: FaCh 89, 3–65, here 15.

6 See Henri Cr ouzel, Origène, Paris/Namur 1985, 9; Heine, ibid. 4.

7 See Rolf Gö gler, Einleitung, in: id., Origenes: Das Evangelium nach Johannes, Einsiedeln/Zürich/Köln 1959, 15–90, here 87; Ansgar Wucher pfennig, Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert (WUNT 142), Tübingen 2002, 5; Alfons Fürs t, Art. Origenes, in: RAC 26 (2014) 460–567, here 476.

8 Cf. Origen, in Ioh. comm. XIII 10,63f. (SC 222, 64 f.); XIII 11,3 (222, 68 f.); XIII 20,122(222, 94 f.); XIII 25,149 f. (222, 113.); XIII 31,190 (222, 136 f.); XIII 52(51),341 (222, 223.).

9 See Theo Kobusch, Die philosophische Bedeutung des Kirchenvaters Origenes: Zur christlichen Kritik an der Einseitigkeit der griechischen Wesensphilosophie, in: ThQ 165 (1985) 94–105; Alan Scot t, Origen's Relationship to Valentinianism, in: Robert J. Daly (ed.), Origeniana Quinta (BETL 105), Leuven 1992, 79–84, here 80; Fürs t, Art. Origenes (n. 7) 483. 533–53.

10 Origen, in Ioh. comm. XIII 1,4 (SC 222, 36 f.).

11 Ibid. XIII 1,6 (222, 38 f.).

12 Ibid. XIII 6,39 (222, 52 f.).

13 Jean-Michel Poffe t, La méthode exégétique d'Héracléon et d'Origène, Commentateurs de Jn. 4: Jésus, la Samaritaine et les Samaritains (Par. 28), Fribourg 1985, 118.

of gaining knowledge through Scripture to that which is beyond what is written in the text.

According to Origen, the primary meaning of thirst (Jn. 4:13) is as follows. Whoever participates in what he believes to be the depth of scriptural teachings is satisfied for a while. Later, however, he will doubt this because he does not find real understanding (*τὸ νομιζόμενον*) in it.<sup>14</sup> Origen turns the woman's thirst for water into thirst for teaching. Thus, we find the interpretation of the water of the well as containing teachings that can be drawn up. Origen alludes to Jn. 4:14, but changes the biblical text substantially – Jesus does not promise water but teaching (*λόγος*) that becomes a source of living water in the one who receives what Jesus has promised. The water from this source wells upwards,<sup>15</sup> and so does the understanding (*διάνοια*) of the person who has received the water. The person is carried to the higher and eternal life (*ἐπὶ τὸ ἀνώτερον, ἐπὶ τὴν αἰώνιον ζωὴν*).<sup>16</sup> Origen thus interprets the water from the well as unclear teachings, while Jesus' water represents teaching that leads to true understanding.<sup>17</sup> Jesus' teaching thus guides human beings to knowledge.<sup>18</sup> This teaching is what Jesus offers to the Samaritan woman whom Origen earlier interpreted as an image of heretics when they study the divine Scriptures.<sup>19</sup> Obviously, he thinks that she is still worthy of receiving it – even though she represents the heretics – because she thirsts and asks for Jesus' water, i. e., his teaching.

However, not all of the most important and divine mysteries of God are in the Bible, not all of them are even in human language;<sup>20</sup> the Scriptures are only a very elementary introduction to all knowledge (*τῆς ὅλης γνώσεως στοιχείᾳ τινα ἐλάχιστα καὶ βραχυτάτας εἶναι εἰσαγωγὰς ὅλας γραφάς*).<sup>21</sup> Origen therefore asks the reader whether Jacob's well might not symbolise the whole Scripture (*ἢ μὲν πηγὴ τοῦ Ἰακώβ [...] ἢ πᾶσα εἶναι γραφή*),<sup>22</sup> while Jesus' water represents what is "above that which is written" (*τὸ "ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται"*). Drinking water from the

14 Origen, in Ioh. comm. XIII 3,15 (SC 222, 42f.).

15 See Behler, Source (n. 4) 62f.

16 Origen, in Ioh. comm. XIII 3,16 (SC 222, 42f.).

17 See Maurice F. Wiles, The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church, Cambridge 1960, 46f.; Jean-Michel Poffe, Jésus et la Samaritaine (Jean 4,1–42) (Sup. CE 93), Paris 1995, 27.

18 Poffe, Méthode exégétique (n. 13) 270, describes the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman in Origen's interpretation as an illustration of the encounter "entre toute intelligence croyante et le Verbe illuminateur."

19 Origen, in Ioh. comm. XIII 1,6 (SC 222, 38f.).

20 Ibid. XIII 5,27 (222, 46f.).

21 Ibid. XIII 5,30 (222, 48f.).

22 See Micheline Laguë, "Boire à son propre puits:" une expression de Bernard de Clairvaux? Petite enquête sur une référence, in: EeT(O) 29 (1998) 303–326, here 316. Cf. Origen, in Num. hom. 12,1,ξ. (SC 442, 72–77).

well means reading the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament,<sup>23</sup> which does not satisfy thirst.<sup>24</sup> One starts with the Scriptures, but once they have been accurately understood (*ἀκριβῶς νενοημένων*), one proceeds to Jesus who provides the source from which comes the water that wells up into eternal life.<sup>25</sup>

Origen assumes that not all human beings are at the same level of knowledge but that they can advance in knowledge or progress towards more knowledge during their lifetimes.<sup>26</sup> The less advanced they are, the easier the interpretation of Scripture that is addressed to them needs to be so that they can understand it. Origen explains this by interpreting different ways of drawing water from the well as different depths of understanding of Scripture. Not everybody draws in the same way from Jacob's well. Those who are wise in the Scriptures drink as did Jacob and his sons; the simpler ones, however, the so-called sheep of Christ, drink like Jacob's flocks.<sup>27</sup> A third group drinks as the Samaritan woman did when she did not yet believe in Jesus; they misunderstand the texts and make up blasphemies, pretending that they apprehend the Scriptures.<sup>28</sup> At this point, we can see that Origen assumes progress in the Samaritan woman's attitude. When she did not yet believe in Jesus, she misunderstood the text. This formulation makes it obvious that there has been a change or that there is going to be a change. Does she already believe in Jesus? Or does Origen anticipate the outcome of the encounter? This is not yet clear at this point, but Origen is going to clarify the situation in the explanations which follow.

23 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 5,31 (SC 222, 48 f.).

24 *Ibid.* XIII 1,7 (222, 38 f.); XIII 3,13 (222, 40 f.).

25 *Ibid.* XIII 6,37 (222, 40 f.).

26 See Toshio Miko da, *HTEMONIKON in the Soul*, in: Dorival /Le Boull uec, *Origeniana Sexta* (n. 3) 459–463, here 459; Alfons Fürs t, *Origenes: Grieche und Christ in römischer Zeit* (Standorte in Antike und Christentum 9), Stuttgart 2017, 42–44; Gögler, *Einleitung* (n. 7) 61; Kobusch, *Philosophische Bedeutung* (n. 9) 97 f.: Origen was the first to bring “gegenüber dem Wesensmäßigen das Willensmäßige, gegenüber der Natur die Freiheit [...] zur Geltung.” This criticism was primarily directed against “die Gnostiker, nach denen auch die Geistwesen nach Art der geschaffenen substantiellen Naturdinge auf bestimmte Weise ‘eingichtet’ und somit von vorneherein dem Verderben oder dem Himmel geweiht sind.”

27 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 6,38 f. (SC 222, 50–53). Gögler, *Einleitung* (n. 7) 246: “Mit dieser Naivität der Schrift gegenüber meint Origenes den bloßen Glauben an die historischen Tatsachen.” See also Marguerite Har l, *Introduction*, in: SC 302, Paris 1983, 19–159, here 47. 57.

28 Henri Cr ouzel, *Le contexte spirituel de l'exégèse dite spirituelle*, in: Dorival /Le Boull uec, *Origeniana Sexta* (n. 3) 333–342, here 335, interprets the drinking of Jacob and his sons as spiritual exegesis, the drinking of the flocks as literal exegesis and the Samaritan's drinking as the exegesis of heretics. In *philoc.* 11,2(SC 302, 380–382), Origen emphasises that one also has to drink the water from the Scriptures that others – who didn't understand the text and played off passages against each other – had churned up.

The woman asks Jesus for his water and addresses him for the second time as “Lord” (Jn. 4:15). For Origen, Jesus’ statement “if you had asked him, he would have given you living water” (Jn. 4:10) is true. Therefore, following her request, the woman receives some of the water and no longer needs to come to the fountain to draw water but contemplates the truth as the angels do in a way that is beyond human ability. Also, the angels have within themselves a fountain of water that wells up to eternal life.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the woman is offered this water by Jesus, something that is higher than the water from the well, higher than reading the Scriptures, and, following her request for this water, she receives it. In this interpretation, Origen sees the woman as proceeding extremely quickly from being an image of heretics to one of receiving the water that wells up to eternal life. Jesus considers her worthy to receive this water.

Origen repeats that nobody can receive this water if he is not driven by thirst and does not draw water from the well most diligently.<sup>30</sup> Interpreting the images as he did previously, this signifies that one can reach what is above that which is written only by an intense study of Scripture. Rebecca is presented as a positive example, because she goes to the well daily in order to draw water (Gen. 24), which means that she studies the Scriptures daily.<sup>31</sup> In his *Homilies on Genesis*, Origen writes that if his readers do likewise, the Word of God will meet them at the water and marry them so that they become one spirit (*unus spiritus*) with him.<sup>32</sup>

Although the Samaritan woman emphasises that she has no husband (Jn. 4:17), Origen nevertheless assumes that she has one, and that this husband is the law. She follows the law observed by the heretics because she follows the wrong interpretation of sound words. Here again, we see Origen presenting the woman as a heretic. The divine Word wants the heretical soul – which Origen interprets as the woman – to mistrust the law which reigns in her because it is not a legitimate husband. She is supposed to give herself to another man, namely to the Word that was raised from the dead.<sup>33</sup> Origen wants the woman to proceed from the false interpretation to Jesus Christ.

The woman’s five husbands are interpreted by Origen as the five senses. Each soul that is guided through the Scriptures to the veneration of Christ begins with

29 Origen, in Ioh. comm. XIII 7,41 (SC 222, 52–55).

30 Ibid. XIII 7,42 (222, 54f.).

31 In Gen. hom. 10,2 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 260): “Rebecca came to the wells daily; she drew water daily. And because she spent time at the wells daily, therefore, she could be found by Abraham’s servant and be united in marriage with Isaac. Do you think these are tales and that the Holy Spirit tells stories in Scriptures? This is instruction for souls and spiritual teaching (*eruditio et spiritalis doctrina*) which instructs and teaches you to come daily to the wells of the Scriptures, to the waters of the Holy Spirit, and always to draw water and carry home a full vessel just as also holy Rebecca used to do.” Translation: Heine, FaCh 71, 59f.

32 Ibid. 10,5 (7<sup>2</sup>, 272).

33 In Ioh. comm. XIII 8,48 (SC 222, 56–59).

the visible and bodily (*ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν καὶ σωματικῶν*). When the soul wants to rise and turn towards the noetic (*ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ*), she meets a false teaching which claims to be allegorical and pneumatic. The soul starts living with the sixth husband after having divorced the other five. She thus leaves bodily things but still does not manage to follow the correct noetic path. At this point, Origen switches to the first-person plural: *We* stay with this husband until the coming of Jesus makes *us* aware of who this husband is.<sup>34</sup> As soon as the Word of the Lord<sup>35</sup> comes and speaks to us, we deny this other husband and say that we have no husband. As a consequence, the Lord compliments us for having truly said that we have no husband. Thus, the encounter with Jesus makes the Samaritan woman aware of her former mistaken situation, which she admits by saying that she has no husband. Hereupon, she is complimented by the Lord – and not, as one might expect, dispraised for her former mistaken situation. The woman, still an image of heretics, denies the wrong law which she had followed before. Anyway, she has not yet installed Jesus in place of the law; she has not yet given herself to the Word that raised from the dead.

The woman then realises that Jesus is a prophet (Jn. 4:19). Origen interprets this as follows. The mind of the heretic who is engaged in studying Scripture is confused because of his exposure to the six husbands and is not able to perceive what the Word really is. Therefore, the woman realises only that Jesus is a prophet and not who he really is.<sup>36</sup> But in fact, we can see that the woman has already made progress. She at least realises that the man she is talking to must be someone outstanding. After having interpreted the place and the way to worship (Jn. 4:20–24) and what it means that God is spirit (Jn. 4:24), Origen continues with the woman's opinion. The heretic's opinion is that the coming Messiah will tell her everything. Again, the Samaritan woman is an image of heretics. However, she already knows from whom she can get knowledge. At this point, Jesus reveals himself to the woman.<sup>37</sup> She thus apprehends with whom she is speaking, namely, with the man who can tell her everything. Thus, the heretic is, in Origen's interpretation, both worthy to receive Jesus' water and his self-revelation.

In the next passages, the image of the woman as a heretic, i. e., Origen's spiritual interpretation, recedes. Instead, Origen focuses on the literal level of the biblical

34 Ibid. XIII 9,51f. (222, 58–61).

35 Bl anc, SC 222, 60 n. 2, takes up Origen, in Ioh. comm. II 4,38 (SC 120, 234–237), where Origen says that it would be absurd to claim that several beings are entitled to the titles word, wisdom, justice in the basic meaning (*κυρίως*; 120, 232f.) of these terms. She therefore translates *ἐλθόντος δὲ τοῦ κυρίου λόγου* as "lorsque la Parole, au plein sens du terme, vient s'entretenir avec nous" (222, 61). Alternatively, the Greek formulation *ἐλθόντος δὲ τοῦ κυρίου λόγου* ibid. XIII 9,52 (222, 60) can be translated, as Heine, FaCh 89, 80, does, as "after the Word of the Lord has come."

36 Ibid. XIII 12,76 (222, 70 f.).

37 Ibid. XIII 27,163 (222, 12f.).

text. Coming back from the town, Jesus' disciples are amazed that Jesus is speaking with a woman (Jn. 4:27). By this we learn from Jesus on the literal level (*ἐπι τῷ ῥητῷ*) that he is meek and lowly in heart (Mt. 11:29) and does not disdain to talk to a woman who is so poor that she needs to draw water outside the city.<sup>38</sup> Here, Origen focuses the woman's social status (that is not addressed explicitly in the biblical text) and her sex. We forget, explains Origen, turning again to the first-person plural, i. e., to the intended reader, that the words "Let us make man according to our image and according to our likeness" (Gen. 1:26) apply to each and every person. We should remember that God formed man in the womb (Jer. 1:5), formed all men's hearts and understands all their works (Ps. 32[33]:5), that he is a helper of those who are lowly, that he is a supporter of the weak and a protector of those who have been given up in despair or as hopeless (Jdt. 9:11).<sup>39</sup> Origen presents Jesus as not making any distinction between persons. Jesus doesn't mind that the woman is poor or that she is a woman. For him, unlike the disciples, in modern terms, there is no difference in human dignity because all human beings' dignity is constituted in being made according to God's image and likeness.

Then, Jesus uses this woman as an apostle (*οἰονεὶ δὲ καὶ ἀποστόλῳ*) for the people in the town. She is so inflamed by his words that she leaves her water jar and asks the townspeople to come and see the man who has told her everything she has ever done.<sup>40</sup> She asks them, "Could this not be the Christ?" (*μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός*; Jn. 4:29). The interrogative particle *μήτι* expects a negative answer or, after verbs of fearing, signifies "maybe." In the context of Jn. 4:29 the question signifies, "This is not the Messiah, is it?" Origen's interpretation of the woman as preaching Christ (*ἀπαγγέλλοντα*)<sup>41</sup> as announcing him to the townspeople (*εὐαγγελίσασθαι*;<sup>42</sup> *εὐαγγελίζεται*)<sup>43</sup> seems to make the woman's role more important and the woman more sure about her preaching than she is in the text of Jn. 4, even though Origen cites the question as given in Jn. 4:29.<sup>44</sup> He needs to enhance the woman's role because he thinks that she has received some of Jesus' water that wells up to eternal life; otherwise she couldn't preach Christ.<sup>45</sup> In Origen's commentary, unlike the biblical text, the woman thus has to know that the man she is talking to is the Messiah. Here already, the interpretation of the woman as a heretic who proceeds in knowledge and the literal interpretation interlace.

38 Ibid. XIII 28,166 (222, 124 f.).

39 Ibid. XIII 28,167 (222, 124–127).

40 Ibid. XIII 28,169 (222, 126 f.).

41 Ibid. XIII 29,176 (222, 130 f.).

42 Ibid. XIII 29,173 (222, 128 f.).

43 Ibid. XIII 30,179 (222, 132 f.).

44 Ibid. XIII 28,169 (222, 126 f.).

45 Ibid. XIII 29,176 (222, 130 f.).

Again, Origen points out that the disciples are amazed that a woman who is easily deceived is considered worthy of engaging in a conversation with the Word.<sup>46</sup> Firstly, he thus points out the amazement because of the woman's sex. He then gives a possible explanation for the amazement of the disciples: maybe the disciples are struck with amazement because the Word condescends<sup>47</sup> to a soul who despises Zion and trusts in the mountain of Samaria.<sup>48</sup> At this point, he focuses – after having mentioned the woman's poverty and her sex – on her religious views. Obviously, Jesus doesn't meet the disciples' expectations but acts in a way that is contrary to custom.

After the preaching of the woman in the town, people leave the town and come to see Jesus (Jn. 4:28 f.). That the woman leaves her water jar at the fountain shows in the literal sense (*κατὰ [...] τὴν λέξιν*) how eager she is. She no longer cares about her bodily task but is now concerned with how to be useful to the multitude. By doing so, she becomes an example. We should follow her, give up bodily realities and help others to participate in the benefit which we have received.<sup>49</sup> In the spiritual sense (*ἀναγωγῆ*), the water jar represents the vessel for the teaching (*διδασκαλία*) that the woman had followed before, which she abandoned after having received in a more precious vessel some of the water that wells up to eternal life. Origen asks how the woman could have preached Christ by telling the crowd that Jesus told her everything that she had ever done if she had not already received a portion of this salvific water. He thus presents the woman as a model to follow because she has stopped caring about bodily things. She abandons the false teachings that she had followed before because she has received the water that wells up to eternal life. This is what enables her to preach Christ.<sup>50</sup> At the beginning of his interpretation of Jn. 4, Origen had interpreted the water as the teachings of the Spirit.<sup>51</sup> Taking up this thought, he says here that the woman had already received the teachings of the Spirit when she preached Christ. As we noted above, the woman therefore needs to know that she preaches Christ; she doesn't expect the townspeople to object that it is not Christ whom she met at Jacob's well. Here, Origen again slips in his spiritual interpretation that we had seen in the first passages of the woman as a heretic who firstly follows the wrong teaching, but then receives Jesus' teaching.

46 Ibid. XIII 28,169 (222, 126f.).

47 For this concept, see Rudolf Bränd le, *Συγκατάβασις* als hermeneutisches und ethisches Prinzip in der Paulusauslegung des Johannes Chrysostomos, in: Georg Schö ll gen /Clemens Scho l ten (eds.), *Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann* (JbAC.E 23), Münster 1996, 297–307, here 298.

48 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 28,171 (SC 222, 126 f.).

49 Ibid. XIII 29,173f. (222, 128–131).

50 Ibid. XIII 29,175f. (222, 130 f.).

51 Ibid. XIII 6,35 (222, 48–51).

Origen then compares the Samaritan woman to Mary Magdalene.<sup>52</sup> In Jn. 4, the woman proclaims Christ (*γυνή εὐαγγελίζεται*), and, at the end of the Gospel, the woman who saw Jesus before all the others tells the apostles of the Resurrection of the Saviour (*γυνή διηγείται*). It seems to be worth noting that in Jn. 20:18 Mary Magdalene tells the disciples that she has seen the Lord, and she tells them that he had said to her that he is ascending to his Father and their Father, his and their God. She doesn't literally say that he has risen. This is what Origen makes her say (*τὴν ἀνάστασιν [...] διηγείται*). It is not clear if, by doing so, he again – as he did with the woman's question in Jn. 4:29 which he turns into preaching (see above) – makes Mary Magdalene's role and her witness more positive than they are in the text of Jn. 20. Michael Theobald points out that women in the Johannine communities must have been highly appreciated, given that Jesus' first self-revelation is to the Samaritan woman as a first witness and Mary Magdalene as the last one, as the first to see the risen Christ.<sup>53</sup> Origen enhances the evangelist's positive accentuation of the woman at least for the Samaritan woman, maybe also for Mary Magdalene. In both places, he points out explicitly that it is a woman who acts. Even though, of course, the aspect of Jesus' first and last self-revelation in the fourth Gospel is an important element of the comparison, the question of sex is not without importance for Origen.

Besides the revelation of Christ, Origen sees another parallel between the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalene.<sup>54</sup> The Samaritans do not thank the woman as if she had announced a perfect faith, and Mary Magdalene is not allowed to touch Jesus Christ (Jn. 20:17), whereas Thomas is invited to put his hand into Jesus' side (Jn. 20:27). Poffet comments: "Heureusement qu'Origène ne s'aventure pas plus avant dans ce genre de parallélisme davantage dicté par sa misogynie."<sup>55</sup> This might be not entirely correct. Origen makes the Samaritan woman preach and goes beyond the biblical text in doing so. He says that Jesus uses her as an apostle and notes that she also obtains benefit for those from her city; she was the reason that they came out of the city and went to Jesus.<sup>56</sup> Her word was the beginning of belief for the people from her town.<sup>57</sup> However, the Samaritan woman's action is not appreciated by those to whom it is directed. The people from the city don't thank her as if she had announced a perfect faith. The disciples' reaction to Mary Magdalene's witness is not recorded in the Gospel of John. Origen's comparison of the Samaritan woman with Mary Magdalene and Thomas probably

52 Ibid. XIII 30,179 (222, B2f.).

53 See Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes 1: Kapitel 1–12* (RNT), Regensburg 2009, 342.

54 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 30,180 (SC 222, 132f.).

55 Poffet, *Méthode exégétique* (n. 13) 217.

56 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 30,181 (SC 222, 132f.).

57 Ibid. XIII 52(51),348 (222, 226f.).

focuses on the fact that the people from the town, like Thomas, do not believe because of someone else's witness but because of their own insight (which might be called that perfect faith which the woman cannot announce). Origen discusses this question in the following passage of his interpretation.<sup>58</sup>

In his concluding explanations,<sup>59</sup> Origen brings back to the fore the image of the Samaritan woman as a heretic and states that the woman, after having denied the sixth husband and left her water jar, rests reverently with the seventh<sup>60</sup> and brings the same benefit to the inhabitants of the town who had held false teachings (*ἀπὸ τῶν προτέρων αὐτῆς δογμάτων οἰκοῦσι πόλιν τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῶν οὐκ ὑγιῶν λόγων*). The woman spreads the knowledge she gained, the knowledge that the man whom she met at Jacob's well is the Messiah. She gives the opportunity to the townspeople to go out from the town and to meet Jesus. Those who were entrapped in false teachings (*ἐν ἑτεροδιδασκαλίαις*) now, to some extent, abandon the city of false teachings and meet sound teaching (*ἐπιτυχόντες λόγου ὑγιοῦς*) because the woman had received salvific teaching (*τὴν σωτήριον διδασκαλίαν*) and had left her water jar in order to benefit the others.<sup>61</sup> The former heretic has received Jesus' water, i. e., his teaching, and has brought others to give up the wrong teachings as well.

Again, it is teaching that is passed on, it is false teachings that are given up, and it is a new teaching that the townspeople meet. In the Samaritan woman's word, the townspeople's faith took its origin, and the growth and multiplication of believers happened through the Word itself.<sup>62</sup> The woman is thus successful in her preaching. She does not only make progress herself but causes others to advance as well. This advancement happens in the field of knowledge because the people have left the false teachings and meet a new, sound and salvific teaching.

58 Ibid. XIII 53(52),352–362 (222, 228–235).

59 Ibid. XIII 30,181 (222, 12f.).

60 Ibid. XIII 59(58),408 (222, 258): Origen writes on the healing of the son of the royal official (cf. Jn. 4:52) that "it is not to no purpose that the fever leaves him in the seventh hour because the number seven stands for rest (*ὁ [...] ἀριθμὸς ἀναπαύσεως*)."<sup>61</sup> Translation: Heine, FaCh 89, 156. Ibid. 107, he translates <εις> *ἑβδομον σεμνῶς ἀναπαύεται* (SC 222, 132) with "reverently rested [on] the Sabbath," and comments, *ibid.* n. 199: "This seems to be the best way to translate this clause. There is no reference to the Sabbath, or to any other specific time in John's account of the Samaritan woman. Origen may have taken the fact that the woman left her water jar to be an indication that it was the Sabbath, and that she was now concerned to obey the Sabbath laws about work."

61 Ibid. XIII 51(50),340 (222, 220–223).

62 Ibid. XIII 52(51),348 (222, 226f.).

### 3. The Samaritan Woman as a Role Model, Seen from a Modern Perspective of Human Dignity

In his exegesis of Jn. 4:1–42, Origen is deeply concerned with knowledge and focuses on the interpretation of Scripture. In his spiritual interpretation, drawing or drinking from the well means reading the Scriptures.<sup>63</sup> Origen differentiates three ways of drinking from the well and three ways of reading or understanding Scripture, depending on how advanced readers are. The Samaritan woman is an image of the thoughts of heretics when they study the divine Scripture.<sup>64</sup> Before she believes in Jesus, she drinks as do those who misunderstand the text,<sup>65</sup> but she is offered the water of Jesus which stands for what is beyond the written text<sup>66</sup> and receives it when she asks for it.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, she contemplates the truth in a manner that is beyond human capacity and like that of the angels.<sup>68</sup> Origen later takes the fact that the woman preaches Christ as a clear sign that she has received some of this salvific water.<sup>69</sup>

The encounter with Jesus changes the Samaritan woman's way of life significantly. She stops following the false interpretation of sound words,<sup>70</sup> visible and bodily things<sup>71</sup> and mistaken teachings.<sup>72</sup> She turns from bodily to spiritual and divine things, from false teachings to Christ, from the erroneous interpretation of Scripture to that which is beyond the written text: to truth. Origen assumes thus that heretics are not automatically rejected but can turn away from the wrong teaching and reach the truth. With this position, he turns against Heracleon, whose exegesis he rebuts on behalf of Ambrose and who claims that human beings can not progress towards more knowledge during their lifetimes. The Samaritan woman gains knowledge in the noetic and spiritual field, and this knowledge has major consequences for her way of life.<sup>73</sup> The knowledge gained is not knowledge for its own sake but must result in action. Theresia Heither writes: "Die Erlösung

63 Ibid. XIII 5,31 (222, 48 f.).

64 Ibid. XIII 1,6 (222, 38 f.).

65 Ibid. XIII 6,39 (222, 52 f.).

66 Ibid. XIII 5,31 (222, 48 f.).

67 See Theresia Heither, *Schöpfen aus dem Brunnen: Ein Zugang zum Alten Testament*, Trier 1994, 144, concerning the dynamics of knowledge that urges men to proceed on the way of knowledge.

68 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 7,41 (SC 222, 52–55).

69 Ibid. XIII 29,176 (222, 130 f.).

70 Ibid. XIII 8,48 (222, 56–59).

71 Ibid. XIII 9,51 (222, 58–6); XIII 29,173 (222, 138 f.).

72 Ibid. XIII 29,175 (222, 130 f.).

73 See Heither, *Schöpfen aus dem Brunnen* (n. 67) 141; Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Zum Fest der Freiheit: Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origenes* (TTS 33), Mainz 1990, 284.

geschieht immer so, dass der Mensch Christus als das lebendige Wort Gottes aufnimmt, d. h. dieses Wort erkennt und versteht, aber nicht in intellektueller Einseitigkeit, sondern mit seinem ganzen Sein; das ist ein Lebensvorgang, der sein Leben verändert und neu macht.<sup>74</sup>

Origen presents the Samaritan woman explicitly as a role model who aims to be useful to the townspeople, even though she is a poor Samaritan woman, and he wants his readers to assist others to participate in the benefit which they have received. The Samaritan woman is thus not only a role model to be followed in learning the correct way to read Scripture and to reach that which is beyond the text, in turning away from visible and bodily things and false teachings and turning towards spiritual things. All this might be knowledge “for its own sake” even though it already affects the woman’s way of life, but, in fact, she helps others to gain the same benefit she has received, new knowledge and a new way of life. This, for Origen, is a clear sign that she has received some of the salvific water of Jesus. It is not enough to keep this knowledge and its consequences to oneself – it needs to be preached to others. This is what the evangelist challenges us to when he writes about the commendation of the woman for those who understand how to read.<sup>75</sup> Hence, the woman is presented as a role model who was a heretic, but then gains knowledge through her encounter with Jesus and who tries to bring this knowledge to the lives of others where, again, it will result in action. Perception and action are, as Eberhard Schockenhoff writes, “die beiden Pole einer spannungsvollen Einheit, die den Weg zur Vollendung auf allen Stufen prägt.”<sup>76</sup>

Finally, these results can be looked at from the perspective of a modern interest in human dignity and freedom. Even though Origen presents the woman as an image of the thoughts of heretics when they study the divine Scripture<sup>77</sup> or as an image of those who understand the Scripture wrongly,<sup>78</sup> even though she has no legitimate husband<sup>79</sup> and at first thinks that Jesus is only a prophet,<sup>80</sup> Origen still thinks that she is worthy of receiving Jesus’ water, worthy of receiving Jesus’ teaching<sup>81</sup> that carries one to the higher and eternal life<sup>82</sup> and hence to contemplate the truth as the angels do.<sup>83</sup> When the disciples come back to Jesus, they are amazed that he is speaking with a woman (Jn. 4:27). Firstly, Origen ascribes this

74 Heither , *ibid.* 162.

75 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 29,174 (SC 222, 128–131).

76 Schockenhoff , *Fest der Freiheit* (n. 73) 283.

77 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 1,6 (SC 222, 38 f.).

78 *Ibid.* XIII 6,39 (222, 52 f.).

79 *Ibid.* XIII 8,43.48 (222, 54–59).

80 *Ibid.* XIII 12,76 (222, 70 f.).

81 *Ibid.* XIII 5,31 (222, 48 f.).

82 *Ibid.* XIII 3,16 (222, 42 f.).

83 *Ibid.* XIII 7,41 (222, 52–55).

amazement to the disciples because Jesus speaks to a poor woman; he thus points out sex and social status. Then, he underlines that the disciples could be amazed because Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman. Origen's interpretation focuses on the fact that – in modern terms – there is no difference in human dignity. This dignity is justified in the fact that each person is made according to God's image and likeness.<sup>84</sup> It does not matter that the Samaritan is a woman, that she is poor, that she holds other religious views and that she had followed the wrong law. Origen presents this woman very positively: in his interpretation, Jesus uses this woman as an apostle for the people in the town; she preaches Christ. Gender roles that society ascribes to people are respected neither by Jesus nor by the woman; her social status and religion do not matter. Origen is not only concerned about the Samaritan woman as such, but he claims that human beings don't differ from each other insofar they are all made according to God's image and likeness.

One might dare to reformulate Origen's interpretation in modern terms by saying that Jesus attributes dignity to the Samaritan woman (and with her to all human beings) notwithstanding social status, sex, religion or previous history when he talks to her, when he offers and gives her his water. This interpretation is based on the biblical text, especially on the disciples' amazement, that Origen explains as follows. They are amazed about the conversation with a poor Samaritan woman who has had five husbands. Receiving divine knowledge, Jesus' water, then, can be seen in this image as a way of attributing dignity to someone. The knowledge gained and dignity attributed result in a free decision for action with outreach. The woman preaches and makes others participate in what she receives – firstly knowledge. It might not be an overstretched modern interpretation of this ancient text if we say that the woman helps others to participate not only in the knowledge received but also in the dignity that was attributed to her. Out of the experience of being accepted, she doesn't need to conceal her former history but can say to the townspeople that there is a man who told her everything she has ever done. She wants them to come and see this man, to have the same experience.

This strand of the literal interpretation can be complemented by the spiritual dimension that was stated above. In his spiritual exegesis, Origen ascribes dignity to the heretics. They are not lost by nature, but created according to God's image and likeness as all human beings are, and they can proceed to truth. What we read in the Gospel and Origen's literal and spiritual interpretation of the biblical passage could be interpreted as an antique way of expressing human dignity.

84 Ibid. XIII 38,167 (222, 124–127).

# Judging the Judges

## Exaltation and Humiliation in Origen's *Homilies on Judges*\*

SARA CONTINI, BRISTOL

### 1. Aim of the Paper

This paper aims to highlight the internal coherence of Origen's *Homilies on Judges*. The conflicts introduced in the first, second, and third homilies are elaborated on and seen to be ultimately resolved in the subsequent homilies, which focus on the role models constituted by biblical leaders or "judges." Based on the Latin translation of this work, the paper will assess the communication strategies employed in the homilies to convey a sense of urgency, as the audience is called upon to take part actively in the spiritual war between the God of Israel and foreign idols by correctly discerning which leader to follow. This analysis will show how Origen interprets the cyclical narrative of the Book of Judges in light of his thought on the unstable relationship between human beings and God as mediated by Christ and how he indicates to his audience that only under the leadership of Christ are human beings able to regain ownership of themselves.

### 2. Origen's *Homilies on Judges* and their Latin Translation

The nine extant homilies, dealing with chapters 2 to 7 of the biblical Book of Judges, were delivered by Origen in Caesarea (Palestine), possibly around 248. The original Greek text of the homilies is now lost, but we have a Latin translation, produced probably between 401 and 403 by Rufinus of Aquileia.<sup>1</sup>

\* This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 676258.

1 On the dating of the delivery of the homilies and on the reliability of Rufinus' translation, see Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro (ed.), *Origen: Homilies on Judges* (FaCh 1B), Washington D.C. 2010, 5–9. All English quotes from the homilies in this paper follow Dively Lauro's translation, with slight modifications. Other modern translations of the collection with commentary include: Maria Ignazia Danieli (ed.), *Origene: Omelie sui Giudici* (CTePa 101), Rome 1992, and Pierre Messiaé/Louis Neyrand /Marcel Borret (eds.), *Origène: Homélie sur les Juges* (SC 389), Paris 1993 [updated in Riccardo Pane (ed.), *Origene: Omelie sui Giudici* (Sources Chrétiennes Edizione Italiana 9), Bologna/Rome 2010]. For the Latin text of the homilies, see Wilhelm Adolf Baehrens (ed.), *Homilien*

There are no extant Greek fragments of the *Homilies on Judges*, and there are no other passages from other Greek or Latin works by Origen where he interprets chapters 2–7 of the Book of Judges.<sup>2</sup> However, it is still possible to make some preliminary observations on whether Rufinus’ translation can be considered a good representation of Origen’s reasoning and of the communication strategies he adopted in the exegesis of the Book of Judges. In the epilogue to his translation of Origen’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Rufinus claimed that he had translated Origen’s homilies on Joshua, Judges, and Psalms 36–38 plainly, following the text as he found it, without great effort (*simpliciter ut invenimus et non multo cum labore*).<sup>3</sup> This statement suggests that the complex work of adaptation that Rufinus claims was necessary for Origen’s homilies on Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus<sup>4</sup> was not needed for the *Homilies on Judges*, resulting in a translation that was essentially faithful to the overall structure of Origen’s discourse, if not word-for-word. Rufinus’ claim is substantiated by the comparison between his translation of the first four *Homilies on Psalm 36* and the extant Greek text.<sup>5</sup> As for the *Homilies on Joshua*, we may compare Rufinus’ translation with the Greek fragment of the twentieth homily preserved in the *Philocalia*.<sup>6</sup> These comparisons confirm Rufinus’ statement that he translated *simpliciter*, with the understanding that this statement must be contextualized in light of Rufinus’ motivation for translating the homilies.

Rufinus always undertook the work of translation by aiming to make the text, which was originally intended for preaching to a mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century Palestinian Church, clear and relevant to a readership of Roman nobility and clergy of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. So, every rhetorical or linguistic observation made in this paper about the *Homilies on Judges* must be taken as referring to the text in its Latin translation, which is all we can read now. There is no sure way to prove that the original Greek homilies presented the same stylistic features, even though the

zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung: Die Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judices (GCS Orig. 7), Leipzig 1921, 464–522.

- 2 With a few partial exceptions: for the interpretation of the name of the judge and prophetess Deborah as meaning “bee” in *Iud. hom. 5,2* (GCS Orig. 7, 493) and of Barak as “flash” *ibid. 5,4* (7, 494), see also in *Cant. comm. prol. 4,9* (SC 375, 152); in *Cant. hom. 1,1* (SC 376 f.).
- 3 Rufinus, in *Rom. comm. Orig. epil. 1* (SC 555, 452).
- 4 *Ibid.* (555, 45).
- 5 This comparison was made by Emanuela Prinzivalli, *L’originale e la traduzione di Rufino*, in: Lorenzo Perrone et al. (eds.), *Origenes: Die neuen Psalmenhomilien: Eine kritische Edition des Codex Monacensis Graecus* (GCS Orig. 13), Berlin/Munich/Boston 2015, 35–57.
- 6 *Philoc. 12* (SC 226, 388–393) = in *Ios. hom. 20,1f.* (GCS Orig. 7, 415–420). This comparison was made by Jaubert, SC 71<sup>2</sup>, 68–82. See also Antonio Grapone, *Omelie origeniane nella traduzione di Rufino: Un confronto con i testi greci* (SEAug 103), Rome 2007, 213–384.

content of Origen's exegesis of the Book of Judges was probably not altered by Rufinus in any substantial way.

### 3. The Narratological Structure of the Book of Judges according to Origen

The biblical account of the events that followed the death of Joshua or Jesus of Nun (Judg. 2:7–19) is a good representation of the overarching structure of the book. This is because, as Old Testament scholars have pointed out, it foreshadows a recurring narrative pattern based on the succession of idolatry, punishment, and liberation.<sup>7</sup>

Under the leadership of Joshua, “the people served the Lord” (Judg. 2:7); this situation is disrupted by the death of Joshua, the “servant of God” (Judg. 2:8). The Israelites then abandon their God and worship foreign deities (Judg. 2:10–B). God is thus provoked to anger and lets the surrounding people capture and enslave the Israelites (Judg. 2:14f.). The suffering Israelites cry for help from their God, who responds by appointing a judge who will lead the Israelites out of their imprisonment (Judg. 2:16–18). As long as the leader is alive, the people follow him and keep their pact with God, but as soon as he dies the cycle starts again with a new abandonment and new idolatry (Judg. 2:19). What happens after the death of Joshua happens again and again in the Book of Judges every time a judge or leader of the Israelites dies.

For Origen, the cyclical framework of the Book of Judges holds a valuable message for Christians, if correctly interpreted. In his homilies, Origen explains that the judges should be interpreted as indicating the angels,<sup>8</sup> or leaders of the Church.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes, he interprets the biblical judges as referring to Christ, but this is mostly true for Jesus of Nun specifically.<sup>10</sup> The identification of Jesus of Nun with Jesus Christ is a prominent theme both of Origen's *Homilies on Judges* and of his *Homilies on Joshua*, which are very close thematically and were probably delivered and translated in close proximity to each other. While the typology of Joshua is already suggested in the second century in the *Epistle of Barnabas*<sup>11</sup> and in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*,<sup>12</sup> Origen is, to the best of our knowledge, the first to claim that every single word or action that the Bible attributes to Joshua should

7 I mostly follow Susanne Gillman, *Framework and Discourse in the Book of Judges*, in: *JBL* 128 (2009) 687–702.

8 Origen, in *Iud. hom.* 3,3–6 (GCS Orig. 7, 483–487).

9 *Ibid.* 4,3 (7, 490).

10 *Ibid.* 2,1 (7, 472f.); in *Ios. hom.* 1,1–3 (GCS Orig. 7, 287–290).

11 *Barn.* 12,8 (SC 172, 170 f.).

12 Justin, *dial. c. Tryph.* 90,4 f. (PTS 47, 226).

be systematically interpreted as referring to Christ.<sup>13</sup> If the judges are the angels, then the rulers of the foreign people, the enemy kings who defeat and enslave the people of Israel, are for Origen the demons who promote sin.<sup>14</sup> Finally, the Israelites of the past are the Christians of the present: the spiritual Israel is “us.”<sup>15</sup>

The fact that for Origen what is said in the Book of Judges about the people of Israel can and should be understood as referring to his Christian audience is demonstrated by his interpretation of the Israelites’ worship of idols (Judg. 2:12f.). Idolatry is the sin that sets in motion the cyclical narrative in the Book of Judges. Thus, Origen’s audience could feel disconnected from the Book of Judges, as Christians did not worship pagan deities. On the other hand, Origen insists that even a biblical book focussing on idolatry could still teach something of value to Christians. Origen explains that Christians, just like the Israelites of old, are extremely likely to incur the sin of idolatry, as “to serve idols” means for him to value something else above their relationship with God.<sup>16</sup> Origen offers examples of what he means by idols: wealth,<sup>17</sup> pleasure, rank, glory, but also the love for one’s family, literature, philosophy, divination.<sup>18</sup> Anyone who has more love for these “human things” (*humana*) than for God, and who would rather pursue these things than focus on progressing towards union with God, in fact, worships idols, even if they profess themselves Christians. The Book of Judges is therefore extremely relevant to any audience, including Christians.

For Origen, it is very important that no one in his audience feels exempt from the call to action against idolatry in the Book of Judges. Origen explains that the condemnation of those who prioritize, for example, the quest for power over their relationship with God does not apply solely to those who have actually attained a position of power. Nobody can consider themselves immune from the “vice of pride” (*superbiae vitium*), as it concerns all those who are trying to achieve exter-

13 See Mario Maritano/Enrico Dal Corno (eds.), *Lettura Origeniana 5: Omelie su Giosuè*, Rome 2007, especially the introductory essay by Manlio Simonetti.

14 Origen, in *Iud. hom.* 3,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 481); 71f. (7, 505).

15 *Ibid.* 2,3 (7, 474–477); 3,1 (7, 480).

16 *Ibid.* 2,3 (7, 474–477).

17 For Origen’s view of material wealth, see Benjamin Blosser, *Love and Equity: The Social Doctrine of Origen of Alexandria*, in: *SCE* 27 (2014) 385–403. The idea that greed is idolatry is already expressed in *Col.* 3:5 and *Eph.* 5:5; see Brian S. Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor*, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK 2007, esp. 38–40 for the interpretation of this theme in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.

18 Constantin-Ionut Mihai, *Elementi protretici e biografici nell’Encomio di Origene* attribuito a Gregorio il Taumaturgo, in: *Classica et Christiana* 8 (2013) 215–227 here 221–224, argues that the motive of the *aliena bona* or false goods in Origen’s work, expressed via dichotomies such as light versus dark, is typical of the protreptic genre, and is used by authors such as Aristotle, Cicero, and Boethius to present two contraposed ways of life and show why the life of true philosophy is preferable.

nal recognition and predominance over other people, regardless of whether they are successful in their pursuit.<sup>19</sup> Hence, every member of Origen's audience or of Rufinus' readership, regardless of their social status, is constantly exposed to the risk of being carried away from God by the love of idols. In the *Homilies on Judges*, we clearly see the moral impact of Origen's Christian interpretation of the Book of Judges and its protagonists.

After having presented the sin for which God "handed over" (*tradidit*) Israel to its enemies, Origen goes on to explain how this biblical expression should be understood. In his interpretation of Judg. 2:14,<sup>20</sup> God "handing over" the soul to enemies, i. e., demons, is always the consequence of the soul having previously delivered itself to idols, i. e., false goods. Origen demonstrates this by establishing a dichotomy between the themes of presence and absence, through verbs and expressions indicating "staying" versus "going" or "vacant" versus "inhabited." If the souls "cleans" themselves from sin, then God dwells gladly in them (*habitare, intra nos tenere*); if the soul is "grounded" (*posita est*) in impurity, then God "deserts," "flees" or "turns away" from it. Once the soul is found to be "empty" of God, it is violently "seized" (*invaditur*) by a vile spirit. The presence of God in the soul is associated with the progress of the soul towards liberation from sin; the absence of God is instead inevitably connected with a disturbing external force taking over the soul. Both options are ultimately the result of the soul's choice to open itself up to purity or to vice. If God is absent, the Devil (*Zabulus*) is inevitably present, as the soul cannot be without a ruler and guide.<sup>21</sup>

In this sense, each Christian soul is like the biblical Israelites, who must decide whether to follow God or idols. In the *Homilies on Judges*, at least as far as we can judge from the Latin translation, Origen adopts a preaching style aimed at encouraging his audience to make the correct choice.

#### 4. Framing the Conflict Between God and Idols: Oppositional Rhetoric in the *First* and *Second Homilies on Judges*

Origen's *First Homily on Judges* shows why it is impossible for the two presences, God and the Devil, to coexist in one soul. A striking feature of the homily, at least in Rufinus' translation, is the clearly bipartite structure of the discourse that en-

19 Origen, in *Iud. hom.* 3,2 (GCS Orig. 7, 481).

20 *Ibid.* 2,5 (7 478 f.).

21 According to John M. G. Barclay, *Under Grace: The Christ-Gift and the Construction of a Christian Habitus*, in: Beverly R. Gaventa (ed.), *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, Waco TX 2013, 59–76, this idea that the human soul is "no man's land" (*ibid.* 60) is a distinctive feature of the anthropology emerging from Paul's *Romans* 6.

acts the drastic opposition between righteousness and impiety by framing almost every sentence of the homily, especially in the first paragraph, as two polar opposites separated by individual choice. Sentences are structured in the following way. First, Origen states that human beings inevitably need to choose and are responsible for the outcome of their choice, then he presents the two alternatives (in italics in the texts quoted in this section) in a way that makes it immediately obvious that one is the direct binary opposite of the other. For example: “every single one of us causes for themselves that they are either in *good days* or in *evil days*;<sup>22</sup>” or “through their actions and way of life, every single person acquires for themselves either *days of injustice and war* or *days of justice and peace*.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, black and white alternatives are suggested by Origen, with no scope for a grey area in-between. This creates in Origen’s audience a sense of constant urgency: at every moment of their life, they *must* fight, they *must* make a choice.

All matters raised in the homily ultimately depend on the assumption that evil inspires a way of life that is opposite to the life informed by good. Origen explains that this is because those who follow the one who “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14), i. e., the Devil, are led to “search for *carnal* instead of *spiritual* things, *earthly* instead of *heavenly*, *passing* instead of *eternal*, *present* instead of *future*.”<sup>24</sup> The error of the wicked consists in practice in directing their desires and their zeal towards earth rather than heaven. They think that pleasure is the “highest good” (*summum bonum*); they cherish wealth, glory, and status in this life as a replacement for eternity or, because they are unable correctly to produce a spiritual and heavenly interpretation of Scripture, they proclaim a false knowledge of God, as heretics do.<sup>25</sup>

As Origen often reiterates in his homilies, the objective of the Devil is to pervert, through the appeal of earthly things, the natural tendency of human beings to pursue heavenly and spiritual realities in order to achieve reunification with God.<sup>26</sup> The Devil is presented by Origen through his activity, opposite to that of God and Christ, whose work he aims to destroy.<sup>27</sup> This has ecclesiological implications in the *First Homily on Judges*. The loss of concord in the Church, mainly

22 Origen, in *Iud. hom.* 1,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 464). Translation: Dível y Laur o, FaCh 1 B, 39.

23 Ibid. (7, 465). Translation: *ibid.* 41.

24 Ibid. (7, 467). Translation: *ibid.* 45.

25 Ibid. (7, 466).

26 Cf. in *Gen. hom.* 1,2 (GCS N. F. 17, 28–33); in *Ex. hom.* 2,1 (GCS Orig. 6, 155f.); 6,6 (6, 197f.); in *Ios. hom.* 10,3 (GCS Orig. 7, 361).

27 In *Iud. hom.* 1,4 (GCS Orig. 7, 470): “Just as it is the ‘work of the Lord’ (Judg. 2:7), the work of the Devil is without doubt contrary to it. For it is certain that, just as *justice* is the work of *God*, so also is *injustice* the work of the *Devil*, and, just as *gentleness* is the work of *God*, so also would *anger or rage* be the work of the *Devil*” Translation: Dível y Laur o, FaCh 1 B, 49. Cf. also in *Ps. 36 hom.* 3,2f. (GCS Orig. 13, 555–558) featuring the contrast between the pacifying activity of God, who, with his bow aimed at the clouds, stops the storm from

because of heresies, is considered a clear proof of the activity of the Devil,<sup>28</sup> who aims to break the cohesion of the assembly of Christians, mirroring that of the Kingdom of God.

From an ontological standpoint, Origen did not conceive of evil as an entity or principle contrary to good; rather, evil is the temporary absence of good or distance from good. Origen understood sin as a “cooling” in the creatures’ love for God, leading to negligence in pursuing union with him.<sup>29</sup> However, due to the stronger pastoral concerns of the homilies as compared to the treatises, in the collection on Judges Origen’s main purpose is not to describe the nature of good and evil. Rather, he appears more concerned with prescribing a course of action by interpreting the war between God and idols from the Book of Judges as the conflict within the human soul between the desire for worldly goods and the effort to be reunited with God. This focus on the human way of life would explain the oppositional rhetoric in the first two *Homilies on Judges*. Human beings are presented with the choice either to do good, i. e., to pursue union with God through Christ above all else, or to do evil, i. e., to pursue worldly goods. In this sense, from the human perspective, good and evil, God and idols stand as two opposite alternatives that yield antithetic results in terms of how one leads one’s life.<sup>30</sup>

Because God and the Devil pull the soul in two opposite directions (heaven and earth, respectively), the presence of one in the “land” of the soul is incompatible with the presence of the other, so conflict is unavoidable. Origen remarks throughout the homily that it is impossible for one person to serve both God and idols.<sup>31</sup> The outcome of such a conflict is inevitably in favour of the good, because the good is true and eternal. Thus, evil, as its opposite, can only be empty and

upsetting the serene weather, and that of the Devil, who uses the same instrument to stir up chaos and devastation.

28 Cf. in Iud. hom. 8,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 509). For Origen’s portrayal of the heretics, see Manlio Simonetti, *Eresia ed eretici in Origene*, in: Aug. 25 (1985) 735–748.

29 Cf. princ. I 6,2 (SC 252, 198–201); II 9,2 (252, 354–357). On evil in Origen, see Mark S. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil*, New York 2012; Guido Bendinelli, *Origene e il problema del male tra creazione e redenzione*, in: DT 107 (2004) 36–77.

30 Scholars have often remarked that the theme of freedom of choice of the creatures is so prominent in Origen’s work that it informs his entire belief system and his notion of humanity in its relationship with God. See Lorenzo Perrone (ed.), *Il cuore indurito del Faraone: Origene e il problema del libero arbitrio (Origini 3: Testi e studi del CISEC)*, Bologna 1992, vii; Alfons Fürst, *Origenes: Theologie der Freiheit*, in: id., *Von Origenes und Hieronymus zu Augustinus: Studien zur antiken Theologiegeschichte (AKG 15)*, Berlin/Boston 2011, 12: “Das ethische Leben des Menschen beruht auf seiner Freiheit, die im trinitarischen Gott gründet und zugleich das innerste Wesen des Menschen ist.”

31 Origen, in Iud. hom. 1,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 467): “It is certain that the one who possesses in oneself ‘the days of Jesus’ would *serve the Lord*. Nor can it happen that somebody, possessing in oneself ‘the days of Jesus’ and the light of Christ, would *serve the Devil*. Nor can it happen

destined to fail.<sup>32</sup> The most valuable teaching of the Book of Judges for Origen as a preacher is that human beings are called upon actively to participate in this war<sup>33</sup> and will always need divine support in order correctly to discern whose example to follow and which objective to pursue as the goal of one's progress in life.

a) The "True Light" and the "False Light:" The Two Opposing Sides as Described in the *First Homily on Judges*

In the first part of the homily, Origen lays the foundations for the reasoning that he will develop in the *First and Second Homilies on Judges*, based on the main themes emerging from the text of Judg. 2:7, i. e., the "days of Jesus" and the "days of the elders," during which the people "served God" and "knew his great work." At this initial stage, Origen describes the two parties participating in the conflict and introduces the theme of human responsibility. Later in the collection, he will explain in more detail which options are available to human beings and how they can discern the best one. The main opposition that Origen establishes is between the true light that will never be extinguished, produced by Christ, and the deceptive, temporary light produced by the Devil:

"It is to be understood that our soul either is illuminated by the *true light*, that *will never be extinguished*, that is, *Christ*, or, if that light does not possess what is eternal, without doubt the soul is illuminated by that temporary and *extinguishable* light (cf. Job 18:5), by that one 'who disguises himself as an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11:14) and illuminates the heart of the sinners with a *false light*, so that what is *present and transitory* may seem to them *good and splendid*."<sup>34</sup>

If one follows the first light, one follows the guidance of Jesus. Origen here uses the symbolic meaning of daylight, emerging from the agreement of both Old and New Testament passages, to convey the continuity between Jesus of Nazareth, to whom the "days" in Judg. 2:7 refer, and Jesus Christ, the "sun of righteousness"

that someone would be illuminated by the light of *truth* and would serve *falsehood*." Translation: Divel y Laur o, FaCh 1 B, 44 f.

32 Cf. *ibid.* 1,3 (7469) on the "evil days" being "cut short."

33 For the *certamen* that the soul faces, cf. *princ. I praef. 5* (SC 252, 82–85): "Every reasonable soul [...] is in conflict against the devil and his angels, and opposing powers, because they strive to burden it with sins; but if we live rightly and carefully, we should endeavour to shake off such a burden [...] For if we possess freedom of choice, some powers perhaps may be able to urge us to sin, and others to help us to salvation; we are not, however, compelled by necessity to act either rightly or wrongly." Translation: I p. 17 Behr .

34 In *Iud. hom. 1,1* (GCS Orig. 7, 466). Translation: Divel y Laur o, FaCh 1 B, 42 f.

of Mal. 3:20 and the “true light” of Jn. 1:9.<sup>35</sup> The leadership of the one Jesus (“the days of Jesus”) contrasts with the variety of enemy kings (“the days of Manasseh, the days of Pharaoh, or the evil days of some other”).<sup>36</sup> Through the language of light, evil is depicted as the opposite of good. If we read in Malachi that for the pious “the sun of justice will rise,” then, reasons Origen, for sinners, whose judgement is clouded by the confusion of sin, “the sun of justice sets,” and the darkness of injustice “has risen” in its stead.<sup>37</sup> If the light of Jesus is true, perfect, and eternal, the enemy’s light is flickering and unsafe, a grotesque deformation of the good light.<sup>38</sup> If the “good day” is the shining monarchy of Christ, a spiritual land of peace and concord, the “bad days” are dominated by a variety of “unjust and wicked” tyrants.<sup>39</sup>

The “good days,” the jurisdiction of the one Jesus, are characterized by “justice” and “abundance of peace” (cf. Ps. 71:7),<sup>40</sup> while the dominion of the Devil is a land of turmoil and uncertainty, as Origen often reiterates in his homilies.<sup>41</sup> This has implications both for individuals and for society. Origen depicts the sinful soul as upset and destabilized by the loss of its rightful leader, Jesus, while the individualism of those who vainly seek their own exaltation by pursuing wealth and rank throws the entire people into the chaos of prevarication, as the *Third Homily on Judges* will show (see section 5).

The pervasiveness of the contrasts laid out in the *First Homily on Judges* shows how the homily serves a programmatic function in the collection, which thus appears more cohesive than other extant collections of Origen’s homilies such as the *Homilies on Exodus*. The Book of Judges appears to be interpreted consistently

35 For a survey of passages where Origen uses the imagery of light, see Fred Ledegang, *Mysterium Ecclesiae: Images of the Church and its Members in Origen* (BETL 156), Leuven 2001, 614–639. In Christian literature, we find the association of God with light and the incompatibility with darkness already in 1 Jn. 1:5–7.

36 Cf. also Origen, in *Iud. hom.* 3,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 481): King *Chusarsaton*, i. e. the main antagonist in the narratological section *Judg.* 3:7–10, is for Origen just another demonic power, “just as one time Pharaoh or another time Hiram.” Translation: Dively Laur o, FaCh 119, 62.

37 *Ibid.* 1,1 (7465). Translation: *ibid.* 41.

38 *Ibid.* (7, 466): “Also the wicked have their own light,” in the sense that in their lives they are temporarily deceived by the false light, but we must not believe that there is a specific evil light with its own substance, different than the good light (*aliquam substantialem lucem aliam quam impiorum dicatur*). Translation: *ibid.* 42. Pane, *Omelia sui Giudici* (n. 1) 63, comments that Origen feels the need to specify this to avoid Gnostic dualism.

39 *Ibid.* (7, 465). Translation: *ibid.* 40.

40 *Ibid.* Translation: *ibid.*

41 Cf. in *Ios. hom.* 8,2 (GCS Orig. 7, 337): “As we know, chaos is the place or habitation of enemy powers, of which the Devil is the king and chief.” Translation: Bruce/White, FaCh 105, 86; in *Iud. hom.* 7,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 504): “‘The land is at peace’ (*Judg.* 5:31), as long as sin is in repose. But it is said that the land is stirred up, [...] when sins have begun to stir up and disturb thoroughly the souls of humans.” Translation: Dively Laur o, FaCh 119, 94.

by Origen as referring on the one hand to the universal Church, collectively living a cycle of fall and redemption, and on the other to the state of each individual soul in this life, constantly at risk of moving further away from God.<sup>42</sup> Both the Church (*ecclesiae populus*) and the individual soul (*sensus uniuscuiusque mentis et animae*)<sup>43</sup> have the responsibility to ask God to help them to reconfirm at every moment their choice to place themselves in the light of Christ.<sup>44</sup> In the *First Homily on Judges*, Christ is depicted as both the destination of the progress of human beings (culminating in the “days of Jesus”) and also the guide on this path (as the “true light” showing the way).

In this difficult task, human beings can count on the support of God himself, who, if invoked, answers by sending a savior who lights the path of the soul. Origen uses the term “saviors” (*salvatores*) to refer to the judges,<sup>45</sup> presenting the heroes of the Book of Judges as prototypes of the Savior of the universe, Christ. Christ does not only act directly as a leader but also reflects his own light onto other leaders of the Church. They in turn transmit it to others and thus become “light of the world” (Mt. 5:14), just as Christ himself is the “light of the world” (Jn. 8:12).<sup>46</sup> It is a steady stream of light beaming from the Sun of Justice, lighting the way of the righteous, the “elders” of Judg. 2:7, until they all reach the eternal triumph of the “good days.”<sup>47</sup> By participation (*participati sunt*) in the true light of Christ, the apostles and the saints acquire the prerogatives of Christ as sun, i. e., enlightening souls by their example and teaching. They raise in the souls of others the “generation” that served God for “all the days of Jesus” (Judg. 2:7), which Origen identifies with all the virtues that are in Christ and are Christ.<sup>48</sup> Origen states

42 For the identification of the people of Israel, led by the judges, with the Christian community gathered in the Church, see for instance *ibid.* 3,3 (7, 484); 4,3 (7, 490); for the passages referring to each individual member of the Church, cf. *ibid.* 1,1 (7464); 2,3 (7, 476).

43 *Ibid.* 4,4 (7, 491); cf. *ibid.* 5,6 (7, 497). For *mens* and *anima* in the *Homilies on Judges* cf. Divel y Laur o, FaCh 1 Ð, 91.

44 *Ibid.* 1,1(7, 467): “Let us pray that *Christ*, who is the ‘true light,’ may make *good ‘days’* in us always and that we may never possess in ourselves, by the *Devil* illuminating us, the *evil days.*” Translation: *ibid.* 45.

45 *Ibid.* 3,6 (7, 486).

46 *Ibid.* 1,2 (7, 468). Cf. also in *Gen. hom.* 1,5–7 (GCS N.F. 17, 36–40).

47 For the “days” enlightened by the “sun of righteousness,” i. e. Christ, cf. in *Ios. hom.* 16,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 395): “Just as the sun makes the days of this world, so also the ‘sun of righteousness’ makes those spiritual days that are illumined by the splendour of truth and the lamp of wisdom.” Translation: Bruce /White , FaCh 105, 152.

48 In *Iud. hom.* 1,3(GCS Orig. 7, 469 f.). See Paul B. Dec ock , *Discernment in Origen of Alexandria*, in: *AcT(V).S 17* (2013) 189–208, for the idea that the practice of the virtues is part of the human progress towards the participation in the *Logos* or Christ, which is the object of correct discernment. As noted in Pane , *Omèlie sui Giudici* (n. 1)41, the association between Jesus and the virtues found in this passage is connected to the christological theme of the *ἐπίνοιαι* in Origen, the “denominations” or “aspects” of Christ: on the connection between

that all the saints are attributed “longer days” in Judg. 2:7, but only God knows who among the saints “would have emitted from himself the greater light, whether Paul or Peter, Bartholomew or John.”<sup>49</sup> In this sentence, Origen places emphasis on equality and communion among the saints rather than on differences between their respective lights.

This communion of light between Christ, the saints, who imitate him and as role models help to cultivate and practice heavenly virtues, and those who follow their lead fulfils Paul’s commandment to follow him in his imitation of Christ (1 Cor. 4:16; cf. Phil. 3:17).<sup>50</sup> Origen thus interprets the biblical “days of Jesus” as referring to a pivotal concept of Christian ethics, i. e., the imitation of Christ through the practice of virtue as participation in the Son of God and hence a condition for salvation. The righteous person is the one who, through the example and teaching of other, more advanced human beings acting as mediators, chooses Christ as their ultimate role model, rather than pursuing worldly goods by imitating those who appear to have gained success on earth, which would be idolatry.<sup>51</sup> By quoting Paul in 2 Cor. 6:14 f.: “What does justice share<sup>52</sup> with injustice? [...] What agreement does Christ have with Belial?,” Origen establishes another dichotomy: on the one hand, a good *participatio*, i. e., the assimilation to Christ that the righteous attain and display for others through the practice of virtue, and, on the other, an evil and in fact impossible *participatio*, the one between true divinity and idols.

#### b) Intergenerational Conflict: Origen’s Interpretation of the Contrast between Judg. 2:7 and Judg. 2:10

Using oppositional rhetoric in the *First Homily on Judges*, Origen layers the fundamental contrast between the good and the bad light with other contrapositions deriving from it, namely between unity and multitude, justice and injustice, truth

the virtues and the *ἐπίνοιαί*, see Matthew Kuhner, “The ‘Aspects of Christ’ (*Epinoiai Christou*) in Origen’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, in: HThR 110(2017) 195–216.

49 Origen, *ibid.* (7, 468). Translation: Divel y Laur o, FaCh 18, 46.

50 *Ibid.* (7, 470).

51 Cf. in Ps. 38 hom. 2,1(SC 411,372–375): Imitating someone means bearing their “image” in oneself, so those who pursue earthly goods and imitate those who possess them carry the “image of the earthly” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:49), rather than the “image of the heavenly,” carried by those who imitate Christ and Paul; see also in Ps. 36 hom. 1,1 (GCS Orig. 13, 17f.).

52 *Quae participatio est*, in the Latin translation of in Iud. hom. 1,1(GCS Orig. 7, 467); *μετοχή* in the Septuagint. According to Dmitry Birjukov, *Paradigms of Participation in Origen*, in: *Scrinium* 13 (2017) 277–290, Origen “was the first Patristic author who incorporated the words from [scil. New Testament] Epistles about participation in the divine nature into a theological and philosophical context. Origen incorporates this theme into a consistent philosophy of participation” (*ibid.* 280).

and falsehood, eternity and precariousness, peace and war. We find further elements of contrast in the *Second Homily on Judges*, where Origen interprets Judg. 2:7 and Judg. 2:10. The biblical text tells of two generations. A first generation lived at the times of Joshua, and “knew the great work” that God had done for Israel, by liberating his people from the Egyptian captivity (Judg. 2:7).<sup>53</sup> The second generation, living after the death of Joshua, did not know God or his “great work” (Judg. 2:10) and sinned against him by worshipping foreign idols.

First, Origen explains that we should interpret the death of Jesus/Joshua with reference to the human soul. Christ is “alive” in all those who freely associate themselves with him through the practice of virtues such as justice, patience, and truth, and he is so much alive and active in those who imitate him that “all that the saints do, we say that Christ does it.”<sup>54</sup> Conversely, Christ is “dead” in all those who do not participate in the victory of the risen Christ against death and sin. Hence, while righteous conduct is associated in Origen’s discourse with life, prosperity, and good health, a sinful life is described with the language of death and illness.<sup>55</sup>

“God, omnipotent ruler, ensure that it should never happen to us that Jesus Christ, *after he has risen from the dead, again should die* in us. For what does it profit me if in others he should *live* on account of virtue and in me should *die* on account of the *infirmity* of sin? [...] What does it profit me if on account of good desires, good faith, and good works by another he is *nourished and restored*, but because of evil thoughts and impious desires by me and in my heart, [...] he is, so to speak, *suffocated and killed*?”<sup>56</sup>

Origen interprets the “great work” of Judg. 2:7 as the resurrection of Christ, that liberates humanity from the slavery of sin, and he develops the contrast between the generation that “knew” and the one that “did not know” by associating the sinful generation with the concept of oblivion and by remarking on the necessity of remembering:

“You see that sinners come to the point of *forgetting* even that ‘great’ and excellent ‘work’ that the Lord did [...] I believe that this is why the Apostle, fearing this *forgetfulness*, said [...]: ‘Remember that Christ Jesus rose from the dead’ (2 Tim. 2:8). For he knew that even a work so great, that ‘he rose from the dead’, *could be forgotten* if a sinful generation were to ‘rise up’ in the heart.”<sup>57</sup>

53 That in the homilies Origen consistently interprets as indicating sin: cf. in Ios. hom. 5,6 (GCS Orig. 7, 318); in B. 36 hom. 3,1 (GCS Orig. 13, 41).

54 In Iud. hom. 2,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 473). Translation: Dível y Laur o, FaCh 1 Ð, 52.

55 Cf. in Ios. hom. 1,7 (GCS Orig. 7, 295).

56 In Iud. hom. 2,2 (GCS Orig. 7, 473). Translation: Dível y Laur o, FaCh 1 Ð, 53.

57 Ibid. (7, 474). Translation: *ibid.* 53. Cf. *ibid.* 1,4 (7, 470): “Knowing” the work of God is understood by Origen in the practical sense of “acting” according to virtue.

In Origen's exegesis of Judg. 2:7.10, those who act in accordance with virtue are said to replicate in themselves the victory over sin of the risen Christ.<sup>58</sup> In sinners, on the other hand, instead of coming to new life with the resurrection, Christ, somewhat paradoxically, comes to a new death. Those who associate themselves with sin, which is death, have "forgotten" the resurrection, in the sense that they do not constantly renew it in their life as the virtuous do.

Hence, oppositional rhetoric is used by Origen in the *First* and *Second Homilies on Judges* to manifest the opposition between a clear discernment of what is truly good and permanently beneficial to us (i. e., God), and the blindness and confusion caused by the deception of meaningless and unworthy goods (i. e., idols), in pursuit of which we degrade and lose ourselves.

### 5. Origen's Interpretation of Biblical Slavery in the *Third Homily on Judges*

After having set the scene for the war between God and idolatry in the previous two homilies, in the *Third Homily on Judges*, we finally see how the war plays out. In this text, we observe a specific stage of the conflict described by the Book of Judges, i. e., when the Israelites are defeated and enslaved by King *Chusarsaton*, whose name for Origen means "their humiliation" (Judg. 3:8f.). Origen interprets the traumatic experience of slavery as necessary for the transition from a stage of deception, where human beings are unable to discern what is truly valuable and are subject to the temptation of worldly goods, to a stage of clarity, where, enlightened by Christ, they understand that the only true good is their relationship with God. We have observed in section 4 that in his homilies Origen describes the action of the Devil as aimed at keeping human beings focussed on earthly pursuits. Origen uses terminology indicating that human beings are *weighed down* by sin.<sup>59</sup> Conversely, he stresses that God dwells in high places.<sup>60</sup>

So, the best thing for human beings would be to be elevated. In the *Third Homily on Judges*, Origen describes how this elevation is correctly achieved. In this homily, the progress from idolatry to piety is described through the extensive use of terms connected to a high position, or upward movement, such as *exaltare*, "to exalt," from *altus*, "high," and to a low position, or downward movement, such as *humiliatio*, "humiliation," from *humus*, "ground." In all the quotations from the homily that follow, these terms will be in italics.

58 Cf. *ibid.* 1,5 (7471).

59 *Ibid.* 2,3 (7476): "I also fear lest in others the love of lust and pleasure should weigh so much more (*praeponderet*) that he should sink all the way down to the ground (*usque ad terram demergat*)."<sup>7</sup> Translation: Divel y Laur o, FaCh 1B, 56.

60 *Ibid.* 5,3 (7493).

The first stage of the progress is a phase of “impious elevation,” in which human beings are falsely led to believe that they can exalt themselves. They pursue objectives that they believe will provide them with a high status, such as glory or power. Since these things are in fact false and empty idols, they can never yield any true and lasting result, so all that human beings gain by chasing after worldly goods is the frustration and abasement of sin. In this stage, they unknowingly humiliate themselves, a state which I would term “impious humiliation.” This is how Origen describes this stage of impiety:

“Because they themselves acted impiously *at the top* of the mountain (cf. Jer. 2:20) against the *Most High*, for that reason they are ‘handed over’ by him into *humiliation*. But I do not want you to think that this divine providence, i. e. that he would ‘hand over’ to be *humiliated* those who were *exalted impiously* (*ut eos qui impie exaltabantur traderet humiliandos*), and the salutary medical practice of healing the illness with its contrary, was only for the people of old, whereas now the omnipotent God lacks this kind of providential health towards his Church [...] If someone, despising the *humility* of Christ, who for us, ‘although he was God, became human and *humbled himself* all the way to death’ (Phil. 2:6f.), is *raised up and elevated*, and rushes toward power and secular dignity, and neither spurns nor is horrified by the skills by which these things are obtained, even if they are against faith and religion, so long as they may obtain what they desire, it happens that they ‘do evil in the eyes of God’ (Judg. 3:7)”<sup>61</sup>

This text is based on the contrast between sin (exaltation, pride) and correction (humiliation). God acts in his capacity as doctor and teacher, two roles that Origen often associates in his homilies with God, Christ, and those God whom selects to deliver his people from sin.<sup>62</sup> The fact that God “hands over” the Israelites to be humiliated is interpreted by Origen as an intention to initiate a process of conversion, which I would term “educational humiliation.” The outcome of God’s punishment is a phase of recognition for the downtrodden Israelites, who, finally realizing that human beings cannot do without God’s assistance, look up to him for help, and God raises up a savior for them. Origen interprets this stage of their progress as the acknowledgement of the shortcomings of human nature, which is necessary in order to recognise the need to receive help from God through a savior. This is how Origen describes this phase of punishment and repentance:

“After they have obtained the *highest signs of power and have ascended to the greatest heights of pride*, then, *cast down* from there, they are ‘handed over’ to this *Chusarsaton*, [...] so that

61 Ibid. 3,1 (7480 f.). Translation: *ibid.* 61f.

62 This association is not only found in the homilies translated by Rufinus, but also in the ones preserved in the original Greek: cf. in Hier. hom. 14,1–3 (GCS Orig. 3<sup>o</sup>, 106–108); in Ps. 81 hom. 1 (GCS Orig. 13, 479f.). See Samuel Fernández, *Cristo médico según Orígenes: La actividad médica como metáfora de la acción divina* (SEAug 64), Rome 1999.

God may *humiliate* the people who had been *exalted excessively*, so that he may *strike them down* and wear them out, until they come back to their senses and search for the Lord. For, when they were fixed in pride and *self-exaltation*, they did not know God.”<sup>63</sup>

The final stage of this progress will be, for Origen, the achievement of what I would term “pious humiliation,” when human beings will no longer be subjected to humiliation coming from outside but will knowingly humiliate themselves, thus initiating in themselves the process of repentance and liberation from sin. Origen emphasizes that human beings are guided in this process by the example of the humility of Christ. In support of this notion of the humility of Christ and its paradigmatic significance, Origen references Phil. 2:6–8. Origen’s view that, after their repentance, human beings move from pious self-humiliation to true and lasting exaltation closely follows the path taken by Christ, as described in the Epistle to the Philippians. Because Christ humiliated himself (*ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν*, Phil. 2:8), God exalts (*ὑπερύψωσεν*, Phil. 2:9) him above all. In this final stage of the progress described by Origen in the *Third Homily on Judges*, human beings, who had previously relinquished their dominion over themselves to the enemy kings and their idols who enslaved them,<sup>64</sup> become the protagonists of their own liberation. This is how Origen describes this phase of piety:

“O listener, whoever you are, who are conscious of any error of your own: [...] *humiliate yourself* to God and you shall give him satisfaction in the confession of repentance. Do not wait for Cushanrishathaim to *humiliate you* and for necessity to force your repentance against your will, but, on your own, anticipate the hands of that tormentor [...] Until those who were ‘handed over’ on account of their sins were not ‘crying out to the Lord,’ no one was raised up who could save them.”<sup>65</sup>

This process of spiritual awakening is, thus, depicted by Origen as the traumatic, but necessary, acquisition of the knowledge that the only true and lasting exaltation is in the humiliation that imitates that of Christ, allowing human beings to associate themselves with the glory that God bestowed on Christ (Phil. 2:9).

63 Origen, in Iud. hom. 3,1(GCS Orig. 7, 481). Translation: Divel y Laur o, FaCh 1 B, 62. The idea that God abandons the souls for an educational purpose, so as to initiate a process of spiritual awakening and repentance, is explained by Origen in princ. III 1,13 (SC 268, 76).

64 Cf. in Iud. hom. 2,3 (GCS Orig. 7, 475).

65 Ibid. 3,2 (7 482). Translation: Divel y Laur o, FaCh 1 B, 64.

## 6. What Does it Mean for Origen that the Judges Lead by Example?

In the war narrated in the Book of Judges, each phase of slavery ends with the advent of a different judge. In Homilies 3 to 9, Origen reflects on who the judges are and how they relieve the Israelites from their plight. He reasons that the judges lead by example. They offer themselves as the answer to the problems that were laid out in chapter 2 of the Book of Judges, namely the conflict between two sides and the importance for human beings to discern the highest good between the appeal of worldly things and the pursuit of heaven. Origen demonstrates this by explaining determining features that are attributed to the judges in the Bible (for example, the meaning of their names) in a way that clarifies how the conflicts presented so far in the collection are settled by the judges.

For example, Israel is liberated from slavery under King Eglon by the judge Ehud, who is called “ambidextrous” in Judg. 3:15. Origen interprets this as indicating that Ehud is wholly “right,” having absolutely nothing to do with those who are “left,” i. e., the demons and the sins they induce.<sup>66</sup> In the *First Homily on Judges*, which has a programmatic function with respect to the rest of the collection, Origen had described a situation of conflict between two sides that cannot in any way coexist in the same soul, and he explained that the conflict makes it inevitable that human beings must discern which is the right side and commit themselves to it. Ehud, incontrovertibly one-sided, indicates in himself the solution to this predicament that all human beings face. In him, the contrast between the two sides is solved, there is no further conflict, as Ehud is entirely devoted to the right side and shows himself to be completely disassociated with pride and the other vices that keep human beings enslaved by the Devil. Consequently, Ehud is shown to possess the uncontaminated and irresistible strength of God’s truth, as opposed to the uncertainties and errors of pagan philosophy, represented by his opponent Eglon, who is associated with terms and expressions referring to instability.<sup>67</sup>

In the same way, especially in Homilies 2 and 3, Origen had shown that one important problem that human beings must learn to deal with is the temptation of worldly goods, which appear to attribute worth and elevation to human beings but actually force them into slavery and degradation. When faced with the allure of these false goods, human beings should resist temptation and pursue only heavenly objectives. The interpretation that Origen offers of what he believes to be the meaning of the names of the judges Shamgar and Jael is aimed at showing how

66 Ibid. 3,5 (7 485f.).

67 Ibid. 4,1 (7, 488): *volubiles motus et orbitas mali, fluxus vel effusio, fluxae et dissolutae gentis princeps vel dux*. The image of the storm and the unpredictability of the sea are associated with evil also in Ios. hom. 19,4 (GCS Orig. 7, 413), where they are used to address the inconsistency of sin, as well as the hardship faced by those who fight it, requiring the help of God.

the judges reveal in themselves the solution to this predicament and exemplify the end of the conflict between the two contrasting forces, one weighing human beings down in the sins of the world, and the other calling them up to communion with God in heaven. Shamgar's name (Judg. 3:31) for Origen means "foreigner" in this world,<sup>68</sup> whereas Jael's name (Judg. 4:9) means "ascension."<sup>69</sup> Origen explains that Jael figuratively refers to the Church, and her opponent, Sisera, to the vices of the flesh. Only through the Church are human beings able to "ascend from bodily to spiritual things and from earthly to heavenly things." Shamgar, completely estranged from this world and pulling away from it, and Jael, leading the ascension towards heaven and the defeat of the vices of the flesh, release the tension between elevation and falling delineated in the *Third Homily on Judges* and give impetus to the movement away from the earth and up towards heaven that animates the entire collection. In this sense, the judges offer themselves as examples of "pious elevation," showing human beings the way to attain true and lasting happiness by detaching themselves from false goods.

The last hero introduced in the *Homilies on Judges*, i. e., Gideon, perfectly fulfills the role of judge by revealing in himself the solution to previously articulated problems. For example, Origen points out that when Gideon encounters an angel<sup>70</sup> he makes sure to pause and examine this vision with the utmost caution, as he is aware that evil often disguises itself as good, so as to lead human beings to sin by deceiving them into valuing meaningless and temporary things, as Origen had previously explained in Homilies 1 and 2. With his caution, Gideon exemplifies discernment, which is what human beings need to fend off the wiles of the Devil. Again, Origen introduces a problem (that worldly goods are deceptively attractive), explains what would be needed to solve it (discernment), and exemplifies the problem as already solved in the figure of the judge. Furthermore, Gideon does this precisely because he is prompted by the example of Joshua, who had a similar encounter in Josh. 5:3: Origen had presented forgetfulness and the absence of Jesus, as connected to sin;<sup>71</sup> in response to that, Gideon proves that he retains the memory of Joshua/Jesus.

Finally, Origen's interpretation of Gideon's battle against the coalition of enemy kings<sup>72</sup> shows that he frames the biblical episode as a direct response to a problem presented in the *Third Homily on Judges*, i. e., the fact that human beings be-

68 In Iud. hom. 4,2 (GCS Orig. 7, 488).

69 Ibid. 5,5 (7 495).

70 Ibid. 8,4 (7, 513), interpreting Judg. 6:12.

71 Ibid. 2,2 (7, 474).

72 Ibid. 9,1 (7, 516–519). Origen adds the example of female heroes such as Judith, who defeats an enemy that male soldiers could not fight. Judith wins not because of her own strength, but because of her virtue and her faith that God was going to give her power. For this reason, Origen associates her with female Christian martyrs of his time.

lieve that they can obtain exaltation for themselves. Because of this false belief, human beings end up pursuing sinful objectives such as glory, power, and rank, in the vain hope that these things will signify their success.

When faced with an impossibly large army, Gideon had initially gathered a force of 32,000 soldiers (Judg. 7:3). God, however, ordered him to march out with only 300 men and promised him victory. God gave this commandment “lest by chance Israel should boast, and by boasting, should claim a part of the victory.” The motive behind God’s commandment, argues Origen, is to show his power in Gideon’s victory. If Gideon had won with an adequate army, people could have believed that the human soldiers were responsible for the victory. On the contrary, it would not be believable that 300 men had conquered a huge army unless they were seen to have won not because of their forces but because of God’s overwhelming power and superiority. Hence, with Gideon’s impossible success against the kings of evil, for which God was undoubtedly responsible, God revealed that true victory against sin is found only in him.

### 7. The Outcome of the War and the Triumph in Christ: the *Sixth Homily on Judges*

We come now to the end of the war as prophesized by Deborah’s song in Judg. 5:1–3. The *Sixth Homily on Judges* provides the answer to a series of questions relating to the topic of eschatology, the time of the end, to which the triumphant anaphora of *tunc* (“then”) refers.<sup>73</sup> In the end, everyone, each in their own time, will join in Deborah’s song in celebration of Jael’s victory over Sisera. With the hero Jael representing the Church and the invading Sisera representing vice, Origen indicates that in the end everyone will participate in the victory of the Church and in liberation from sin. Origen argues that, at first, the victorious army will be led by the judges or angels, but, after being set on the right path by them and having successfully avoided the deception of false guides, it will be up to our own will to ensure that our soul is liberated from the perturbing presence of sin.<sup>74</sup> As indicated by the overwhelmingly large army that marched against Gideon and his people, human beings by themselves are not able in any way to resist the power of sin. However, since their own forces are insufficient, human beings may tap into the power of Christ, who has already defeated sin in his resurrection; only through participation in his victory, are they able to accomplish this seemingly impossible feat.<sup>75</sup>

73 Ibid. 6,1 (7, 498).

74 Ibid. 6,2 (7, 499 f.).

75 Ibid. 6,6 (7, 504).

In the *Homilies on Judges*, the commitment that God requires of human beings is described with the use of the language of war and weapons.<sup>76</sup> Human beings are called upon to become worthy to join in Deborah's song by actively engaging in a war against sin that is described by Origen as aimed at the total massacre of the enemy. Origen actualizes for his Christian audience the message of the biblical books of Joshua and Judges by interpreting the wars and bloodshed as indicating that human beings should replicate in themselves the complete victory and the absolute monarchy of Christ, where the enemy is entirely vanquished and destroyed.<sup>77</sup> He thus fulfills the claim, made in the *First* and *Second Homilies on Judges* through the insistent use of oppositional rhetoric, that there can be no peace and coexistence between good and evil.

Origen indicates that the culmination of human progress will be to reclaim the ownership of ourselves that we formerly relinquished to sin:

“Rejoice, people of God, hearing the marks of your nobility. You are summoned to hear the word of God, and not as a commoner, but as a king [...] Therefore, because you are kings, deservedly our king the Lord Christ is called ‘king of kings’ (Rev. 19:16) [...] You are made king of all, if Christ reigns in you; for by reigning one is called ‘king.’ If, therefore, the mind reigns in you and the body obeys, if you cast desires of the flesh under the yoke of your command, [...] deservedly you will be called a king, you who have learned to rule yourself rightly.”<sup>78</sup>

So, after human beings have eradicated sin from their souls, who will be left to reign over the liberated land? Origen answers that, in the final stage of the war against sin, the dominion over our souls, which we had given away to idols, will be handed back to us. With participation in Christ as Lord and king of all, we are restored as Lords and kings of ourselves.

## 8. Conclusion

For Origen, the Book of Judges tells of an unstable relationship between Christians and their God. At every moment, Christians, both as individuals and as part of a community, are called on to decide whether to chase those things that only seem to be valuable or to focus on their relationship with God in Christ as the only genuinely valuable thing to pursue. The tension between these two options is

76 Cf. *ibid.* 6,2 (7, 500); 9,1 (7, 516–519).

77 Cf. in *Ios. hom.* 8,7 (GCS Orig. 7, 345): “For what is it to sanctify war if not that you [...] destroy all the enemies of your soul, which are the blemishes of sins?” Translation: Bruce/White, *FaCh* 105, 94.

78 In *Iud. hom.* 6,3 (GCS Orig. 7, 501). Translation: Divel y Laur o, *FaCh* 119, 88f.

consistently represented throughout the collection by sets of contrapositions laid out especially in the first, second, and third homilies, such as true versus false, life versus death or high versus low. This conflict is solved in the figures of the Old Testament judges themselves, who are offered by God as models of perfection. The judges show the lasting peace that human beings will find when participating in the victory of Christ over sin and death.

Once they have humiliated themselves and have accepted that they can only find true exaltation by subjecting themselves to Christ, human beings break the cycle of arrogance and slavery portrayed in the Book of Judges, and they progress until they become their own royal rulers, imitating the monarchy of Christ. Thus, for Origen, the message of the Book of Judges, that he conveys in his homilies with a persuasive language based on powerful and dramatic oppositions, is ultimately that only through Christ can human beings come into their own and reclaim control of themselves.

# PERSPECTIVES ON ORIGEN IN LATE ANTIQUITY



# Readings of Origen in Late Antiquity

Origen as Presented by Pamphilus, Athanasius and the *Philocalia*

ALFONS FÜRST, MÜNSTER

Since the late antique controversies about the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of Origen's thought, the doctrines of pre-existence and apokatastasis and his alleged subordinationism have functioned as the most common identity markers of Origenism. Any concept of Origenism, however, depends on the perspective from which Origen's texts are read and his thought is depicted. The abovementioned critical concept of Origenism was mostly formed by the adversaries of Origen during the first and second Origenist controversies at the turn of the fifth and in the midst of the sixth centuries, respectively.<sup>1</sup> Before this development, which led to the official condemnation of Origen as a heretic, some followers and advocates of Origen had a quite different view of him. Pamphilus of Caesarea and Athanasius of Alexandria on the one hand, and Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea on the other, the presumed authors of the *Philocalia*, presented another portrait of the manner and contents of Origen's thinking. It is their reading of Origen's writings on which I will focus in this paper.

## 1. Origen as an Academic Scholar: Pamphilus and Athanasius

It is a commonly accepted opinion in current research that Origen did not give firm answers to the questions he posed, nor did he teach his tentative answers as doctrines. Rather, his way of thinking is characterised by an open mode of questioning and searching. He quite often proposed different answers and discussed their validity, advantages and shortcomings. Sometimes he came to a final assessment and signified his own preference, but sometimes he left the answer open to the reader. Origen, as Ulrich Berner wrote in his influential overview of tendencies in modern research on Origen, offered "free research of a hypothetical char-

1 See Alfons Fürst, *Origenesbilder in der Spätantike: Vom akademischen Freiheitsphilosophen zum Ketzler der Präexistenz und Apokatastasis*, in: id./Thomas R. Karmann (eds.), *Verurteilung des Origenes: Kaiser Justinian und das Konzil von Konstantinopel 553* (Adamantiana 15), Münster 2020, 11–5.

acter.”<sup>2</sup> Eberhard Schockenhoff ascribed to Origen an “ethos of finding the truth in dialogue” which corresponds to the discursive style of contemporary academic research and teaching.<sup>3</sup> Henri Crouzel, the leading French Origen scholar of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, coined the now widely used formula of a “théologie en recherche” for Origen’s way of thinking.<sup>4</sup> Well aware of the boundaries of human knowledge when it comes to the fundamental questions of being, Origen conceived of theology as an enduring search for the truth which a human being will never be able to reach fully.

The first author who presented Origen as an academic scholar was Pamphilus of Caesarea. In his *Apology for Origen*, written between 307 and 310 – only the first book is preserved in the Latin translation made by Rufinus of Aquileia in 397/98 –, Pamphilus tried to defend Origen against charges circulating at that time.<sup>5</sup> To achieve this aim, he placed the biblical exegesis of Origen in an introductory letter to his *Apology* under the caveat that Origen “does not proclaim a definite statement when he explains something, and that he does not conclude with a dogmatic tenet, but that he rather searches after the meaning of the Scriptures to the best of his ability and does not claim to have understood it to the fullest extent.” In some cases, his deliberations end up in aporias and “he confesses that he does not know how to proceed,” so he is open to other and better explanations. For this reason, “he sometimes proposes different explanations of one and the same biblical chapter” particularly since “there are many mystical and secret things hidden in the Holy Scriptures.” Thus, he leaves it up to “a prudent reader” to accept the explanation which he “evaluates as correct.”<sup>6</sup> There is a lot of evidence in the works of

- 2 Ulrich Berner, *Origenes* (EdF 147), Darmstadt 1981, 69, relying on Gustave Bardy, Art. Origène, in: DThC 11/2 (1932) 1489–1565, here 1494. 1514.
- 3 Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Zum Fest der Freiheit: Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origenes* (TTS 33), Mainz 1990, 312.
- 4 Henri Crouzel, *Qu’a voulu faire Origène en composant le Traité des Principes?*, in: BLE 76 (1975) 161–186. 241–260, here 248; id., *Actualité d’Origène: Rapports de la foi et de cultures: Une théologie en recherche*, in: NRTTh 102 (1980) 386–399, here 394–398; id., *Origène*, Paris/Namur 1985, 216–223.
- 5 On the theological context, see Rowan Williams, *Damnosa haereditas: Pamphilus’ Apology and the Reputation of Origen*, in: Hanns Ch. Brennecke / Ernst L. Graßmück / Ch. Marckschies (eds.), *Logos: Festschrift für Luise Abramowski* (BZNW 67), Berlin / New York 1993, 151–169; Éric Junod, *L’Apologie pour Origène de Pamphile et la naissance de l’origénisme*, in: Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXVI*, Leuven 1993, 267–286; Emanuela Prinzivalli, *The Controversy about Origen before Epiphanius*, in: Wolfgang A. Biener / Uwe Kühnweg (eds.), *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (BETL 137), Leuven 1999, 195–213.
- 6 Pamphilus, *apol. Orig. 3* (SC 464, 36–38): [...] *quae cum exponit frequenter addere solet et profiteri se non haec quasi definitiva pronuntiare sententia nec statuto dogmate terminare, sed inquirere pro uiribus et sensum discutere Scripturarum, nec tamen profiteri quod integre perfecteque comprehenderit, suspicari magis se de quam plurimis dicens, nec tamen certum*

Origen for all of these assertions of Pamphilus.<sup>7</sup> Pamphilus bolstered his assessment of Origen's way of thinking by a long quotation from Origen's preface to his (now lost) *Commentary on Genesis* in which Origen himself emphatically stressed his reserve concerning excessive assurance of knowledge in exegetical matters: "If somebody notices something important in a disputed question, we have to discuss it, but not with all assurance. This is only done by an imprudent man or by someone who has lost the sense of human weakness and has forgotten himself."<sup>8</sup>

When Origen spoke his mind in this way, it was not simply a literary expression of modesty and humility, as Pamphilus stated several times.<sup>9</sup> Rather, Pamphilus himself thought of a hermeneutical rule for the "comprehension of Origen" (*Origenis intellectus*).<sup>10</sup> Origen's zetetic method is based on a realistic reserve concerning the range of human knowledge when it comes to questions, for instance, about the decrees of God which "a created mind cannot comprehend at all," as he stressed in a chapter of *On First Principles* on the limits of human understanding.<sup>11</sup> At the end of the passage quoted by Pamphilus from the *Commentary on Genesis*, Origen appealed to the great ancestor of the philosophical tradition to which he himself belonged: "While many do not realize their lack of knowledge and em-

*esse quia in omnibus quod perfectum est et integrum adsecutus sit – sed et non numquam inuenimus eum de multis haerere se profitentem, in quibus ea quidem quae in quaestionem ueniunt mouet, nec tamen eorum absolutiones adiungit, sed cum omni humilitate et ueritate non erubescit fateri haec sibi non liquere. [...] Praeterea comprehendimus eum non numquam diuersas expositiones eiusdem capituli facere; et cum omni reuerentia, quasi qui sciat se de sanctis Scripturis dicere, cum multa quae sibi occurrerint exposuerit, praecipit his qui legunt probare de singulis quae dixerit et quod rectius prudens lector iudicauerit obtinere, profecto quia nec ipsum latebat quod non omnia quae mouerat uel discusserat probabilia uel fixa haberi deberent, pro eo quod multa mystica in Scripturis sanctis et in secreto recondita esse credantur. Cf. also ibid. 160 (464, 246).*

7 Cf. Origen, princ. I 8,4 (GCS Orig. 5, 105), quoted by Pamphilus, ibid. 175 (464, 264). Furthermore: Origen, ibid. II 6,7 (5, 147); II 8,4 (5, 162); II 8,5 (5, 163); II 9,4 (5, 167f.); III 4,5 (5, 270); in Cant. comm. II 6,13 (OWD 9/1, 254); III 14,34 (9/1, 392); III 17,16 (9/1, 422). As to the *Commentary on Matthew*, see Hermann Josef Vogt, *Wie Origenes in seinem Matthäuskommentar Fragen offen lässt*, in: Henri Cr ouzel /Antonio Quac quar elli (eds.), *Origeniana Secunda* (QVetChr 15), Rome 1980, 191–198, reprint in: id., *Origenes als Exeget*, ed. by Wilhelm Geer lings , Paderborn et al. 1999, 105–111.

8 Pamphilus, ibid. 7 (464, 40) = Origen, in Gen. frg. D 1 Metzler (OWD 1/1,60): *Si cui uero in disceptatione profundum aliquid occurrerit, de hoc dicendum quidem est, sed non cum omni affirmatione. Hoc enim aut temerarii hominis est et eius qui sensum humanae infirmitatis perdiderit oblitusque sui sit [...]*.

9 Pamphilus, ibid. 3 (464, 36). 8 (464, 42). 16 (464, 54). On this aspect, see Éric Juno d, *Origène vu par Pamphile dans la Lettre-Préface de l'Apologie*, in: Lothar Lies (ed.), *Origeniana Quarta* (IThS 19), Innsbruck/Vienna 1987, 128–135, here 130.

10 Pamphilus, ibid. 1 (464, 32). This passage contains, according to Juno d, ibid. 134 n. 17, "la meilleure description jamais écrite du travail théologique tel que le concevait Origène."

11 Origen, princ. IV 3,14 (GCS Orig. 5, 345), quoted by Pamphilus, ibid. 82 (464, 136–142).

phatically proclaim their incoherent and jumbled thoughts, which sometimes are even stupid and fictitious, as they appear to them as most certain statements, we are grateful that we do not ignore our ignorance about the great things which are above us.”<sup>12</sup> This is a clear allusion to Socrates’ knowledge of his lack of knowledge, as Plato wrote in the *Apology of Socrates*: “What I don’t know I do not think to know.”<sup>13</sup> Origen explicitly employed the Socratic-Platonic tradition of doing philosophy in dialogue with the readers of his texts.<sup>14</sup> Pamphilus placed this quotation at the beginning of his anthology of Origenian texts as an instruction to the reader on how to read Origen. In doing so, he presented Origen as a Platonic philosopher, who “pretty much like Socrates” (μάλα Σωκρατικῶς), as Gregory the Wonderworker had already characterised Origen’s pedagogy,<sup>15</sup> practised exegesis as a permanent search for the deeper meaning of the biblical text. According to Pamphilus, Origen should not be perceived as a dogmatician who proclaims doctrines but as an exegete who seeks to explore the hidden sense of Scripture: “He poses questions and discusses them rather than affirming anything” by “proposing various interpretations of a given chapter.”<sup>16</sup>

The next author who read Origen’s writings in the same sense used virtually the same wording. In his *On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod* of 358/59, Athanasius of Alexandria described “the learned Origen” (ὁ φιλόπονος Ὀριγένης) as one “who searches and discusses,” or “who expresses himself as in an exercise of dispute” (ὡς ζητῶν καὶ γυμνάζων).<sup>17</sup> This short notice is often quoted as referring to Origen’s discursive style in general. But a closer reading of the whole passage reveals that Athanasius has slightly shifted the meaning of these words in comparison to what Pamphilus had said. Athanasius referred such scholarly discussions in Origen’s works to the opinions of his adversaries: “For what he has written as

12 Pamphilus, *ibid.* 7 (464, 42) = Origen, in Gen. frg. D 1 Metzler (OWD 1/1,62): [...] *in eo autem gratias agimus quod, cum multi imperitiam suam nesciant et motus suos incompósitos et inordinatos, interdum etiam et ineptos ac fabulosos, cum omni intentione, sicut sibi uidentur, quasi uerissima adsertione adnuntiant, nos de rebus magnis et his quae supra nos sunt ignorantiam nostri non ignoramus.*

13 Plato, *apol.* 21 d 7: ἄ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶμαι εἰδέναι.

14 For this *Origenes Socraticus*, see Alfons Fürst, *Origenes und seine Bedeutung für die Theologie- und Geistesgeschichte Europas und des Vorderen Orients*, in: id. (ed.), *Origenes und sein Erbe in Orient und Okzident* (Adamantina 1), Münster 2011, 9–25, here 11–16.

15 Gregor Thaumaturgus, *pan. Orig.* 97 (SC 148, 136).

16 Pamphilus, *apol. Orig.* 28 (SC 464, 72, 74): [...] *opinionibus magis et his sensibus qui disputanti ei et tractanti de talibus occurrere potuerunt quam certis aliquibus ac definitis adsertionibus utitur, id est discutiens et pertractans potius quam adfirmans. [...] et in omnibus quae de Scripturis exponit hac sententia uti solet et in his praecipue in quibus plures unius capituli interpretationes exponit, hoc adserens se quidem, ne quid quod dici possit omitteret, plura uel diuersa prout sentire potuit protulisse [...]. Cf. *ibid.* 174 (64, 262): Origen says something “in order to discuss it [...] not to define it” (*discutiendi [...] non confirmandi*).*

17 Athanasius, *decr. Nic. syn.* 27,1 (AW 2, 23).

one who searches and discusses should not be taken as his own opinion but as the opinion of people who seek trouble in scholarly debates.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, Athanasius did not qualify Origen’s own thinking as zetetic but understood his discursive style in the sense that, when talking in this way, Origen expressed opinions which were not his own. This becomes even clearer as the text goes on: “What he, however, seems to define with certainty is the scholar’s opinion.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, according to Athanasius, in contradistinction to other contributions to the debate there are also Origen’s own opinions which he definitely asserts. Hence, Athanasius did not qualify Origen’s texts as zetetic in general, but distinguished passages in which other opinions are discussed academically from passages in which Origen does not discuss opinions but proclaims firm convictions. Accordingly, in the following sentence about the structure of Origen’s texts, Athanasius said: “Subsequent to what he has said against the heretics as in an exercise of dispute (ὡς ἐν γυμνασίᾳ), he immediately infers his own thoughts (τὰ ἴδια).”<sup>20</sup>

The underlying question in these early assessments of Origen’s way of thinking is how to read his texts. Of course, they contain statements which Origen definitely made. Against positions which he qualified as heretical, especially the Gnostic assumption of different natures of souls, he affirmed a definite opinion. Pamphilus had already explicitly stated this in regard to the heresy of Valentinus.<sup>21</sup> But to confine Origen’s discursive style to anti-heretical discussions, as Athanasius did, results in a constriction of Origen’s zetetic way of thinking. This seems to be due to the development of theological controversy in the fourth century. Origen’s own text, which is quoted by Athanasius in this context, provides a revealing example. In the final chapter of *On First Principles*, the *Anacephalaiosis* (*Recapitulation*), Origen deals with the question of the co-eternal co-existence of the Son with the Father.<sup>22</sup> Athanasius quoted two passages of this paragraph in Greek and accurately preserved the circumspect manner in which Origen had expressed his thoughts: he “dares to add” (ἐγὼ δὲ τολμήσας προσθήην ἄν) – a formula very often used by Origen – a deliberation about the Son’s co-eternity with the Father,

18 Ibid.: ἃ μὲν γὰρ ὡς ζητῶν καὶ γυμνάζων ἔγραψε, ταῦτα μὴ ὡς αὐτοῦ φρονουῦντος δεχέσθω τις, ἀλλὰ τῶν πρὸς ἔριν φιλονεικούντων ἐν τῷ ζητεῖν [...].

19 Ibid.: [...] <ἃ δὲ> ἀδεῶς ὀρίζων ἀποφαίνεται, τοῦτο τοῦ φιλοπόνου τὸ φρόνημά ἐστι.

20 Ibid. 272 (2, 23): μετὰ γοῦν τὰ ὡς ἐν γυμνασίᾳ λεγόμενα πρὸς τοὺς αἰρετικούς εὐθὺς αὐτὸς ἐπιφέρει τὰ ἴδια [...].

21 Pamphilus, apol. Orig. 173 (SC 464, 262): *Ad quod sicut in ceteris fecimus ipsius qui accusatur respondebimus uerbis, illud primo pernecessario commentes quia accusatores eius, non intellegentes qualiter ab eo de ista quaestione tractatum sit uel quod ratio disputationis ita se habeat ut non semper ex sua persona uelut pronuntiari uideantur quae dicuntur sed interdum etiam ea quae e contrario dici poterant disputentur, et hanc esse artem disputandi non aduertentes, obiciunt ei de hoc dogmate quod quasi ipse senserit ea quae ex aduersantis persona disseruit.*

22 Origen, princ. IV 4,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 348–350).

and “it is not proper nor free of danger” (*οὐ θέμις ἐστὶν οὐδὲ ἀκίνδυνον*) not to assume it.<sup>23</sup> The whole passage is formulated in the discursive style typical of Origen which is also preserved in Rufinus’ translation. Athanasius, however, used Origen’s cautious deliberation that “there was never a ‘when’ when he (i. e. the Son) was not,” within his polemical context against the assertion already referred to by Origen and in the fourth century ascribed to Arius, that “there was a ‘when’ when he was not.”<sup>24</sup> By framing this quotation in the introductory sentence quoted above, Athanasius presented Origen’s zetetic text rather more like a definite doctrine than Origen himself had done. Admittedly, Athanasius still read Origen as a discursive scholar, but he transposed his academic style subtly into a more dogmatic reading of his text.

## 2. Biblical Hermeneutics and Free Will: Origen in the *Philocalia*

A few years after Athanasius had characterised Origen’s style of thought in the way described above, a book was published in which Origen’s theology is depicted in a remarkable way. This was not done by means of a direct characterisation of his thought but indirectly through the conception of the book’s organisation. I am speaking of the *Philocalia*.<sup>25</sup> This anthology of Origenian texts – traditionally ascribed to Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea<sup>26</sup> – was produced

23 Athanasius, decr. Nic. syn. 272f. (AW 2, 23f.).

24 Ibid. 272 (2, 23) as quote from Origen: *Εἰ ἔστιν ‘εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου’* (Col. 1:Ἐ), *ἀόρατος εἰκὼν· ἐγὼ δὲ τολμήσας προσθεῖην ἄν, ὅτι καὶ ὁμοίότης τυγχάνων τοῦ πατρὸς οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν. Πότε γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ὁ κατὰ τὸν Ἰωάννην φῶς λεγόμενος (‘ὁ θεὸς γὰρ φῶς ἐστὶν’ [1 Jn. 1:5]) ‘ἀπαύγασμα’ οὐκ εἶχε τῆς ἰδίας ‘δόξης’* (Hebr. 1:3), *ἵνα τολμήσας τις ἀρχὴν δῶ εἶναι υἱοῦ πρότερον οὐκ ὄντος; Πότε δὲ ἡ τῆς ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀκατονομάστου καὶ ἀφθέγκτου ὑποστάσεως τοῦ πατρὸς ‘εἰκὼν’, ὁ ‘χαρακτήρ’* (Hebr. 1:3), *<ὁ> λόγος ὁ ‘γινώσκων τὸν πατέρα’* (Jn. 10:Ἐ) οὐκ ἦν; *Κατανοεῖτω γὰρ ὁ τολμῶν καὶ λέγων· ‘ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ὁ υἱός’, ὅτι ἐρεῖ καὶ τό σοφία ποτὲ οὐκ ἦν καὶ λόγος οὐκ ἦν καὶ ζωὴ οὐκ ἦν.* Rufinus’ translation is as follows, princ. IV 4,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 350): *Sed et Iohannes indicat quia ‘deus lux est’* (1 Jn. 1:5), *et Paulus designat quia filius ‘splendor lucis aeternae’* (Hebr. 1:3) *sit. Sicut ergo numquam lux sine splendore esse potuit, ita nec filius quidem sine patre intellegi potest, qui et ‘figura expressa substantiae eius’ et ‘verbum’ et ‘sapientia’ dicitur* (Hebr. 1:3). *Quomodo ergo potest dici quia fuit aliquando, quando non fuerit filius? Nihil enim aliud est dicere nisi quia fuit aliquando, quando ueritas non erat, quando sapientia non erat, quando uita non erat.*

25 The only complete edition is still Joseph Armitage Robinson, *The Philocalia of Origen*, Cambridge 1893, on which the English translation of George Lewis, *The Philocalia of Origen*, Edinburgh 1911, is based.

26 The attribution of the authorship to them in the manuscripts is based on Gregory of Nazianzus, epist. 1Ἐ (GCS 53,88), and the information about their joint study of Origen given by Socrates, hist. eccl. IV 26,8f. (GCS N. F. 1, 260 f.), and Sozomenus, hist. eccl. VI 17,2f. (GCS N. F. 4, 258). I am not dealing with this disputed theme in the present article.

sometime between 364 and 378 (probably rather earlier than later between these dates) as the fruit of an obviously in-depth study of the writings of the Alexandrian. The *Philocalia* provides excerpts from Origen's exegetical hermeneutics in the first part and his defence of free will in the second.<sup>27</sup> The *Philocalia* thus presents Origen as an exegete of the Bible and a philosopher of freedom.<sup>28</sup>

The compilers of the *Philocalia* focused on the two key issues of Origen's thought. Through their excerpts, two large portions of the otherwise lost Greek text of *On First Principles* are preserved. It is interesting to see which parts of this seminal treatise the authors have chosen. According to the now commonly accepted disposition,<sup>29</sup> *On First Principles* consists of two large parts (not identically divided into four books) in each of which the themes of God, rational creatures and material creation, or the intellectual and material world, are discussed. In the first part (I 1–II 3), this is done in a more metaphysical way, while in the second (II 4–IV 3) the method is more salvation-historical. The second part is completed by a short final section (IV 4), in which the same themes are recapitulated and supplemented by some additional aspects. The long chapters on freewill and self-agency (III 1) and on biblical hermeneutics (IV 1–3), which are excerpted in the *Philocalia*, are part of this overall structure, but they appear to have been inserted into or attached to the complex argument of the whole treatise. To put it boldly: *On First Principles*

- 27 Philoc. 1–20 (p. 7–151 Robinso n) “Sur les écritures” according to the title of the edition of this part provided by Marguerite Harl, SC 302, Paris 1983, and philoc. 21–27 (p. 152–256 Robinso n) “Sur le libre arbitre” according to the title of the edition by Éric Juno d, SC 226, Paris 1976 (ibid. 12 on the date and the authors, both doubted by Harl, ibid. 21–24). This disposition is bolstered by a manuscript, Codex Parisinus, Bibliothèque Nationale, Suppl. graec. 615 (saec. XIII): Harl, ibid. 27f. Juno d, ibid. 1f., distinguished three parts, but his second part, philoc. 15–20, to which he ascribed “un caractère apologétique” because all of the texts quoted here are taken from the *Apology against Celsus*, likewise treats problems related to the biblical text: see Harl, ibid. 29 (and ibid. 35–37 against the qualification of the *Philocalia* as an apology), and furthermore the headlines ibid. 427–468 in Harl's analysis of these chapters.
- 28 Harl, ibid. 29, reduced the overall theme of the *Philocalia* to biblical exegesis (cf. ibid. 30), while a few pages later she spoke of two principal aspects: ibid. 35; but ibid. 37–41 the content is again unilaterally confined to exegetical questions. This restricted perception of the collection might have been due to the fact that Harl only edited the chapters which deal with exegesis (philoc. 1–20, systematically interpreted ibid. 42–157 under the headline “L'herméneutique d'Origène”).
- 29 It was detected by Basilius Steidle, *Neue Untersuchungen zu Origenes' Peri ἀρχῶν*, in: ZNW 40 (1941) 236–243, and adopted and further developed and modified by Marguerite Harl, *Recherches sur le Peri ἀρχῶν d'Origène*, in: F.L. Cross (ed.), *Studia Patristica III* (TU 78), Berlin 1961, 57–67; Manlio Simonetti, *Osservazioni sulla struttura del De principiis di Origene*, in: RFIC N. S. 40 (1962) 273–290. 372–393; Paul Kübel, *Zum Aufbau von Origenes' De Principiis*, in: VigChr 25 (1971) 31–39; Marguerite Harl, *Structure et cohérence du Peri Archôn*, in: Henri Cr ouzel /Gennaro Lomiento/ Josep Rius-Camps (eds.), *Origeniana* (QVetChr 12), Bari 1975, 11–2; Gilles Dorival, *Remarques sur la forme du Peri Archôn*, in: ibid. 33–45; id., *Nouvelles remarques sur la forme du Traité des Principes d'Origène*, in: RechAug 22 (1987) 67–108.

could be read without these parts, yet all of Origen's core ideas about God, men and world would still be present. But this certainly does not mean that these chapters are unimportant. Exactly the contrary is the case. In these parts Origen laid the philosophical and hermeneutical groundwork of the themes with which he dealt in the other parts of *On First Principles*. In the treatise on freewill (III 1), he explained the necessary assumption of God's and humans' self-agency as a *a priori* of all his thoughts about God, men and the world. In the treatise on Scripture (IV 1–3) he explained the hermeneutical and methodological principles of how to understand the biblical text as a foundational source of, again, all his thoughts about God, men and the world. All of his reflections in the two main parts of *On First Principles* are based on biblical interpretations according to the principles described in the treatise on Scripture and guided by the philosophical principle of a libertarian concept of freedom as developed in the treatise on freewill.<sup>30</sup>

If we perceive the structure of *On First Principles* in this way, we can say that the compilers of the *Philocalia* obviously read this treatise in a similar way and incorporated the foundational philosophical and exegetical parts into their anthology. Surprisingly, they seem not to have been interested in the themes with which Origen mainly dealt in his fundamental work. In striking contrast to Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen*, there are no excerpts concerning his concepts of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the creation and the fall of rational beings, the creation of the material world and universal salvation at the end.<sup>31</sup> Why did they pass over these chapters? The obvious assumption is they did this because Origen's bold ideas about these themes had become increasingly disputed during the course of the fourth century. Also, Gregory and Basil, although they were posthumous students and adherents of Origen, may have detected too many problematic aspects in these parts of *On First Principles*. Could it be possible that the title "The Love of Beauty" suggests that they focused not simply on the "beautiful passages" in his writings<sup>32</sup> but in a deeper sense (although connected to the one mentioned) on the enduringly "beautiful", i. e. 'orthodox,' aspects of his legacy? However, since it is always idle to muse about a lacuna, we can leave these speculations aside. What we can clearly see in the text is that the compilers of the *Philocalia* began the two parts of their anthology with the two treatises from *On First Principles* in which Origen dealt with the themes that the compilers were interested in: biblical

30 On the latter, see now Christian Hengstmann, Christian Libertarianism and Theodicy: Models of Human and Divine Agency in Origen, in: Alfons Fürst (ed.), *Freedom as a Key Category in Origen and in Modern Philosophy and Theology* (Adamantiana 14), Münster 2019, 51–74.

31 Noticed by Éric Junod, *Remarques sur la composition de la "Philocalie" d'Origène par Basile de Césarée et Grégoire de Nazianze*, in: *RHPR* 52 (1972) 149–156, here 152f. There are only minor traces of the pre-existence of the soul in the quoted texts: Har I, SC 302, 35f.

32 See the reflections of Har I, *ibid.* 34, on the meaning of the title.

hermeneutics and methodology (philoc. 1 = princ. IV 1–3) and the philosophical and exegetical defence of freewill and self-agency against determinism (philoc. 21 = princ. III 1).<sup>33</sup> To these foundational treatises, they added texts which deal with the same themes taken from other works of Origen, treatises (the *Apology against Celsus*) as well as commentaries and a few minor pieces of scholia and homilies and one letter (to Gregory the Wonderworker).<sup>34</sup>

By this arrangement of the *Philocalia*, Origen the exegete is connected with Origen the defender of freewill. According to my own reading of Origen, this is an appropriate portrait of Origen. The connection of the Bible with philosophy is the basic feature of Origen's Christian philosophy. Apart from the Logos who in his double aspects of Word and reason functions as a key principle in the inspired Scripture as well as in the created world,<sup>35</sup> one of the connecting notions is the postulate of free self-motion and self-determination as practical *a priori* of God's and men's actions.<sup>36</sup> It seems to me that the compilers of the *Philocalia* had at least some sense of this fundamental structure of Origen's thought. After all, the arrangement of their anthology suggests this reading of Origen – which was long forgotten in modern research. The best, or perhaps better, the worst example of this is the manner in which this highly interesting example of reading Origen is presented in the edition of the *Philocalia* in the series *Sources Chrétiennes*. Admittedly due to financial reasons,<sup>37</sup> the two parts are split into two volumes, the latter part (in SC 226) appeared before the first one (in SC 302), and the excerpts from *On First Principles* are omitted, as are the other texts already published in the series (the large excerpts of the *Apology against Celsus* and the letter to Gregory the Wonderworker), so that around three fifths of the whole book are missing.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the structure and sequence of this anthology being blurred, it has become difficult to discern how closely the two parts are intertwined.<sup>39</sup> In this edition – which as such, though, is highly appreciated for its reliable editing and useful commentary on the texts presented – the *Philocalia* is treated like a quarry out of

33 To give the precise references: philoc. 1,1–27(p. 7–33 Robinso n) = princ. IV 1,1–3,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 292–341); philoc. 21,1–23(p. 152–177 Robinso n) = princ. III 1,1–2 (GCS Orig. 5, 195–244).

34 See the detailed list of sources in Henri Cr ouzel , *Bibliographie critique d'Origène* (IP 8), Steenbrügge 1971, 581–58.

35 See Alfons Fürs t, *Bibel und Kosmos in der Psalmenauslegung des Origenes*, in: Adam. 20 (2014) 130–146, based on an important chapter in the *Philocalia*: philoc. 2,1–5(p. 36–40 Robinso n; SC 302, 240–248).

36 See the seminal study of Christian Hengs termann , *Origenes und der Ursprung der Freiheitsmetaphysik* (Adamantiana 8), Münster 2016.

37 See the “avertissement” of the editorial board of the series in SC 226, 7 f.

38 See the overview in SC 302, 9 f. Cf. Juno d, SC 226, 11.

39 It has to be mentioned, though, that Har l , SC 302, 29, noted the connectedness of both parts, although she reduced the main content to biblical exegesis (see above n. 28).

which single pieces can be taken without any respect to their arrangement in the book as a whole – an anthology of an anthology, as it were.

### 3. Byzantine Readings of the *Philocalia*

Around the same time that the *Philocalia* was compiled or some years later, in the years between 374 and 377, Epiphanius of Salamis wrote a lengthy chapter against Origen in his *Panacea (Panarion) of All Heresies*,<sup>40</sup> and later on in the 390s he campaigned against Origenism in Palestinian monasticism. In the wake of this first Origenist controversy, Origen was widely regarded as a heretic because of his ‘doctrines’ of pre-existence and universal salvation and the alleged subordinationism of his Trinitarian theology. The themes which feature in the *Philocalia*, however, were neither disputed nor condemned but still functioned as fundamental to Christian theology. Origen’s hermeneutical and methodological principles had paved the way of biblical exegesis for centuries to come, notwithstanding minor modifications, and every Christian philosopher defended freewill and self-agency against fatalism and determinism, although again with modifications. Hence, the *Philocalia* escaped the demolition of most of Origen’s works after his final condemnation in the sixth century – it is preserved in 60 manuscripts written from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries –, which was, of course, mostly due to the reputation of the presumed authors, Gregory and Basil, as champions of orthodoxy.<sup>41</sup>

But this did not prevent later authors from a critical assessment of this collection of texts which stem from a man who was eventually regarded as the most dangerous heretic of all. Thus, a scribe, presumably in the ninth century, wrote an anti-Origenian preface preserved in two manuscripts of the tenth century.<sup>42</sup> The unknown writer, who might be identified with Photius of Constantinople,<sup>43</sup> obviously felt the need to warn readers against “the impious subtleties which Origen

40 Epiphanius of Salamis, haer. 64 (GCS Epiph. 2, 403–524).

41 See Juno d, SC 226, 13.

42 Codices Patmianus graec. 270 (saec. X) and Marcianus graec. 47 (saec. XI). The second manuscript has been attributed to a scribe in the tenth century by Daniele Bianconi, Michele della lavra di Stilo: Qualche nuova attribuzione e considerazione, in: Scripta 5 (2012) 31–41. Other manuscripts whose scribes were not that hostile of Origen provide only a drastically shortened version of this preface (only a few lines: p. 1.1–6 Robinson; French translation: Harl, SC 302, 170 f. n. 2). On this preface, see Harl, ibid. 24–27.

43 Proposed as a conjecture by C.H. Turner, Two Notes on the *Philocalia*, in: ZNW 12 (1911) 231–236, here 234–236. Raffaele Tondini, Photius as Origen’s Reader (and Editor), in: Brouria Bitton-Ashkenazy et al. (eds.), Origeniana Duodecima: Origen’s Legacy in the Holy Land – a Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem (BETL 302), Leuven/Paris/Bristol CT 2019, 752–770, here 759–769, has recently gathered evidence for ascribing this preface, if not to Photius himself, to his “reading circle” (ibid. 767).

borrowed from the Greeks.”<sup>44</sup> He therefore added marginal notes on “the spurious and illegitimate passages,” such as “heretic” (αἰρετικά) or “reproachable” (ψεκτά)<sup>45</sup> or even longer reproaches (to which a scribe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century added even more aspersions).<sup>46</sup> We also find reading aids of this kind in manuscripts of the *Commentary on John*,<sup>47</sup> and similar notes were added to the *Commentaries on Romans* and *on Luke*,<sup>48</sup> by which the scribes or readers distanced themselves from Origen the heretic. This use of marginal notes was widespread. Already Cassiodorus had highlighted problematic passages in Origen’s Latin homilies on the Octateuch as “useless” in order to prevent readers from being deceived,<sup>49</sup> and Erasmus’ edition of Origen’s works of 1536 contains numerous *caute lege* – “read cautiously” – warnings in the margins.<sup>50</sup>

The author of the preface of the *Philocalia* found it difficult to imagine that the great theologian Gregory of Nazianzus (together with Basil the Great) should have compiled a collection of texts of the arch-heretic Origen. He did not doubt Gregory’s authorship which, in his eyes, clearly emerges from the letter which Gregory had written to his metropolitan Theodor of Tyana, when he sent him a copy of the *Philocalia* as an Easter gift in 382 or 383,<sup>51</sup> and which was later copied at the beginning of most of the manuscripts of the anthology.<sup>52</sup> He therefore

44 Philoc. praef. (p. 3 Robinso n; SC 302, 168):[...] τῆς ἑλληνικῆς Ὠριγένους [...] δυσσεβείας [...]. Translation: p. xiii Lewis .

45 Ibid. (p. 4 Robinso n; SC 302, 170): [...] τοῖς ὑποβολιμαίοις καὶ νόθοις ἐπὶ μετώπου σημεῖα παρατεθείκαμεν ταῦτα· αἰρετικά· ψεκτά· δι’ ὧν ἐκεῖνα ὡς αἰρετικά, ὡς ψεκτά, κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους ἕκαστα τόπους ἐσηγησάμεν. Translation: p. xiv. These notes are only in the Codex Marcianus graec. 47.

46 See Juno d, SC 226, 14f. On these marginal notes in the Venice manuscript, see also Samuel Fer nánd ez , Las notas marginales de Venetus Marcianus graecus 47 y la historia de la recepción del *De principiis* de Orígenes, in: CNS 38 (2017) 11–26.

47 See Origenes Werke. Vierter Band: Der Johanneskommentar, ed. by Erwin Pr euschen (GCS Orig. 4), Leipzig 1903, xiii–xvii.

48 Jean Scher er , Le Commentaire d’Origène sur Rom. III.5–V.7 d’après les extraits du papyrus n° 88748 du Musée du Caire et les fragments de la Philocalie et du Vaticanus gr. 762: Essai de reconstitution du texte et de la pensée des tomes V et VI du “Commentaire sur l’Épître aux Romains” (Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale. Bibliothèque d’Étude 27), Cairo 1957, 4f.; Bernhard Neusch äfer , Origenes als Philologe (SBA 18/1–2), Basel 1987, 337 n. 18.

49 Cassiodorus, inst. I 1,8 (p. 14f. Myno rs ): *Quapropter in operibus eiusdem Origenis, quantum transiens inuenire praeualui, loca quae contra regulas Patrum dicta sunt achresimi repudiatione signaui, ut decipere non praeualeat qui tali signo in prauis sensibus cauendus esse monstratur.*

50 See Tondini, Photius as Origen’s Reader (n. 43) 767 n. 76.

51 Gregory of Nazianzus, epist. 1B (GCS 53, 88): see above n. 26. For the date, see Har l , SC 302, 21.

52 Philoc. epist. Greg. Naz. (p. 1 and p. 4 Robinso n; SC 302, 170): *Ἐορτῇ καὶ τὰ γράμματα καὶ τὸ κρεῖττον ὅτι προφθάνεις τὸν καιρὸν τῇ προθυμίᾳ τὸ προεορτάζειν ἡμῖν χαριζόμενος.*

looked for an explanation as to why an anthology of a heretic's writings had been compiled, and found it in the justification which Gregory had already given in his letter to Theodor, namely that it contains "passages useful and profitable" for "scholars."<sup>53</sup> For the heretical passages, he gave the fanciful explanation that these were not gathered by Gregory and Basil but were the interpolations of Origenist heretics.<sup>54</sup> To prevent "the more simple-minded readers" from falling victim to these heretical ideas by regarding them as orthodox because Gregory and Basil had compiled the text, he briefly explained Origen's heresies concerning the Trinity, pre-existence and the apokatastasis.<sup>55</sup> He then quoted the main orthodox doctrines concerning these themes, namely that the Trinitarian persons are "equal in honour and glory" and "co-eternal and co-essential," to provide to "Christ's sheep the familiar voice and pure tones of the truth."<sup>56</sup> And eventually, he added the abovementioned warnings in the margin.

If the true doctrines are highlighted by means of the correct notions – where Origen fails to match the standards of the dogmatic language developed from the fourth century onwards –, the heretic Origen can still be read in a useful way, especially with regard to the concepts which had not been condemned, namely his exegetical hermeneutics and his defence of freewill. Yet the long shadow of

*Τὰ μὲν οὖν παρὰ τῆς σῆς εὐλαβείας τοιαῦτα· ἡμεῖς δὲ ὧν ἔχομεν τὸ μείζον ἀντιδίδομεν τὰς εὐχάς. Ἴνα δέ τι καὶ ὑπόμνημα παρ' ἡμῶν ἔχῃς, τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Βασιλείου, πυκτίον ἀπεστάλκαμέν σοι τῆς Ὀριγένους φιλοκαλίας ἐκλογὰς ἔχον χρησίμους τοῖς φιλολόγοις. Τοῦτο καὶ δέξασθαι καταξίωσον, καὶ ἀπόδειξιν ἡμῖν δοῦναι τῆς ὠφελείας καὶ σπουδῆ καὶ πνεύματι βοηθούμενος. See also Juno d, SC 226, 13 n. 5.*

53 Philoc. praef. (p. 2 Robinso n; SC 302, 164), with explicit reference to Gregory's letter: *Γεγράφθαι μὲν οὖν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεολόγου ταύτην οὐδὲ ἡμεῖς ἀμφιβάλλομεν [...]. Τοῦτο δὲ συνομολογοῦντες ἀκολούθως δεχόμεθα καὶ τὸ ἕτερον· ὅπερ ἐστίν, τὸ καὶ συναγωγὴν ἐκ τῶν Ὀριγένους ὑπὸ τῶν σοφῶν γενέσθαι καθηγητῶν· τῶν χρησίμων μέντοι καὶ ὠφελίμων ῥητῶν, καθ' ἃ καὶ αὐτὸ ἐπὶ λέξεως τῷ προσεχῶς εἰρημένῳ τοῦ θεολόγου περιέχεται γράμματι. [...] Οὐ τί φαμεν καὶ ὡς ὠφέλιμα τὰ τοιαῦτα δόγματα τοῖς φιλολόγοις ἀπεθησαύρισαν; The notion φιλόλογοι in Gregory's letter and in the preface has to be taken in the wider sense of "learned men," "scholars," as Lewis (p. ix. xii) and Har I herself (SC 302, 171) translated and as Juno d, Remarques (n. 31) 150, understood it as not confined to the notion of a biblical scholar, as Har I, *ibid.* 30 f., argued.*

54 Philoc. *ibid.* (p. 2. 3 Robinso n; SC 302, 164. 168): *Τὸδε γέ ἐστιν, ὡς ὁμολογουμένως τινὲς, καθ' ἃ λέλεκται, τὴν Ὀριγένους νοσοῦντες κακοδοξίαν, χάραν διὰ τῆς τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰρηγορίου λαβόντες ἐπιστολῆς, βεβήλοις τισὶ παρενθήκαις τολμηρῶς τὸ τῆς ἐκλογῆς κατεμόλυναν ἄθροισμα· ὡς ἂν οἱ ἀπλούστερον ἐντυγχάνοντες εὐρεθεῖεν, καθ' ἃ που Βασίλειος εἶπεν ὁ θεῖος, τὰ δηλητήρια μετὰ τοῦ μελιτος προσιέμενοι.*

55 *Ibid.* (p. 2 Robinso n; SC 302, 164–166).

56 *Ibid.* (p. 2 Robinso n; SC 302, 166): *Ἐκείνοις [sc. Gregory and Basil] μὲν οὖν εἰς τὸ δεῖξαι ὁμότιμον καὶ ὁμόδοξον καὶ κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀλήθειαν συναϊδίον τε καὶ ὁμοούσιον τὴν παναγίαν καὶ ἀρχικὴν τριάδα σύμπας ὁ βίος σχεδὸν κατηνάλωται, ἐν τῇ ζωοποιῷ τῶν εὐσεβῶν δογματῶν πάα τὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νέμουσι πρόβατα, καὶ συνῆθι πρὸς αὐτὰ κεχηρημένοι φωνῆ μηδὲν ἐξηλλαγμένον ἐχούση πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Translation: p. xii Lewis.*

Origen's condemnation in the sixth century was eventually cast even onto a text which contained his undisputed legacy to Christian exegesis and philosophy.

#### 4. How Should we Read Origen in Anthologies and Beyond?

A striking feature of the late antique debates about Origen is the genre of the books which were written to demonstrate either his orthodoxy or his heterodoxy: they are anthologies, i. e. excerpts (and N. B. the first anthologies dedicated to a single and non-biblical author).<sup>57</sup> This was the case with Pamphilus' first book of his *Apology for Origen* and with the *Philocalia*, as well as with Jerome's letter to Avitus of 408, which consists of excerpts from his (otherwise lost) translation of *On First Principles*,<sup>58</sup> and with Justinian I's treatise against Origen to which the emperor added excerpts from *On First Principles*.<sup>59</sup> A later Latin example is a compilation of Christological passages of the same book, probably made in the seventh century or later in France and transmitted under the name of Augustine.<sup>60</sup>

The genre of these books leads us to the question of how to read Origen, as Jerome had already stated in two letters written in 396 and 397.<sup>61</sup> Is it possible in this genre to get an appropriate impression of Origen's versatile style of dealing with difficult questions, whereby he frequently filled several pages musing on only one word in the Bible or one philosophical problem? Is this genre suitable to capture the allusive open-mindedness of his notions and concepts, the audacity of some of his ideas and, within this web of arguments, his own options and opinions, which he always proposed with caution and circumspection? The late antique anthologies, by their genre as such, abstracted Origen's lively way of thinking into single

57 On this genre in late antiquity, see the information given by Har I, SC 302, 31–3.

58 Jerome, epist. 124 (CSEL 56, 96–117).

59 Justinian's *Treatise against Origen* has been edited by Eduard Schwartz, ACO III, Berlin 1940, 189–214; reprint in: Mario Amelotti/Livia Migliardi Zingales (eds.), *Scritti teologici ed ecclesiastici di Giustiniano* (Florentina Studiorum Universitas. Legum Iustiniani Imperatoris Vocabularium. Subsidia III), Milan 1977, 68–118. The excerpts of *On First Principles* are on p. 208–213 and p. 106–116, respectively. See now the edition with German translation and notes by Alfons Fürst in: id./Karmann, *Verurteilung des Origenes* (n. 1) 170–233 (the excerpts *ibid.* 218–229).

60 Pseudo-Augustine, *De incarnatione et deitate Christi ad Ianuarium*, ed. by Lukas J. Dörfbauer, CSEL 99, Vienna 2011, 133–214. Reprint with German translation and notes in Fürst/Karmann, *ibid.* 316–33.

61 Cf. Jerome, epist. 61 (CSEL 54, 575–582) and epist. 62 (54, 583f.). In the manuscript transmission, the aptly title *Quomodo Origenem legere debeamus* was added to the latter. For this topic, see also Alfons Fürst, *Origenes in Rom: Hieronymus und Rufinus über die Frage, wie man Origenes lesen soll*, in: Ingo Schaff (ed.), *Hieronymus Romanus: Studies on Jerome and Rome on the Occasion of the 1600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Death* (IPM 87), Turnhout 2021, 299–330.

sentences separated from their context. This also holds true for the lengthy quotations in Pamphilus's *Apology* and in the *Philocalia*, although these books aimed at defending Origen by providing a collection of texts concerning his key concepts.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the impression provoked by such an anthology is bound to create another portrait of Origen. At any rate, the Byzantine author of the preface had the impression that the *Philocalia* "contains a selection of scriptural problems and their solutions," as he wrote in the opening lines,<sup>63</sup> thus turning Origen's academic way of considering different solutions of any given problem into a manual of set answers to specific questions.<sup>64</sup>

The jeopardy inherent in this genre immediately becomes clear when we look at the list of excerpts set up by his enemies, such as the later Jerome and the emperor Justinian I, and at the lists of the anathemas by which Origen, or sixth-century Origenism, respectively, was condemned in 543 and 553.<sup>65</sup> It is quite easy to present a heretical Origen by isolating (sometimes even distorting) sentences without regard to their context. Pamphilus' *Apology* and the *Philocalia* are thus very useful books, and the latter has preserved otherwise lost Greek texts of Origen. Since most of the excerpts in Pamphilus' *Apology* and in the *Philocalia* are quite long, they convey at least an idea of Origen's academic way of dealing with questions, as was highlighted by Pamphilus and, albeit to a lesser degree, by Athanasius. But in view of the risk they run in providing a restricted reading of Origen, it is still highly recommended to read the writings of the Alexandrian themselves. Enough of them are still preserved to do this extensively.

62 In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hans Urs von Balthasar intended the same by his famous and often reprinted anthology *Spirit and Fire*: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origenes. Geist und Feuer: Ein Aufbau aus seinen Schriften*, Salzburg 1938 (Freiburg 1991); English translation: *Origen. Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, trans. by Robert J. Daly, Washington D. C. 1984 (2001).

63 *Philoc. praef.* (p. 1 Robinson; SC 302, 162): *Ἐκλογὴν ἢ παροῦσα περιέχει βιβλος γραφικῶν ζητημάτων καὶ ἐπιλύσεων ἐκ διαφόρων βιβλίων τῷ Ὀριγῆνι πονηθεισῶν ἠθροισμένην.*

64 For this literary feature in Origen's writings, see Lorenzo Perrone, "Quaestiones et responsiones" in *Origène: Prospettive di un'analisi formale dell'argomentazione esegetico-teologica*, in: *CNS 15* (1994) 1–50; id., *Perspectives sur Origène et la littérature patristique des "Quaestiones et responsiones"*, in: Gilles Dorival / Alain Le Boulluec (eds.), *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible* (BETL 118), Leuven 1995, 151–164.

65 The anathemas of 543 are added to Justinian's *Treatise against Origen*: Schwartz, *ACO III*, p. 213f. = p. 116–118; Melot/Migliardi/Zingales. The anathemas of 553 are edited in Johannes Straub, *ACO IV/1*, Berlin 1971, 248f. See now the edition of these anathemas with German translation and notes in Fürst/Karman, *Verurteilung des Origenes* (n. 1) 228–233 and 240–247.

# Origen against Origen?

## The Paradoxical Legacy of Origen in Athanasius' Exegesis of Prov. 8:22 in *Contra Arianos* II

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### 1. Athanasius and Origen: A Complex Relationship

The question of how to interpret Origen rightly no doubt was a central part of the doctrinal controversy during the first half of the fourth century. The disputed status of Origen's teaching was already evident at the beginning of the century, in Pamphilus' *Apologia pro Origene*,<sup>1</sup> gaining further centrality later in the polemical exchanges in the period following the Council of Nicaea. We know Marcellus of Ancyra certainly built into his polemic against Asterius of Cappadocia and Paulinus of Tyre the question regarding the misappropriation of Origen's teachings in support of heretical 'Arian' teaching.<sup>2</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, in turn, criticised Marcellus' handling of the Alexandrian master and spelled out at some length his opponent's misappropriation of Origen's teaching.<sup>3</sup> The misuse of Origen therefore was an important strategy to rebut one's doctrinal opponents in this period. While many fell short of Pamphilus' unreserved affirmation of Origen's teachings as authoritative and orthodox, theologians in this period generally recognised the power behind the name 'Origen.' Hence, each was quick to criticise potential abuses of the use of Origen in support of doctrinal causes perceived as problematic.

1 On Pamphilus' *Apology* as a document of the disputed status of Origen's teaching in the fourth century, see Rowan Williams, *Damnosa haereditas: Pamphilus' Apology and the Reputation of Origen*, in: Hanns Christof Brønnecke / Ernst Ludwig Graßmück / Christoph Marckschies (eds.), *Logos: Festschrift für Luise Abramowski (BZNW 67)*, Berlin / New York 1993, 151–169.

2 Marcellus' critique of Paulinus is quoted in Eusebius, *Marcell. I* 4,18–20 (GCS Eus. 4, 21). On Paulinus and Marcellus' critique, see Markus Vinzent, *Origenes als Subscriptum: Paulinus von Tyrus und die origenistische Diadoche*, in: Wolfgang A. Biener / Uwe Kühnweg (eds.), *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts (BETL 137)*, Leuven 1999, 149–157. See also in the same volume Alastair H. B. Logan, *Marcellus of Ancyra on Origen and Arianism*, in: *ibid.* 159–163.

3 For Eusebius' rebuttal of Marcellus' use of Origen, see esp. Eusebius, *Marcell. I* 4,26f. (GCS Eus. 4, 23).

It is within this doctrinal landscape where we find Athanasius' cautious and calculated endorsement of Origen as the forerunner of the Nicene Orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup> In *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 27,1, he writes:

“As to the Word's being eternally coexistent with the Father and not of another essence or subsistence but belonging to the essence of the Father, as those in the council said, you may hear this also from the diligent Origen. Those things which he has written by way of enquiry and speculation one should not take as his own beliefs but of those who are engaged in the contention of an enquiry that is undertaken with a view to debate. But it is the declarations that he makes when he is defining matters freely which represent the mind of that diligent one.”<sup>5</sup>

After this opening statement, Athanasius cites two passages likely from *De principiis* IV 4,1 to prove that Nicene teaching could be traced back as far as Origen. It is scarcely believable that Athanasius was unaware that the status of Origen's teaching by this time was a highly contentious matter. The cautious tone in the above passage indicates Athanasius' hesitation regarding Origen's somewhat speculative bent, revealing his unease about offering an unreserved endorsement of Origen. Nonetheless, Athanasius made his message clear: despite the disputed authority of Origen's teaching, and despite the fact that other interpretations of Origen's thought were available at the time, he is best understood as in-line with the brand of Nicene Orthodoxy defended by Athanasius himself. The fourth century Alexandrian bishop, then, was keen to stake his claim on the name of Origen, implying that his predecessor's theology is most appropriately understood in line with the Nicene Orthodoxy, and thus by implication, his own theology.

But how seriously should we take Athanasius' claim? In other words, to what extent was Origen's theology a precursor to the pro-Nicene theology constructed and exemplified by Athanasius?<sup>6</sup> The relationship between Origen and Athanasius is a significant question for evaluating the former's legacy for pro-Nicene theology in the fourth century more generally since the latter is usually identified as the champion of the confession of Nicaea. The task to evaluate this question is complicated by the observation that Origen's thought might also be put forward as a forerunner of the anti-Nicene tradition.<sup>7</sup> So the reality regarding Origen's leg-

4 Athanasius, *decr.* 27,1–3 (*AW* 2/1, 23 f.).

5 *Ibid.* 27,1 (2/1, 23). Translation: p. 166 Anatolios.

6 This view is defended with rigour and erudition by Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line*, in: *VigChr* 65 (2011) 21–49. In the most recent comprehensive study of Origen's Trinitarian theology, Christoph Bruns, *Trinität und Kosmos: Zur Gotteslehre des Origenes* (Adamantina 3), Münster 2013, the author also concludes with a similar perspective that Origen should be regarded as an ancestor of the Nicene faith.

7 On the relationship between Origen and Arius, see Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK 2001, 131–148. See also the earlier work by Ru-

acy in the fourth century is a great deal more complex. Naturally, one should suspect any claim that Origen is best aligned with the pro-Nicene or the anti-Nicene tradition *tout court*. Hence, Athanasius' claim to inherit the 'tradition' passed on from Origen should be critically assessed. To do so, it is necessary to interrogate the precise nature of the relationship between the theologies of Athanasius and Origen. Scholars who have undertaken the considerable task of comparing the two Alexandrians' theologies have inclined to think that the reality is much more complex than the picture painted in *De decretis*. Wolfgang Bienert is surely right when he remarked that Athanasius handled Origen as a reputable authority, albeit independently and critically, and in light of his own commitment to the confession of Nicaea.<sup>8</sup> In drawing from Origen's thought, Athanasius' main concern was to open up the possibility of aligning his illustrious predecessor with the Nicene faith. It is not unreasonable, then, to suggest that what we have in Athanasius is an 'Origen Athanasianised,' where the emphasis here is placed on how Athanasius re-moulded the Origenian materials to fit them in line with his own theological vision. As Bienert has highlighted, the achievement of Athanasius' reception of Origen is that the legacy of Origen was subsequently entwined with that of his own "to an indissoluble unity."<sup>9</sup>

But the crucial question remains: what, then, is the nature of Athanasius' re-moulding of Origen's theology? Two eminent Athanasius scholars have offered clarifications on this issue. Working within the 'Origen Athanasianised' picture, Charles Kannengiesser has spelled out in further details how Athanasius' claim to Origen's heritage must be square with the fact that the fourth century bishop's theology also departed significantly from his Alexandrian predecessor.<sup>10</sup> Analysing Athanasius' two citations of Origen in *De decretis* 27, Kannengiesser notes how these excerpts from Origen were carefully selected and integrated by Athanasius into his anti-Arian theology, found also in the *Contra Arianos* I 11–20. Close comparison between the themes in Origen's texts and Athanasius' own anti-Arian theology reveals that the latter's own mature defence of pro-Nicene theology was "completely imbued with Origenian motifs."<sup>11</sup> This closeness to Origen, however, must be further qualified due to the doctrine of salvation taking a central place

dolf Lorenz, Arius Judaizans? Untersuchungen zur dogmengeschichtlichen Einordnung des Arius (FKDG 31), Göttingen 1984, 67–94.

8 Wolfgang A. Bienert, Athanasius von Alexandrien und Origenes, in: Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXVI*, Leuven 1993, 360–364.

9 Ibid. 364: "[...] das Erbe des Origenes mit dem des Athanasius zu unlösbarer Einheit verschmolzen ist."

10 Charles Kannengiesser, Das Vermächtnis des "fleißigen" Origenes zur Theologie des Athanasius, in: Bienert/Kühnweg, *Origeniana Septima* (n. 2) 173–181.

11 Ibid. 179: "Somit mag es klar sein, dass das doppelte Zitat des Origenes in *De decretis* einer athanasianischen Beweisführung der traditionellen Gültigkeit des Nizänums angehört, die völlig von origenischen Motiven durchtränkt ist."

in Athanasius' thought. Soteriology, in Athanasius, has been detached from the cosmological framework in which it was conceived in Origen's thought: "Mais le cosmos religieux lui-même ne présentait plus d'intérêt majeur, ni n'imposait de normes pour comprendre l'homme et sa redemption."<sup>12</sup> Any inheritance of Origen's thinking by Athanasius, Kannengiesser argues, was disciplined by the urge to orient all theological arguments by the soteriological consideration of the divine incarnation. In this way, Athanasius might be said to have carried out an "incarnational update" ("inkarnatorische Aktualisierung") of Origen.<sup>13</sup>

Kannengiesser's analysis characterises the nature of Athanasius's remoulding of Origen in terms of a shift in theological orientation, which in turn transposes 'Origenian' motifs into a new theological key. Khaled Anatolios, though, has offered a rather different way to conceptualise the remoulding of Origen in Athanasius.<sup>14</sup> Comparing Athanasius and Origen on the God-world relation, Anatolios notes that Origen's argument for the eternal existence of creation was modified by Athanasius to argue for the eternal existence of the Son of God. But in doing so, Athanasius was radicalising and extending, rather than negating, the key principles latent in Origen's own account of the God-world relation. Anatolios offered two observations to substantiate this claim, based primarily on comparing Origen's *De principiis* and Athanasius' *Contra Arianos* I. First, Athanasius radicalises Origen's insistence that God's relation to creation as Creator is through wisdom, e.g. grounded on creative agency exercised through wisdom, by using this same principle to argue for the transcendence of the Son over creation.<sup>15</sup> Since God creates through wisdom, his Son, Athanasius takes this point further than Origen to establish the Son's co-transcendence with the Father over creation. Second, Athanasius radicalises Origen's insistence of the priority of the intra-divine relation over the God-world relation. Here, Athanasius indeed corrects Origen's doctrine of eternal creation, but in doing so, he actually applies more strictly Origen's own insistence (the first point above) that the God-world relation is contained already through Wisdom. If God's creative agency is already fully contained in wisdom, then divine sovereignty (for God to be 'almighty') does not need to be secured by positing the actuality of creation, but simply by positing the actuality of the

12 Id., *Le Verbe de Dieu selon Athanase d'Alexandrie*, in: LTP 45 (1989) 229–242, here 242. This conclusion was already reached, in a detail study on the exegesis of Prov. 8:22 in the first centuries, by Manlio Simonetti, *Studi sull'arianesimo* (VSen 5), Rome 1965, 66: "[...] ma le questioni cosmologiche interessano poco il vescovo alessandrino, poco incline alle speculazioni filosofiche. Il suo interesse è per l'uomo, la sua condizione, il suo destino."

13 Kannengiesser, *Vermächtnis des "fleißigen" Origenes* (n. 10) 18.

14 Khaled Anatolios, *Theology and Economy in Origen and Athanasius*, in: *Biener t / Kühne weg*, *Origeniana Septima* (n. 2) 165–171.

15 This move forms part of Athanasius' reconstruction of divine transcendence, documented elsewhere in id., *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*, Grand Rapids MI 2012, 104 f.

‘power’ of the Son, e. g. the eternal hypostatic existence of the Son as the power of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:25), independently of the actual existence of creation. Based on these observations, Anatolios suggests that Athanasius’ remoulding of Origen’s thought might be conceptualised not in terms stressing discontinuity (reversal) but continuity (radicalisation and extension).<sup>16</sup> In his use of Origen, Athanasius in a sense ‘out-Origened’ Origen himself.

‘Origen updated’ (Kannengiesser) and ‘Origen out-Origened’ (Anatolios) offer two conceptual models to gain a more precise and critical understanding of Origen’s legacy in Athanasius’ theology. But it is difficult to imagine these models suffice to cover all important aspects of this complex relationship. In this essay, I wish to identify yet another important aspect of Origen’s legacy in Athanasius: ‘Origen against Origen.’ Besides shifting the theological core of Origen’s thought away from cosmological to soteriological considerations (as suggested by Kannengiesser), and radicalising and extending Origen’s own principles (as suggested by Anatolios), this essay suggests that it is also possible for Athanasius to make use of a theological principle central to Origen to reach a conclusion that is diametrically opposite to that reached by Origen. I shall turn to illustrate this point by revisiting Athanasius’ and Origen’s respective exegeses of Prov. 8:22, the central text in early Christian doctrinal controversies from the third to the fourth century. It will be stressed that a closer look at how Athanasius appropriated the exegetical legacy of Origen will put in greater resolution Athanasius’ departure from Origen.<sup>17</sup> This essay will conclude by proposing a possible conceptual framework that will shed light on the phenomenon of ‘Origen against Origen’ in Athanasius’ exegesis of Prov. 8:22.

## 2. Origen on ‘Wisdom’ as a Christological Title in Prov. 8:22

In Book I of the *Commentary on John*, Origen articulated an exegetical principle that will become central also for Athanasius.<sup>18</sup> Commenting on 1 Cor. 1:30, where we read “Christ Jesus, who became for us (*ἡμῖν*) wisdom from God, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption,”<sup>19</sup> Origen finds it important to clarify

16 Id., *Theology and Economy* (n. 14) 171: “In this way, Athanasius corrects Origen even while remaining within the framework of the latter’s doctrine; his correction amounts not to a reversal but rather to a radicalization and extension of Origen’s own principles [...]”

17 Hence I am naturally sceptical to Kannengiesser’s suggestive remark that a closer look at how Athanasius appropriated the exegetical legacy of Origen might in fact reveal his closeness to Origen when it comes to Prov. 8:22. See Kannengiesser, *Vermächtnis des “fleißigen” Origenes* (n. 10) 18f.

18 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* I 34,248–251 (SC 120, 182–185).

19 *Ibid.* I 34,248 (120, 182): *Ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ, ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἀγιασμός καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις.* Translation: Heine, *FaCh* 80, 83f.

the significance of the ἡμῖν in this passage. Why is this little qualifier deemed necessary by the apostle Paul? According to Origen, the ἡμῖν in this verse indicates an important hermeneutical principle for grasping the precise sense attributed to different Christological titles in Scripture. Some titles in Scripture receive further qualifications because the divine Word wishes to indicate that these titles were attributed to Christ for the salvation of mankind. Here, as Ronald Heine has helpfully pointed out, Origen is taking the ἡμῖν as a dative of advantage.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Christological titles such as ‘sanctification’ and ‘redemption’ in this verse indicate that Christ took on these titles for us, implying that they might not by nature, as it were, belong to Christ.

But Origen notes an additional issue when it comes to ‘wisdom’ in this verse. Is it also a title said of Christ purely ‘for us,’ given that it was included in 1 Cor. 1:30? This question arises naturally because earlier in Book I of the *Commentary on John*, Origen had already set out a discussion on wisdom as the only appropriate sense in which Christ is a beginning. Furthermore, Origen notes that 1 Cor. 1:25, “Christ the wisdom and power of God,” suggests that ‘wisdom’ may also be said of Christ in an unqualified manner (ἀπλῶς) in Scripture. In light of this discussion of 1 Cor. 1:30, Origen offers a resolution: perhaps some titles in Scripture are said *purely* for us, that is, attributed to Christ only for our salvation. Other titles, like ‘wisdom,’ were said to be ‘for us’ (as in 1 Cor. 1:30) but in another sense also applies to Christ simply, that is, without qualification (as in 1 Cor. 1:25).

Origen’s Christological exegesis of 1 Cor. 1:30 here alludes to an important hermeneutical rule, first discussed systematically in *Ioh. comm.* I 20,19–124,<sup>21</sup> that will aid the Christian exegete to obtain the appropriate sense of any Christological titles in Scripture.<sup>22</sup> According to this rule, there are titles appropriately said of Christ apart from his role in the salvific economy. For even if there had been no Fall, Christ would still be ‘wisdom.’ Other titles are appropriately said of Christ only because he took on these solely for our benefits. If there was no need for the economy of salvation, these titles would no longer be appropriately said of Christ since they were taken on purely ‘for us.’ For instance, if there had been no Fall – hence no lost sheep to be found or patients to be healed – then it would not

20 Heine, *ibid.* n. 362.

21 On Origen’s discussion of this principle, see Alfons Fürst, *Spiritual Life and Philosophical Reason: Features of Philosophical Exegesis in Origen’s Commentary on John*, in: Anna Usacheva/Anders-Christian Jacobsen (eds.), *Christian Discourse in Late Antiquity: Hermeneutical, Institutional and Textual Perspectives*, Paderborn 2020, 109–123, esp. 121f.

22 As a further clarification, it is clear that for Origen, the following titles should be attributed to Christ ‘simply.’ Classic examples remain ‘truth’ (Jn. 14:6, “I am the truth:” in *Ioh. comm.* VI 6,37–39 [SC 157, 156–159]), ‘power’ and ‘wisdom’ (1 Cor. 1:24, “Christ the wisdom and power of God:” in *Eph. frg.* 1,12–18 [p235 Gr egg]).

remain appropriate to call Christ ‘shepherd’ and ‘physician.’ Elsewhere, Origen suggests that these titles taken on by Christ ‘for us’ contain a sense of ‘becoming’ absent in titles said of Christ ‘simply,’ such as Word.<sup>23</sup> Since titles that Christ took on ‘because of us’ (δι’ ἡμᾶς) are precisely those that ‘came to be,’ lacking a sense of permanence and eternity, it is not surprising that Origen concludes that these titles said of Christ purely ‘for us’ would not remain if the Fall had not occurred.

This hermeneutical rule is foundational for Origen’s whole approach to Christological titles in Scripture, especially in his Christological exegesis of Prov. 8:22. As we have seen, Origen regards wisdom as a title said of Christ both ‘simply’ and ‘for us.’ This view is further confirmed in a passage from Book II of the *Commentary on John*:

“We must know, however, that the Savior has some things not for himself (οὐχ αὐτῷ) but for others (ἑτέροις), and that he has some things for himself (αὐτῷ) and for others (ἑτέροις). And we must inquire if he has some things for himself (ἑαυτῷ) and for no one else (οὐδενί). It is clear that he is a ‘shepherd’ for others, since he receives no profit for himself from being a shepherd, as those do who are shepherds among men, unless indeed one reckons that the benefit those receive who are shepherded is his benefit because of his love for men. He is also a ‘way’ for others, and so too a ‘door,’ and a ‘rod.’ But he is ‘wisdom’ for himself and others, and perhaps this is true also of ‘Word’ (ἑαυτῷ δὲ καὶ ἑτέροις ‘σοφία,’ τάχα δὲ καὶ ‘λόγος’).<sup>24</sup>

At the exegetical level, what this amounts to is that for Origen, sometimes Scripture attributes the title ‘wisdom’ to Christ in an unqualified manner whereas other times, it attributes this title to Christ in a qualified manner. The important question, then, when it comes to Prov. 8:22, is to discern whether Origen regards Scripture as speaking in an unqualified manner, or ‘for us,’ when it speaks of Christ as wisdom.

Origen’s exegesis of Prov. 8:22, as Manlio Simonetti has highlighted, is bound up with his concern to understand the sense in which Christ is a ‘beginning’ (ἀρχή).<sup>25</sup> For Origen, it is only as ‘wisdom’ that Christ is most properly said to be

23 This point is made abundantly clear from Origen’s comparison between Word and Life in Book II of the *Commentary on John*: in Ioh. comm. II 1,8–11(SC 120, 212–214) and II 18,127–19,132 (120, 290–294).

24 Ibid. II 18,12f. (120, 290–292): Χρῆ μέντοι γε εἰδέναι ὅτι τινὰ ὁ σωτὴρ οὐχ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν ἀλλ’ ἑτέροις, τινὰ δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ ἑτέροις· ζητητέον δὲ εἰ τινὰ ἑαυτῷ καὶ οὐδενί. Σαφῶς μὲν γὰρ ἑτέροις ἐστὶν ‘ποιμὴν,’ οὐχ ὡς οἱ παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ποιμένες ὄνησιν ἐκ τοῦ ποιμαίνειν εἰς ἑαυτὸν λαμβάνων, εἰ μὴ ἄρα τὴν τῶν ποιμαινομένων ὠφέλειαν διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν ἰδίαν εἶναι λογίσαιτο. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ‘ὁδός’ ἐστὶν ἑτέροις ὁμοίως καὶ ‘θύρα,’ ὁμολογουμένως δὲ καὶ ‘ῥάβδος.’ ἑαυτῷ δὲ καὶ ἑτέροις ‘σοφία,’ τάχα δὲ καὶ ‘λόγος.’ Translation: Heine, FaCh 80, 127f.

25 Simonetti pointed out that Origen’s overall interest in Prov. 8:22 insofar as this passage clarifies the sense in which wisdom is the beginning of all things amounts to a key reason to

a beginning. For it is as wisdom that Christ is most appropriately understood as creator: “But it is as the beginning that Christ is creator, according to which he is wisdom. Therefore as wisdom he is called the beginning. For wisdom says in Solomon, ‘God created me the beginning of his ways for his works,’ that ‘the Word’ might be ‘in the beginning,’ in wisdom.”<sup>26</sup>

Hence Origen reads Prov. 8:22 as primarily indicating the sense in which Christ is the beginning of all things. This conclusion gains further support by the use of Prov. 8:22 in the following passage:

“But if someone is able to comprehend an incorporeal existence (*ἀσώματον ὑπόστασιν*) comprised of the various ideas which embrace the principles of the universe, an existence which is living and animate, as it were, he will understand the wisdom of God which precedes all creation (*τὴν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν κτίσιν σοφίαν τοῦ θεοῦ*), which appropriately says of herself, ‘God created me the beginning of his ways for his works.’ It is because of this creation that the whole creation has also been able to subsist, since it has a share in the divine wisdom according to which it has been created, for according to the Prophet David, God made ‘all things in wisdom.’<sup>27</sup>

According to this passage, Prov. 8:22 refers to one who precedes all creation, i. e. as a beginning. Such a one is an incorporeal, eternally brought forth, *hypostasis* from God. The subject-matter of Prov. 8:22 for Origen is therefore unmistakable clear: Proverbs teaches the coming forth of wisdom from God, in whom God made all things.

So far, I have clarified the Christological meaning Origen draws from Prov. 8:22, namely, it is as ‘wisdom’ that Christ is a ‘beginning.’ But it is not entirely clear yet whether he regards Scripture as speaking in an unqualified manner, or ‘for us,’ in this passage. To probe this question further, we need to first note that Origen regards wisdom as ‘beginning’ also in a different sense, namely, as the first in the series of Christological titles. This is evident from *Commentary on John I 31,222* where we find another instance of Origen’s exegesis of Prov. 8:22:

“And again the same one is beginning and end, but he is not the same insofar as the aspects are concerned. For he is the beginning insofar as he is wisdom, as we have learned in Prov-

suspect that Rufinus might have added *quomodo creata esse dicitur* to princ. I 2,3 (GCS Orig. 5,30) to stress that Origen was concerned to clarify also the sense in Prov. 8:22 according to which wisdom is ‘created.’ This latter concern likely came from Rufinus’ own later fourth century context than Origen’s own. See Simonetti, *Studi sull’arianesimo* (n. 12)23.

26 In Ioh. comm. I 19,111 (SC 120, 118–120). Translation: Heine, FaCh 80, 56 f.

27 Ibid. I 34,244 (120, 180): *Εἰ δὲ τις οἶός τέ ἐστιν ἀσώματον ὑπόστασιν ποικίλων θεωρημάτων περιεχόντων τοὺς τῶν ὄλων λόγους ζῶσαν καὶ οἰονεὶ ἔμψυχον ἐπινοεῖν, εἴσεται τὴν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν κτίσιν σοφίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καλῶς περὶ αὐτῆς λέγουσαν· ‘Ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισέ με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ.’ Δι’ ἣν κτίσιν δεδύνηται καὶ πᾶσα κτίσις ὑφεστάναι, οὐκ ἀνένδοχος οὐσα θείας σοφίας, καθ’ ἣν γηγένηται. Translation: ibid. 83.*

erbs. Therefore it has been written, ‘God created me the beginning of his ways for his works.’ But insofar as he is Word he is not the beginning, for ‘in the beginning was the Word.’ Her aspects, therefore, have a beginning, and something that is second beyond the beginning, and third, and so on to the end. It is as if he had said, ‘I am the beginning insofar as I am wisdom,’ and second, if there should be such, ‘insofar as I am invisible,’ and third, ‘insofar as I am life,’ since ‘what came to be in him was life.’<sup>28</sup>

We have seen that Origen regards wisdom as the most proper sense in which Christ is said to be beginning. But Christ is not only the beginning of all things. According to this passage, the aspects (*ἐπίνοιαι*) of Christ also have their beginning in wisdom. Origen’s understanding of Christological titles therefore contains an inbuilt ordering, according to which wisdom comes first. Origen justifies positing such an ordering from the use of ‘in’ by Scripture. It is as wisdom that Christ is beginning (Prov. 8:22). Jn. 1:1 further establishes that ‘Word’ is the second Christological title after wisdom since the Word was “*in* the beginning,” a phrase Origen interprets to mean that the ‘Word’ was not the beginning itself but rather is “*in* wisdom.” Jn. 1:3 then further establishes ‘life’ as the third Christological title in the ordering “what came to be *in* him was life,” a phrase that Origen interprets to mean that ‘life’ came to be in the ‘Word.’ This ordering of Christological titles offers a way to clarify Origen’s application of his hermeneutical rule sketched out above to Prov. 8:22. In *Commentary on John I* 19,123, Origen contemplates whether there will be so many Christological titles if the Fall had not occurred:

“Once we have collected the titles of the Son, therefore, we must test which of them came into existence later, and whether they would have become so numerous if the saints had begun and continued in blessedness. For perhaps wisdom alone would remain, or word, or life, and by all means truth, but surely not also the other titles which he took in addition because of us.”<sup>29</sup>

It is significant that according to the above passage, the first title that would remain, had there not been a Fall, is wisdom, then Word, then life, etc. In other words, Origen’s speculation on this point proceeds according to the inbuilt order-

28 Ibid. I 31,22f. (120,168): Πάλιν δὲ ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος ὁ αὐτός, ἀλλ’ οὐ κατὰ τὰς ἐπινοίας ὁ αὐτός. Ἀρχὴ γάρ, ὡς ἐν ταῖς παροιμίαις μεμαθήκαμεν, καθ’ ὃ σοφία τυγχάνει, ἐστὶ γέγραπται γοῦν· Ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισέ με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ· καθ’ ὃ δὲ λόγος ἐστίν, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρχή· Ἐν ἀρχῇ γάρ ἦν ὁ λόγος· Οὐκοῦν αἱ ἐπίνοιαι αὐτοῦ ἔχουσιν ἀρχὴν καὶ δευτέρον τι παρὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τρίτον καὶ οὕτως μέχρι τέλους· ὡσεὶ ἔλεγεν· ἀρχὴ εἰμι καθ’ ὃ σοφία εἰμι, δεύτερον δέ, εἰ οὕτω τύχοι, καθ’ ὃ ἀόρατός εἰμι, καὶ τρίτον καθ’ ὃ ζωὴ, ἐπεὶ ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν· Translation: *ibid.* 77 f.

29 Ibid. I 19,123(120,122): Βασιανιστέον οὖν συναγαγόντα τὰς ὀνομασίας τοῦ υἱοῦ, ποῖα αὐτῶν ἐπιγεγόνασιν οὐκ ἂν ἐν μακαριότητι ἀρξαμένων καὶ μεινάντων τῶν ἁγίων γενόμεναι τὰ τοιαῦτα. Τὰχα γὰρ σοφία ἔμενε μόνον ἢ καὶ λόγος ἢ καὶ ζωὴ, πάντως δὲ καὶ ἀλήθεια· οὐ μὴν δὲ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὅσα δι’ ἡμᾶς προσείληφε. Translation: *ibid.* 59.

ing of Christological titles we have seen previously. Given that Origen is willing to speculate that these titles would remain had there been no Fall (and hence no need for the economy of salvation), it is safe to conclude that he regards these titles as most appropriately said of Christ ‘simply,’ that is, without further qualification with respect to the economy of salvation. Further, if there is one scriptural title most deservingly be said of Christ ‘simply,’ then it must be wisdom since this title, out of all Christological titles, is as Origen said elsewhere “older than all the concepts in the names of the firstborn of all creation.”<sup>30</sup> There is a sense, then, that wisdom, as the ‘beginning’ in the sense of Prov. 8:22, belongs most absolutely and indispensably to Christ.

From this consideration, we must conclude that Origen interprets Prov. 8:22 as speaking of Christ as wisdom in an unqualified manner, ‘simply’ (ἀπλῶς), independent of his benefit ‘for us’ (ἡμῖν), such that one could contemplate even if there was no need for Christ to be wisdom ‘for us,’ he would remain to be wisdom in the sense of Prov. 8:22. For Origen, this passage, unlike passages such as Jn. 1:3 on ‘life,’ does not refer to the aspects of Christ related to his taking on flesh in the economy of salvation. The latter reading, however, is at the heart of Athanasius’ *Contra Arianos* II, arising, paradoxically, after he applies the very same hermeneutical principle that governs Origen’s own Christological exegesis of Prov. 8:22.

### 3. Athanasius on ‘Wisdom’ as a Christological Title in Prov. 8:22

In *Contra Arianos* II, Athanasius famously set out a lengthy discussion of Prov. 8:22 in an attempt to decisively combat ‘Arian’ theology. In the middle of this discourse, at the heart of his argument, Athanasius draws on a distinction we have just seen in Origen. In *Contra Arianos* II 53, Athanasius explains:

“This then is the manner of Divine Scripture: When it refers to the origination of the Word according to the flesh, it points out also the reason why he became human. But when he speaks about his divinity and when his servants proclaim this divinity, then everything is said in simple terms and in an unqualified sense and without any reason added.”<sup>31</sup>

At the heart of Athanasius’ exegesis of Prov. 8:22 is his conviction that the controversial verb, *ἔκτισε*, ‘created,’ should be read economically, that is, referring to

30 Ibid. I 19,118 (120, 122). Translation: ibid. 58.

31 Athanasius, Ar. II 53,4 (AW 1/1,230): *Καὶ τοῦτο ἔθος ἐστὶ τῆ θείας γραφῆς· ὅταν μὲν γὰρ σημαίνει τὴν κατὰ σάρκα γένεσιν τοῦ λόγου, τίθησι καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν, δι’ ἣν γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος· ὅταν δὲ περὶ τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ αὐτὸς τε λέγῃ καὶ οἱ τούτου θεράποντες ἐπαγγέλλωσι, πάντα ἀπλῆ τῆ λέξει ἀπολελυμένη τε διανοίᾳ καὶ οὐδὲν μετὰ συμπεπλεγμένης αἰτίας λέγεται.* Translation: p. 118Anat olios .

Christ's taking on humanity for us.<sup>32</sup> This point is absolutely central to Athanasius' overall anti-Arian polemic because as he reports in *Contra Arianos* II 56, his opponents latched onto this verb to suggest that the Word, Jesus Christ, was a creature (*κτίσμα*).<sup>33</sup> According to Athanasius, his opponents had not sufficiently attended to the way Scripture speaks.

On the one hand, in Prov. 8:22, Athanasius points out that the creation of wisdom was given a further qualification, "as a beginning of his way, for his works." Athanasius takes this qualification to be indisputable evidence for his claim that "the Word spoke thus through Solomon not as signifying the essence of his divinity nor his eternal and genuine generation from the Father, but rather his humanity and accommodation for our sake (*τὸ ἀνθρώπινον καὶ τὴν εἰς ἡμᾶς οἰκονομίαν αὐτοῦ*)."<sup>34</sup> This need for qualification, Athanasius argues, contrasts what we find a few verses on, in Prov. 8:25, where we read "before the hills, he begets me."<sup>35</sup> Here, Athanasius argues, is Scripture speaking of wisdom in simple terms without qualification (*ἀπολελυμένως*), and hence referring to the true being of the eternal Word as 'begotten.' This exegetical observation justifies, for Athanasius, the move to posit a sharp distinction famously advocated by the Nicene creed between 'begotten' and 'made,' the latter to be taken as synonymous with 'created' in Prov. 8:22. The distinction between the matter spoken 'simply' and 'for us' by Scripture, central in Origen's own Christological exegesis, has thus been transposed by Athanasius to support an 'economic' reading of Prov. 8:22, the central move in his construction of an anti-Arian theology.

Without doubt, Athanasius' interpretation of Prov. 8:22 was driven by his soteriological reasoning. In *Contra Arianos* II 55, we find the familiar, typically Athanasian, reasoning that a real assumption of sinful, broken, humanity by the divine was necessary to bring about a real transformation of the *telos* of humanity from death to life.<sup>36</sup> Through the lens of Athanasian soteriology, it is no wonder that he finds it obvious to read Prov. 8:22 as referring to the creation of the human flesh assumed by Christ for us. The humanity assumed by Christ was 'created,' since what is assumed must be exactly in accordance with the nature of humans

32 For a detail examination of Athanasius' exegesis of Prov. 8:22, see Simonetti, *Studi sull'arianesimo* (n. 12) 56–67. See also the PhD dissertation by Allen L. Clayton, *The Orthodox Recovery of a Heretical Proof-Text: Athanasius of Alexandria's Interpretation of Proverbs 8:22–30 in Conflict with the Arians*, Ann Arbor MI 1989.

33 Athanasius, *Ar. II* 56,1 (AW 1/1, 232).

34 *Ibid.* II 45,2 (AW 1/1, 221). Translation: p. 112 Anatholios.

35 Admittedly, in reading Prov. 8:25 as referring to the eternal generation of the Son, Athanasius is following the exegesis of Origen here: in *Hier. hom.* 9,4 (GCS Orig. 3<sup>2</sup>, 70). But this observation further strengthens my claim at a more general level, namely, that Athanasius was able to draw upon Origen's thought to reach an opposite conclusion. For Origen did not find Prov. 8:22 and 8:25 as containing two different Christological meanings.

36 Athanasius, *Ar. II* 55 (AW 1/1, 231 f.).

as creatures. It is then reasonable for Scripture to use the verb ἔκτισε to speak of the incarnation. The intelligibility of Athanasius' exegesis of Prov. 8:22, therefore, is integrally bound up with the *leitmotif* of his theology, namely, his soteriology.<sup>37</sup>

We can now spell out the significance of the distinction between Scripture speaking 'simply' (or in Athanasian's terms, 'without qualification') and 'for us' for Athanasius. This exegetical principle enables Athanasius to kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, it provides a crucial hermeneutical basis for the integration of Prov. 8:22 into part of Athanasian soteriology, as I have just highlighted. On the other hand, by applying this exegetical principle to Prov. 8:22, Athanasius was able to argue, against his opponents, that while we read God 'created' wisdom in this passage, we cannot straight-forwardly conclude that Christ, insofar as he is wisdom, is a creature. Since in speaking of God 'creating' wisdom in Prov. 8:22, Scripture was speaking of something 'for our sake' (εἰς ἡμᾶς) and not 'in simple terms' (ἀπλῆ), it is inappropriate to interpret Prov. 8:22 as teaching that Christ is a creature. Hence the distinction also enabled Athanasius to defend a key exegetical point that he saw as the bottom line against 'Arian' theology.

#### 4. 'Origen against Origen' in Athanasius: A Prospective Account

This brief exploration has reminded us the well-known fact that Athanasius' exegesis of Prov. 8:22 departs from Origen significantly. But I would like to draw a more radical conclusion from this well-treaded ground. It seems to me that what the above analysis has shown is that in Athanasius' exegesis of Prov. 8:22, the application of the same hermeneutical principle for Christological exegesis (i. e. the need to recognise the distinction in Scripture between titles said of Christ 'without qualification' and titles said of Christ 'for us') led to a totally *opposite* conclusion to the one Origen had reached earlier on the same passage. As we have seen, Origen interprets the phrase "as a beginning" in Prov. 8:22 as referring to wisdom as the 'beginning' (ἀρχή), that is creator, of all things, and the first of all Christological aspects. The subject-matter of Prov. 8:22, for Origen, is wisdom as a distinct, incorporeal, *hypostasis* that precedes all creation. On this reading, as I have argued, Origen identifies Prov. 8:22 as Scripture speaking of Christ as wisdom 'simply' without qualification, a sense that Origen speculates would remain even if the Fall had not occurred. Applying the same hermeneutical principle for Christological exegesis, Athanasius however draws the completely opposite con-

37 As Simo net ti, *Studi sull'arianesimo* (n. 12)66, has summed up nicely, Athanasius' interest is "for man, his condition, his destiny." Athanasius' concern to combat Arian reading of Prov. 8:22 was driven by the concern that the denial of the perfect divinity of Christ will lead to the collapse of the whole Christian doctrine of redemption for man, which, as I have pointed out, is integrally connected to the incarnation.

clusion on Prov. 8:22. For him, the phrase “as a beginning” in this passage indicates that Scripture is signalling a further qualification of how Christ as wisdom is ‘created.’ This reading leads Athanasius to conclude that the subject-matter of Prov. 8:22 refers to Christ taking on flesh ‘for our sake.’

In light of this, it seems that here Athanasius cannot be described as simply ‘updating’ Origen’s thought for his own polemical purposes by stressing a different theological emphasis in Prov. 8:22. Rather, what we have here is more accurately described as ‘Origen against Origen,’ that is, the application of a theological principle central in Origen’s Christological exegesis to arrive at a diametrically opposite conclusion to the one reached by Origen using the same principle. This observation demands further precision in the ‘Origen updated’ picture expertly painted by Kannengiesser (can updating lead to straight-forward rejection?).<sup>38</sup> Moreover, it certainly poses a challenge to the ‘Origen out-Origened’ picture painted by Anatolios (does it make sense to speak of Origen being ‘out-Origened’ so as to be speaking against himself?). This brief exploration on Prov. 8:22 thus suggests that a fuller account of the theological relationship between the two Alexandrians will have to take into account the fact that at times, Athanasius was able to use Origen against Origen.

Peter Widdicombe, in comparing Athanasius’ and Origen’s understanding of the Fatherhood of God, turns to the difference between the two theologians’ respective polemical contexts to account for the significant difference in their thinking on this theme.<sup>39</sup> Widdicombe’s approach provides a potentially fruitful avenue for clarifying the nature of the discontinuity between Athanasius and Origen on Prov. 8:22 I have highlighted in this essay. This is because the precise nature of the shift in polemical landscape from the third century to the first half of the fourth century may serve as a key factor that accounts for the differences between Origen’s and Athanasius’ exegeses of this passage.

On the one hand, Origen’s approach to Prov. 8:22 must be read in the context of the wider anti-Monarchian polemic in the third century.<sup>40</sup> As Ronald Heine has

38 I do not mean to suggest, though, that Kannengiesser was unable to perceive how Athanasius might reverse Origen’s thinking. This clearly was not the case, as evident in Kannengiesser, *Verbe de Dieu* (n. 12)239. But he tends to lean towards stressing Athanasius’ closeness to the organic themes and elements in Origen’s theology at the expense of underplaying the radical nature of Athanasius’ departure from Origen.

39 In Widdicombe’s case, whereas writing with ‘Arian’ theology in mind Athanasius saw his primary task as securing the divine status of the Son as the centre of the Christian vision of salvation, Origen writing with the Marcionite distinction between Old Testament creator-God and New Testament Father in mind, saw his primary task as securing that God is Father. See Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, Oxford 1994, 250–254.

40 On Monarchianism as the crucial context for reading Origen’s account of the Son’s generation more generally, see Samuel Fernández Eyzaguirre, *La generación del Logos como*

pointed out (and I have argued elsewhere), in the first two books of the *Commentary on John*, Origen's discussion of wisdom as a distinct *hypostasis*, eternally generated from God, in the context of Jn. 1:1 was heavily driven by anti-Monarchian polemic.<sup>41</sup> Due to commitment to monotheism, Monarchians such as Callistus of Rome insisted that Scripture did not refer to a second distinct divine *hypostasis*.<sup>42</sup> Where a second *hypostasis* might be suggested in Scripture in places like Jn. 1:1 or Ps. 44:2 (LXX), the Monarchians insisted that these passages refer to a *λόγος προφορικός*, an uttered word (or sound) that came to be temporally for the purpose of the economy of salvation.<sup>43</sup> Against the Monarchians, in *Commentary on John I*, Origen reduced the centrality of Logos as a Christological title, instead favouring Wisdom as primary.<sup>44</sup> This anti-Monarchian polemic heavily foregrounded Origen's exegesis of Prov. 8:22, treated as a proof-text for his anti-Monarchian doctrine of a second distinct, eternally generated, *hypostasis*. The interpretation of Prov. 8:22 as evidence for this anti-Monarchian doctrine is a signature move of third century anti-Monarchian polemics, as we also find a similar move in Tertullian's *Against Praxeas*.<sup>45</sup> Anti-Monarchianism therefore may supply the crucial polemical background for Origen's insistence that, contrary to Athanasius, Prov. 8:22 speaks of Christ 'simply,' without qualification, insofar as he is wisdom.

On the other hand, in *Contra Arianos II*, Athanasius' approach to Prov. 8:22 seems to be entirely unconcerned by Monarchian exegesis in the same way that Origen was. Rather, Athanasius' exegesis was pre-occupied with rejecting the use of this verse to establish the claim that the Son is a creature (*κτίσμα*).<sup>46</sup> Athana-

solución al problema monarquiano, según Orígenes, in: id./Juan Noemi/Rodrigo Polanco (eds.), *Multifariam: Homenaje a Los Profesores Anneliese Meis, Antonio Bentué y Sergio Silva* (AFTC 1), Santiago de Chile 2010, 193–229. In a forthcoming essay, I argue, based on a detail analysis of extant heresiological reports in Origen's corpus, that his account of the Son's generation (and hence his wider interest in Prov. 8:22) should be situated within his polemic against (a) Valentinian emission (*prolatio*), and (b) two groups (Monarchianism and psilanthropism) that denied the pre-existence of the Son before the incarnation. See Pui Him Ip 'Arianism' *ante litteram* in Origen's Peri Archōn 4.4.1, in: JTS (forthcoming 2021). A systematic analysis of Origen's anti-Monarchian texts is given by Antonio Orbe, *Orígenes y los Monarquianos*, in: Gr. 72 (1991) 39–72.

41 Ronald E. Heine, *Stoic Logic as Handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John*, in: JTS 44 (1993) 90–117.

42 On Callistus' theology, see Ronald E. Heine, *The Christology of Callistus*, in: JTS 49 (1998) 56–91.

43 Ibid. 67f. On the theology of third century Roman bishops more generally, see Markus Vinzent, *From Zephyrinus to Damasus: What Did Roman Bishops Believe?*, in: id. (ed.), *Studia Patristica LXIII*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole 2013, 273–286.

44 See Stephen Waers, *Wisdom Christology and Monarchianism in Origen's Commentary on John*, in: GOTR 60 (2015) 93–118.

45 Tertullian, *adv. Prax.* 6f. (CChr.SL 2, 1164–1167).

46 As indicated by the opening passage in Athanasius' lengthy discussion of this verse in *Ar. II* 44 (AW 1/1, 220f.).

sius, for instance, seems to be unperturbed by the thought that his interpretation of Prov. 8:22 purely economically could be utilised as a scriptural basis for Monarchian theology.<sup>47</sup> The lack of direct concern to preserve a second distinct *hypostasis* alongside God the Father in Athanasius' exegesis of Prov. 8:22 suggests that the anti-Monarchian concern surrounding this passage played a considerably less significant part in Athanasius compared to Origen.<sup>48</sup> Its immediate urgency seems to have disappeared for the fourth century bishop. This shift, then, might account for why Athanasius was able to apply Origen's hermeneutical principle for Christological exegesis on Prov. 8:22 to reach a conclusion that directly contradicts Origen's own interpretation of the same passage reached through applying the same principle.

If this line of thought is on the right track, then explorations on the legacy of anti-Monarchianism in Athanasius offers a theoretical framework that promises a fresh perspective on Origen's legacy in the fourth century Alexandrian bishop more generally.<sup>49</sup> This approach has the advantage of moving beyond a *retrospective* approach to study Origen's legacy in Athanasius which tends to overly focus on comparing the two figures through the lens of the fourth century doctrinal landscape. A retrospective approach tends to be framed around the question to what extent was Origen a precursor of the Nicene theology Athanasius champi-

47 While we do not have extant evidence that Monarchians did so, it is not difficult to imagine that they could interpret Prov. 8:22 in much the same way they read Jn. 1:1 and Ps. 44:2 (LXX). The 'creation' of wisdom would naturally be interpreted as referring to a *λόγος προφορικός*, understood purely economically. Unlike Athanasius, third century theologians such as Tertullian and Origen were clearly aware of the significance of Prov. 8:22 in relation to Monarchian exegesis.

48 Admittedly, a more detail expansion of the thought outlined here needs to further include consideration of Athanasius' relation with Roman theology, as well as his perception of Marcellus of Ancyra's theology might have shaped his relation with 'Monarchian' theology.

49 The approach I am proposing here thus seeks to re-orientate the overall question of Origen's legacy in Athanasius by situating it within the 'master narrative' developed most recently by Samuel Fernández who has argued extensively for rethinking the 'Arian' controversy as an extension of the third century 'Monarchian' controversy, centred around the crucial question concerning the pre-existence of the Son. This conceptual framework provides a more *prospective* viewpoint concerning the relationship between Origen's and Athanasius' respective doctrinal contexts. It also enables a greater resolution on the way doctrinal contexts have shifted from the time of Origen to Athanasius by offering anti-Monarchian affirmation of the distinction between Father and Son as the measure of doctrinal shift in this period. The details of this framework were elaborated by Fernández in his plenary lecture for the XVIII International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford (19–24 August 2019), to be published as Samuel Fernández Eyzaguirre, *The Fourth Century Controversies: Reevaluating the Evidence towards the Next Centenary of Nicaea (325–2025)*, in: *Studia Patristica* (forthcoming). See also id., *¿Crisis Arriana o crisis Monarquiana en el siglo IV? Las críticas de Marcelo de Ancira a Asterio de Capadocia*, in: Markus Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica LXVI*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole 2013, 203–208.

oned or the non-Nicene theology Athanasius opposed. This retrospective orientation, in turn, tends to generate questions on Origen concerning the status of terms or categories disputed later in the fourth century. Did Origen reject the 'Arian' statement *ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ante litteram*? Did Origen affirm the Son as consubstantial with the Father? Did Origen term the Son a 'creature'?

The alternative approach suggested here might be termed a *prospective* approach, as it shifts the focus instead on probing the relationship between the two Alexandrians by understanding how key elements of Origen's third century doctrinal landscape might have shifted in significance for Athanasius. Such an approach generates a new set of questions framed around to what extent polemical concerns central in Origen retained their centrality in Athanasius. Did Athanasius consider it essential to safeguard an anti-Monarchian emphasis on the Son as a second distinct *hypostasis* in his exegesis of passages such as Jn. 1:1f., Ps. 44:2 (LXX), Prov. 8:22f., etc.? Did Athanasius' account of the Father–Son relation continue to see the task as steering a *via media* between Valentinian *prolatio* and Monarchianism?<sup>50</sup> As I have suggested, the re-configuration of the polemical landscape from the third to the fourth century may well account for why Athanasius' theology diverged on crucial points from Origen, despite attending closely to his predecessor's theological approach nonetheless. It is my hope that this suggestion will be explored and scrutinised further by scholars in future studies on Origen's legacy in Athanasius.

50 In my forthcoming monograph, I have argued extensively that it is by situating Origen's account of the Father–Son relation with respect to this twin polemical context that will enable Origen's Trinitarian thought to be understood in its own third century context. See Pui Him Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea* (forthcoming).

# Origen, Didymus and Theodore on the Literal Sense

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Did the fathers distinguish between typology and allegory? The absence of the word *τυπολογία* from both Liddell and Scott's *Greek Lexicon* and Lampe's *Patristic Lexicon* suggests that they had no vocabulary for doing so; most discussions therefore assume that if we invoke the distinction it will be for our own heuristic purposes, whether we are extolling the typological method of Antioch at the expense of Alexandrian allegoresis or inquiring which of these methods corresponds to the soul and which to the Spirit of Scripture in Origen's *On First Principles*. And of course, the first approach loses even its heuristic value if we join the many scholars who have given up the (admittedly modern) dichotomy between the Antiochene and the Alexandrian traditions of exegesis.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I shall maintain that there were indeed two traditions, and that Alexandria was indeed more hospitable than Antioch both to the term *ἀλληγορία* and to the practices that it denoted, while there were some among the Antiochenes who contrasted the undesirable practice of allegory with the licit use of types. I shall none the less conclude that while the Alexandrians were indifferent to this distinction, they were also seldom vulnerable to the strictures which were passed on nameless allegorists by Theodore of Mopsuestia, and were commonly as wary as he was of substituting new terms for those of the text when their aim was to ascertain its primary and mandatory sense.

## 1. Type vs Allegory in the Antiochene Tradition

We have at least one clear statement, from an exegete of influence and distinction, that the use of types is not in normal parlance an allegory. We might be surprised indeed, in view of the current profusion of studies on the work of John Chrysostom, that this important text has not been quoted more often: "He has used the word *ἀλληγορία* loosely (*καταχρηστικῶς*) to denote the type. What he is saying is this: 'the historical truth is as given, but it does not signify only that

1 For judicious criticism of this dichotomy, see Frances M. Young, *Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis*, in: Alan J. Hauser / Duane F. Watson (eds.), *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 1: *The Ancient Period*, Grand Rapids MI 2003, 334–354.

which is obvious.<sup>2</sup> Hence he has given it the name allegory.<sup>3</sup> Chrysostom seems to foresee that his readers will need some assurance that Paul is not denying the historical veracity of the Old Testament; he also foresees that they will have no objection to the figurative reading of a historical text so long as its veracity is affirmed.

Theodoret of Cyrus, whose comments on Paul's letters read at times like abridgements of Chrysostom, addresses the fears of his audience more directly by saying that Paul does not disavow the history but explains what is prefigured (*προτυπωθέντα*) in the Biblical narrative. Where Chrysostom used the noun *ἀλληγορία*, Theodoret reproduces Paul's own term *ἀλληγορούμενα* – not the noun but the participle, not a mode of writing but a mode of appropriation, or as Theodoret himself has it, of “conceiving otherwise.”<sup>3</sup> This is not semantically identical with Marius Victorinus' definition of allegory as the trope whereby one thing is said and another is intended.<sup>4</sup> This implies that the plain sense should be discarded in favour of the hidden sense, whereas Theodoret plainly understands Paul to mean that the figurative (and in this case higher) sense of the Scriptures is to be embraced alongside the literal one.

## 2. Theodore vs Alexandria?

John Chrysostom lightly intimates that ‘allegory’ is not the proper term for exegesis when performed on Christian principles; his audacious friend and fellow-bishop, Theodore of Mopsuestia, makes Gal. 4:24 the pretext for a salvo against an abuse of Paul's vocabulary, which he evidently believes to be all too common:

“There are some who make it their business to pervert the meaning of the divine Scriptures and to steal away all that is contained in them, or rather to devise some absurd conceits of their own while giving the name of allegory to their ravings. Abusing this locution of the apostle's as if they might seem to derive from it the power to annul every tenet of the divine Scripture, they undertake to speak *through allegory* after the manner of the apostle; yet they themselves fail to perceive how great a difference there is between their own discourse and that of the apostle. For the apostle does not deny the history or pick apart the events of the distant past.”<sup>5</sup>

2 John Chrysostom, comm. in Gal. 4,24 (IV p. 75 Field ). Translations are mine throughout this paper.

3 Theodoret of Cyrus, comm. in Gal. 4,21–24 (PG 82, 490d).

4 Marius Victorinus, comm. in Gal. II (p. 54 Locher ). Cf. Quintilian, inst. VIII 6,44.

5 Theodore of Mopsuestia, comm. in Gal. 4,24 (I p. 73 Swe te ): *Qui studium multum habent intervertere sensus divinarum scripturarum et omnia quae illuc posita sunt interciperere, fabulas vero quasdam ineptas ex se configere et allegoriae nomen suae ponere desipientiae; hanc vocem apostoli abutentes, quasi qui hinc videantur sumpsisse potestatem ut et omnes intellectus divinae exterminent scripturae, eo quod secundum apostolum per allegoriam dicere*

Theodore's text is Gal. 4:24, "these things are ἀλληγορούμενα." He does not name the objects of his jeremiad – a term that we use advisedly, as it is frequently as hard to tell when the pastoral application of a text becomes allegoretic as to distinguish the genuine prophet from the impostor. From the diatribe that follows we grasp that Theodore was particularly incensed by those who denied the historicity of Adam and Eve, thereby doing away with the very narrative that explains the necessity of the Incarnation. Who then, on their understanding, was the first man? How could an imaginary being be disobedient, and whence, but for his crime, came the sentence of death on the human race? Once they dispense with the letter of the text, by what rule do they propose to elucidate the deeper sense? By their own powers of spiritual discernment, no doubt, but how do we, who *ex hypothesi* lack that discernment, know how to test the spirits?

Henry Swete in his commentary quotes three texts from Origen: in Gen. 2:9 asserts that the husbandry of God is incorporeal, in Gen. 2:15 that the church is the paradise of the saints, and *On First Principles* IV 3,1 that only a fool would fail to see the planting of Eden as an anthropomorphic figure of speech.<sup>6</sup> Yet none of these passages says that there was no such person as Adam, and the existence of such a person seems to be assumed in the *Commentary on Romans*; none of them even denies that, by divine *fiat*, there is such a place as Eden, and indeed we read at *On First Principles* II 11,6 that there is such a place on earth even now, accessible only to souls that have shed the coil of flesh and put on incorruptible bodies.<sup>7</sup> Origen ranks the soul above the body yet holds the body to be a precondition of individuation for the soul; so too he ranks the spiritual above the literal sense of Scripture, but never undertakes to reveal the spirit without close scrutiny of the letter. He may have pronounced it absurd that God should sew hides for Adam and Eve, but it was only Methodius (quoted by Epiphanius) who inferred that

*nituntur, et ipsi non intellegentes quantum differt quod ab illis et ab apostolo hoc in loco dictum sit.*

- 6 Henry B. Swete (ed.), *Theodori Episcopi Mopsuestini in Beati Pauli Epistolas Commentarii*, Cambridge 1880, vol. 1, 75 n. 1. Swete is citing verses of Genesis, presumably with reference to Origen's *Selecta in Genesim* (PG 12,99). See now *Collectio Coisliana*, frg. 121 (CChr.SG 15, 124–126) = in Gen. frg. D 22 Metzler (OWD 1/1, 190–192).
- 7 See Mark J. Edwards, Origen on Paradise: A Response to Peter Martens, in: ZAC 23 (2019) 163–185, replying to Peter W. Martens, Origen's Doctrine of Pre-Existence and the Opening Chapters of Genesis, in: ZAC 16 (2012) 516–540. In his response to me (ZAC 23, 185–200), Martens produces numerous texts which he omitted from his previous discussion; few of these, however, could be taken by anyone to imply that the paradise of Adam or of the saints is incorporeal. Some locate it on another earth (or, as I would say, a homonymous earth), while others show that he was capable of allegorizing paradise, as he allegorizes all historical matter in the Old Testament, but do not prove that he rejected the existence of a somatic paradise any more than he rejects the existence of a historical Jeremiah.

he thought the whole narrative a fable.<sup>8</sup> While Theodore certainly deprecates the same error, he has laid it at no-one's door.

Origen was of course now out of hearing, but his enemies in Theodore's day were legion. The accusation that he had allowed history to be swallowed by allegory date at least from the beginning of the fourth century; one of his harshest assailants, Bishop Eustathius of Antioch, had anticipated Theodore's insistence that we must call a fig a fig.<sup>9</sup> If Theodore had read him at length, however, he would have noticed that his predecessor took as much offence at Origen's naïveté as at his flights of fancy. It was Origen who argued that the raising of Samuel by the Witch of Endor was no diabolic illusion but a real act of necromancy. Conversely it was Eustathius who undertook to demonstrate the contrary by a close reading of the text, a technique that Origen had frequently employed to prove the presence of allegory.<sup>10</sup> It would not be easy to say whether he or Eustathius is the more literal in his handling of this episode, but it is an acknowledged fact that many of Origen's most whimsical teachings, whether or not we call them allegories, are supported by a reading of the text *au pied de la lettre*. A survey of the uses to which he put the literal sense is thus a necessary preface to an appraisal of his figurative readings, which meet the Eustathian dictum that a fig is a fig with the premiss that a scriptural fig can connote nothing less than the highest possible object of that term.

### 3. Origen the Literalist

For Origen the literal sense of Scripture has at least three functions,<sup>11</sup> which I would characterise as apologetic, propaedeutic and protreptic. I shall briefly illustrate each in turn, the first from the law and the prophets, the second from wisdom literature, and the third from the Gospel of Matthew:

- 8 Epiphanius, haer. 64,31–33(GCS Epiph. 2, 449–453), within the long quote from Methodius. See further Outi Lehtipuu, *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity*, Oxford 2015, 142–146.
- 9 That is, by insisting on the reality of the trees in paradise at *On the Witch/Belly-Myther of Endor* 21,2, in: *The "Belly-Myther" of Endor: Interpretations of 1 Kingdoms 28 in the Early Church*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Rowan A. Greer /Margaret M. Mitchell, Atlanta GA 2007, 125. For the exact phrase "call a fig a fig" cf. Eusebius of Emesa, *arb. fic. 8* (I p. 261 Buytaert), cited by Robert E. Winn, *Eusebius of Emesa: Church and Theology in the Mid-Fourth Century*, Washington D.C. 2011, 79 n. 6.
- 10 See Greer /Mitchell, "Belly-Myther" of Endor (n. 9); further: Origenes, *Die Homilien zum Ersten Buch Samuel*, ed. and trans. by Alfons Fürst (OWD 7), Berlin et al. 2014, 60–101.
- 11 For a different vindication of the importance of the literal sense to Origen, see Brian Barrett, *Origen's Spiritual Exegesis as a Defence of the Literal Sense*, in: Markus Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica LXVI*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole 2013, 51–63.

1. A pedantic imposition of the literal sense is often the justification for a figurative reading. No Christian would be offended by Origen's demonstration that some Mosaic ordinances could not be performed according to the letter,<sup>12</sup> for in this he was only confirming the obsolescence of rites that all Christians held to be transient adumbrations of the work of Christ. The *Epistle of Barnabas* had already argued that the sacrifice of the red heifer is a riddle to which only Christians have the key.<sup>13</sup> Again it was useless to deny that John's account of the cleansing of the Temple is chronologically inconsistent with that of his fellow-evangelists.<sup>14</sup> Origen's conjecture that the gospels relate historical events but not always in the historical order is reminiscent of a comment on Mark by Papias, which was quoted by later authors with approval.<sup>15</sup> Least of all could exception be taken to his arguments for the application of prophecies to Christ whenever they seemed to exceed the events of the prophet's time, for that had been the stock-in-trade of apologetic ever since Philip expounded the 53<sup>d</sup> chapter of Isaiah to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). Theodore himself, although he insists that every prediction was fulfilled in a manner intelligible to its audience, grants that much will have been interpreted as *ὕπερβολή*, and that only with the coming of Christ did these tropological utterances become true without qualification.<sup>16</sup> He sets his face against macaronic readings which apply one part of a text to Christ and another to contemporary phenomena.<sup>17</sup> This, however, is no contradiction of Origen, for whom Christ is present in every word of Scripture, so that all that is said (for example) of Jeremiah is also true of him, and indeed more true of him in the flesh than of Jeremiah himself.<sup>18</sup> The fact that some allowance must be made for metaphor even when applying the prophet's words to Christ suggests that the somatic sense of Scripture need not be uniformly literal, any more than the plain and natural sense of a profane text.

2. Frances Young asserts that whereas Origen writes "without worrying about textual or narrative coherence," critics of the Antiochene school construed the

12 Origen, in Lev. hom. 3,6 (GCS Orig. 6, 310) on the impracticable expense of procuring an immaculate victim; 6,4 (6, 365) and 8,11(6, 411) on superfluous or impossible reduplications of action. Conversely, where the literal sense can be obeyed, it ought to be: in Num. hom. 11,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 77).

13 Barn. 8 on Num. 19:17–23, with James C. Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background* (WUNT II/64), Tübingen 1994, 140–143.

14 Origen, in Ioh. comm. X 22,130 (GCS Orig. 4, 194).

15 Ibid. X 5,18–20(4, 175). Cf. further Eusebius, hist. eccl. III 39,16 (GCS Eus. 2, 292), with Richard Bauckham, Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel, in: JThS 44 (1993) 24–69.

16 Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, trans. by Robert Ch. Hill (FaCh 108), Washington D. C. 2004, p. 368, commenting on Zech. 9.

17 Ibid. p. 366.

18 Origen, in Hier. hom. 1,1–6 (GCS Orig. 3<sup>2</sup>, 1–5).

part in the light of the whole and thereby elicited a “deeper meaning.”<sup>19</sup> Yet the method attributed here to the Antiochenes is simply the one that any competent reader applies to the surface of the text – the *ἐρμηνεία*, or lexical analysis, which uncovers the *διάνοια*, or authorial intent.<sup>20</sup> It is Origen who looks beneath the surface for “deeper” meanings, but only when he completes the lexical examination. Nowhere does he do this more ostentatiously than in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, which may be a bodiless text inasmuch as its outward or somatic sense cannot edify the reader, but not in the sense that no narrative structure is discernible. It is only after having explained how an utterance contributes to the unfolding of the drama<sup>21</sup> that he puts the church or the reader in place of the bride, construing her words as an expression of yearning for Christ or of delight in the apprehension of his word. In these figurative interpretations he is certainly more inclined to take each passage episodically, without reference to what precedes or follows, seeking illumination from other scriptural books and sometimes outside the Scriptures altogether. In this respect, we may say, he was “not worried” by problems of concatenation; but since the Song of Songs was universally regarded as an allegory even by such Antiochenes as Theodoret,<sup>22</sup> his insistence on divining the literal sense is more remarkable than his inevitable resort to allegoresis.

I will add here that, although it may be generally true that more account is taken of narrative structure in construing the literal or somatic sense, there are cases in which the narrative structure is equally essential to Origen’s allegorical reading. His 27<sup>th</sup> *Homily on Numbers*, for example, makes use of etymology to interpret each of the stations through which the Israelites pass in Num. 33 as a stage in the progress of the soul from pagan ignorance to the consummation of wisdom.<sup>23</sup> The same itinerary may represent the soul’s peregrinations after death or the descent of Christ through 42 generations. Etymology, as Origen admits, was not a method condoned by all, and some modern scholars distinguish it from allegoretic reading on the grounds that it merely draws out what is already latent in the vocabulary of the text.<sup>24</sup> Be that as it may, there is no doubt that Origen means to expound the spiritual sense, or rather the spiritual senses,<sup>25</sup> of Num. 33, and that

19 Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge 1997, 184.

20 Cf. Porphyry, frg. 416 (p. 488f. Smith).

21 Origen, in *Cant. comm.* I 1,4(OWD 9/1,128); II 3,1(9/1,208); III 10,3(9/1,342); III 15(IV 1),1(9/1, 392).

22 See Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, trans. with introduction and commentary by Robert Ch. Hill, Brisbane 2001.

23 Origen, in *Num. hom.* 27 (GCS Orig. 7, 255–280).

24 See Glenn W. Most, *Allegoresis and Etymology*, in: Anthony Gr a ft on/Glenn W. Most (eds.), *Canonical Texts and Scholarly Practices: A Global Approach*, Cambridge 2016, 52–74.

25 Which of course are also apprehended by spiritual senses: Origen, princ. I 1,7(GCS Orig. 5, 24), with Karl Rahner, *Le début d’une doctrine des cinq sens spirituels chez Origène*,

this sense becomes apparent to the reader only by meditation on the successive encampments which this book relates as historical events.

3. In contrast to almost every modern critic who laments his indifference to history, Origen not only believes that the Song was written by Solomon but grounds his interpretation on the premise that it is the last book in a trilogy of sapiential writings.<sup>26</sup> He also holds that the Christ whose *persona* Solomon assumes in the Song<sup>27</sup> is as real a figure in history as in heaven, having become incarnate for us in body, soul and spirit. It cannot be sufficiently emphasised, as it is still too often forgotten, that it is only this threefold apparition in history that justifies our threefold reading of Scripture, which, as Origen repeatedly says, is for us the tangible flesh of the Word whose actions are recorded in the gospels.<sup>28</sup> To know him as the disciples did, both in flesh and in spirit, is to be armed against the carnal interpretation of Mt. 19:12 as an exhortation to mutilate our own bodies.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, this knowledge of Christ's dual nature teaches us not to despise the lexical parsing of the parable of the talents, which must precede the more sublime interpretation.<sup>30</sup> Since even this preliminary reading foretells the judgment of all according to their deserts, it is sufficiently edifying. So is the admonition which is conveyed by Christ's rejection of the proposal to set up tabernacles on the mountain of transfiguration. Origen takes the historical character of this episode so seriously that he weaves into Matthew's account the statements of Mark and Luke that Peter did not know what he was saying, and then deduces from John's observation, "the Spirit was not yet given" (Jn. 7:39), that Peter was moved by a different spirit.<sup>31</sup> Now follows the allegorical reading in which Peter represents the enraptured saint who would gladly contemplate God for ever, but descends to earth again for the sake of others. Again, we receive a double lesson in charity from the child whom Jesus places in the midst of his disciples when they are quarrelling over precedence in the kingdom. According to the "ruder" exposition, the child is an exemplar of moral innocence, unstained by pride, cupidity or lecherous desires;<sup>32</sup> according to the higher exposition, he is a symbol of the Spirit, whom

in: RAM 13 (1932) 1B–142; Mark McInroy, Origen of Alexandria, in: Sarah Coakley and Paul Gavriluk (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses*, Cambridge 2016, 20–36; and Alfons Fürtz, *Θεία αἴσθησις*: Origen's Epistemological Concept of Spiritual Sensation, in: Christian Hengstmann (ed.), *The History of Religious Imagination in Christian Platonism: Exploring the Philosophy of Douglas Hedley*, London et al. 2021, 73–93.

26 Origen, in Cant. comm. prol. 3,1–3 (OCD 9/1, 88–90).

27 Ibid. prol. 4,17–20 (9/1, 111–116).

28 In Lev. hom. 1,1 (GCS Orig. 6, 280 f.); Cels. IV 15 (GCS Orig. 1, 285).

29 In Matth. comm. XV 1–5 (GCS Orig. 10, 348–361).

30 Ibid. XIV 6 (10, 287).

31 Ibid. XII 40 (10, 157f.).

32 Ibid. XIII 16f. (10, 221–225).

Luke and Hosea proclaim to be in our midst.<sup>33</sup> As in the Song, the literal exegesis is determined by the context whereas the keys to the higher exegesis, to borrow a simile from Origen's Hebrew teacher, must be sought in another chamber of the Word.<sup>34</sup>

In all these cases the literal sits beside allegorical. It is also the historical sense when the Biblical text purports to be a record of past events; it is never the historical sense if we mean by this the only one that fits the circumstances of the author. Theodore differs from Origen in both respects, for he seldom admits any second meaning in the text, and still less one that requires the human author to see beyond the proper bounds of his understanding. At the same time, he differs equally from the modern scholar in his definition of those bounds. David, the author of the Psalms, was after all a seer, who can be credited not only with a prophecy of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem but a capacity to speak with infallible prescience in the voice of his own descendant Jesus Christ. Theodore promises, but hardly attempts, to show that the afflictions recorded in Ps. 2 must be those of Christ and not David or Zerubbabel;<sup>35</sup> we need not ascribe the omission to his Latin translator Julian of Eclanum, for the extant Greek of his commentary on Ps. 45 is equally brusque in naming Christ as its subject,<sup>36</sup> notwithstanding his characteristic reluctance to identify Jesus the man with the Word that proceeds from the Father's heart.

#### 4. What Counts as Allegory?

Allegory, in Theodore's use of the term, is a capricious substitution of the exegete's own reveries for the plain meaning of a text. Like other critics of fanciful exegesis, he takes particular offence at the dissolution of history into metaphor. In fact, he appears to have set a higher premium on history as a hermeneutic tool than previous interpreters: it is Theodore, not Origen, Eusebius, Didymus, Hilary or Ambrose, who assumes that the key to understanding a Psalm is to fix the historical circumstances which inspired its composition. He is seldom willing to look beyond this or to countenance the methods which almost every other exegete had employed to show that Christ was the latent subject or anonymous speaker of verses which were confessedly written long before his birth. To say, however, that no other construction was admissible but the one that a competent reader would have put upon the Psalm at the time of its composition would have been

33 Ibid. XIII 18 f. (10, 226–233). Cf Hos. 11:9 and Lk. 17:20.

34 Philoc. 2,3 (SC 302, 244).

35 Theodore, comm. in Ps. 2 (p. 17 Hill ).

36 Ibid. 45 (p. 554).

to challenge the practice of Christ himself, who had quoted Ps. 110 to prove that he was more than the Son of David, and had taken upon his dying lips the first words of Ps. 22.<sup>37</sup>

Theodore, as we have noted, sometimes embraces the Christological application of a Psalm without commentary. At other times, when he posits a different subject but admits a secondary application to Christ, he follows a principle that does not appeal from the obvious to the occult or substitute words from the reader's fancy for those of the text. In Greek as in English, the same terms can be predicated both of the particular and of the species. It is therefore legitimate in expounding a Psalm to widen the reference from the historical subject to all who share his predicament, and then to concentrate it again upon the one man who is all men, Jesus Christ:

"Those who wish this psalm to be spoken in the person of the Lord are persuaded by this verse above all [i. e. Ps. 22:1] to be guilty of no small temerity. For how is it possible to believe that the Lord said of himself, *far from salvation*, etc. [Ps. 22:2]? [...] But when he had taken on himself the passion, the flogging, the beating, the nails and the scaffold, he accordingly made use of this exclamation, which it is fitting for all pious persons to utter when they suffer something of this kind [...]. It was thus for this reason that he employed this testimony, not because it was foretold of him in the oracular mode of prophecy, let alone because this psalm was written about him."<sup>38</sup>

Although he speaks in abstractions, Theodore might have sought a precedent in the epistle to the Hebrews, where the saying "thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps. 8:6), which is not yet true of all humanity, is declared to have been fulfilled on our behalf by Jesus as the Son of Man (Heb. 2:7–9). In the verses quoted by the epistolographer – "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4) – we seem to observe two uses of the word "man," the former subtending all human beings and the latter the Psalmist himself, if "son of man" is an idiomatic locution for "this particular man, myself," as students of the gospels have maintained. Any reader of Greek philosophy knew that the same term X can be used to signify both a particular X and the class, the species, the universal or the idea which subsumes this particular. The noun "man"

37 Mt. 22:41–46; 27:46 and parallels.

38 Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Psalms 1–81* ed. by Robert Ch. Hill (WGRW 5), Atlanta GA 2006, p. 240–242: *Qui volunt hunc psalmum in Domini persona [dici] [I would propose this or dictum est to fill the lacuna] ex hoc loco praecipue convincuntur non parvum temeritatis incurrere. Quomodo enim potest accipi quia hoc de se Dominus dixerit, longe a salute mea et reliqua? [...] Sed cum passionem, flagella, verbera, clavos et patibulum suscepisset, consequenter hac voce usus est, quam convenit omnes pios, cum aliquid huius modi patiuntur, emittere [...]. Propter hanc igitur causam hoc testimonio usus est, non quod per ipsum per profetiae vaticinium sit praedictum, aut certe de ipso psalmus iste compositus.*

in the sentence “this man died” is homonymous with the noun “man” in the sentence “man is mortal;” a different principle of homonymity is apparent when we point to a statue and say “that is Aristotle”<sup>39</sup> or when Origen states, as his premiss in expounding the Song of Songs, that we possess two orders of senses, one serving the outer and one the inner man.<sup>40</sup>

In this respect he does not seem to be indebted to pagan usage. The three examples which assist Heraclitus the Allegorist in the explanation of his method are all, as we might say, heteronymic, for each is a substitution in one of the lyric poets of a concrete symbol for a concrete subject: a sea for a war in Archilochus, a labouring ship for the distempered city in Alcaeus, a Thracian filly for a nubile girl in Anacreon.<sup>41</sup> Quintilian’s list of examples begins with Horace’s imitation of Alcaeus, then follow passages in which Virgil assumes the habit of a shepherd, Lucretius strikes out a path in the haunts of the Muses and Cicero likens politicians to captains in a storm.<sup>42</sup> The interpretative shift in these cases is, as philosophers say, intensional rather than extensional, not from the particular ship to the universal ship or from the inner to the outer, but from this imagined ship to that real city. Pagans seeking rational aetiologies for a myth would often postulate some half-remembered event whose protagonists were mere human beings: the satires of Plato did not deter the Peripatetic Palaiphatos from engaging in speculations which are sometimes homonymic, insofar as they surmise that a human bore the same name as a deity, but never impart a more universal character to the myth.<sup>43</sup>

Only in the Stoics do we discern an incipient tendency to universalisation, illustrated most copiously by Cornutus in his etymological lexicon of divine names.<sup>44</sup> We have noted above, however, that etymology does not substitute new terms for those of the text, but purports to elicit a sense that is already present, albeit elusively, in the words that constitute the text; it may be for this reason that Cornutus himself eschews the noun *ἀλληγορία* and its cognates. Nevertheless, his practice of equating the gods with passions, foreshadowed in Plato’s *Cratylus*, met the later Christian definition of allegory; nor can we doubt that Heraclitus himself is moving from the particular to the universal, and by allegoresis rather than etymology, when he tells us that the magical herb called moly is the intellect, or that

39 Aristotle, cat. 1 a 6, with Porphyry, comm. in Aristot. cat. (p. 67 Buss e), where Porphyry argues that homonyms, unlike metaphors, are not replaceable by a more proper term.

40 On homonymity in Origen, see his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* in the edition of: Claudio Mor eschini /Vito Limone (eds.), *Origene e Gregorio di Nisa sul Cantico dei Cantici*, Milan 2016, p. 348–356.

41 Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 5 (p. 8–11Russ el/K onst an ).

42 Quintilian, inst. VIII 6,44–53.

43 Nicola Festa (ed.), *Mythographi Graeci*, vol. III/2: *Palaephati peri apistōn*, Leipzig 1902.

44 Cornutus, *Compendio di teologia greca*, ed. by Ilaria Ramelli , Milan 2003, with Glenn W. Most, *Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis: A Preliminary Report*, in: ANRW II.36.3, Berlin/New York 1989, 2014–2065.

Athena's reproof to Achilles represents the triumph of reason over passion.<sup>45</sup> Porphyry therefore has some grounds for his judgment that Origen found the tools for his exposition of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Stoa rather than the Academy.<sup>46</sup>

For all that, Gerald Bostock appears to be nearer to the truth when he pronounces Origen's method more Philonic than Platonic.<sup>47</sup> Philo employs the term *ἀλληγορία* and its cognates over forty times – yet none the less more sparingly than he employs the various practices that he designates by this term. His general assumption seems to be that legal texts may be observed both literally and allegorically,<sup>48</sup> whereas in narrative and descriptive texts the allegorical reading is proposed because the literal sense is inconsistent with a sound understanding of God or the world.<sup>49</sup> An exception may be made for the texts in which persons whose historical existence is not to be doubted (Joseph, Miriam, Abraham) are treated simultaneously as universal images of devotion,<sup>50</sup> hope and the pilgrimage of the soul.<sup>51</sup> Laws, of course, are always framed for entire communities, but the laws whose outward sense concerns only Israel become universal in scope when applied to the soul – as, for example, when the exclusion of children of harlots is construed as a prohibition of idolatry and hence as an affirmation of the incorporeality of God.<sup>52</sup> The necessity of an allegorical reading of any predicates which imply that God has a body or inhabits space is repeatedly affirmed in Philo's writings;<sup>53</sup> more contentious, and therefore justified at greater length, is his frequent appeal to the allegorical sense to remove what seems absurd or inconsequential in the Mosaic account of the origin of humanity and the loss of paradise.

Husbandry, Philo tells us, is a common Biblical metaphor for the cultivation of our higher faculties, to be contrasted with Cain's tilling of the soil, which symbolises the pursuit of worldly riches.<sup>54</sup> It follows that Eden, the product of God's

45 Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 17–20 (p. 30–39 Russell/Konstantin); 72f. (p. 116–19).

46 Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* VI 19,8 (GCS Eus. 2, 560).

47 Gerald Bostock, *The Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Pre-Existence*, in: Lothar Lies (ed.), *Origeniana Quarta* (IThS 19), Innsbruck 1987, 259–264.

48 Philo, *spec. leg.* I 269. 287; II 147 (V p. 65. 69. 121 Cohn/Wendland); *decal.* 1 (IV p. 269); *agr.* 151 (II p. 125). A military camp affords a rare image of the body at *ebr.* 99 (II p. 189). A sacrificial law is allegorized at *praem.* 125 (V p. 365), where the head of a victim represents the virtuous man.

49 *Decal.* 101 (IV p. 292) on the six days of creation.

50 *Ios.* 26 (IV p. 66 f.). Allegory is a property of the dreams that Joseph interprets at *somn.* II 8. 31.207 (III p. 260. 264. 291f.). On the readiness of the wise to apply the same trope, see *cont.* 28 and 29 (VI p. 53f.).

51 *Abr.* 68. 99. 131 (IV p. 16. 23. 30), and on Miriam *spec. leg.* II 142 (V p. 109f.).

52 *Spec. leg.* I 327–333 (V p. 79f.). Cf. *ibid.* II 29–31 (V p. 92f.), where a woman who lacks both husband and father is said to represent the unclean soul. Cf. also *Jn.* 4:17, repeated in the male voice at *Jn.* 5:7.

53 *Leg. all.* III 4 (I p. 1 Bf.); *post. Cain.* 7 (II p. 2); *somn.* I 67. 73. 102 (III p. 219. 220. 226).

54 *Agr.* 27 (II p. 100).

own husbandry, is an emblem of the soul and that the fountain which irrigates it from a height represents the fecundity of reason.<sup>55</sup> The trees which populate the garden stand allegorically for vices and virtues,<sup>56</sup> and by the same principle Adam is the mind or rational soul and Eve the faculty of sensation, which depends on the mind for its functioning and in turn supplies it with objects of desire.<sup>57</sup> An extension of this semiotic principle after the fall allows us to understand the five daughters as the five senses and the city of Cain (which could hardly have been inhabited in his day by flesh and blood) as the figurative seat of the vicious passions.<sup>58</sup> Occasionally the allegory is construed by a shift from the concrete to the concrete, as when the cherubim guarding Eden are tentatively likened to the opposing revolutions of the fixed stars and the planets;<sup>59</sup> such cases, however, are easily outnumbered by those in which the term *ἀλληγορία* connotes a shift from the particular to the universal, often involving, as Paul would say, a shift from the outer to the inner man.

Of course the heteronymic shift from particular to particular is not foreign to Paul (it surely occurs in Gal. 4:24) and it is therefore not foreign to Origen. We have noted that in his higher exposition of the Gospel of Matthew. The child in the midst becomes the Holy Spirit; he also equates the creation above the firmament with the rational, and the lower creation with the irrational soul. He will go to some lengths to prove that the Ark was a vessel capacious enough to hold every species, clean or unclean, while maintaining that we derive more edification from the story if we equate the two decks with the two parts of the soul and the animals with our clean and unclean passions.<sup>60</sup> In the last two cases, the heteronymic shift is not only from particular to particular, but from particular to universal (that is, the ark represents not only the soul of Noah but every soul). This, no doubt, is allegory in its strictest form, the substitution of B for A, not of one sense of A for another sense of A. Such readings, however, are offered only as augmentations of the primary, or didactic, sense: we are bound to believe on scriptural authority, that God created the world and that Noah escaped the Flood in a craft of the stated dimensions; we are bound by the teaching of Christ through his Evangelist to cultivate the innocence and simplicity of children. If, however, we are also bound to believe in the Holy Spirit or in the participation of the rational mind in God, it is not on the basis of these texts but of others in which such doctrines are unequivocally affirmed. Thus where the literal sense is mandatory the allegorical

55 Fug. 179 (III p. 149). Cf. mut. nom. 67 (III p. 169), where true sublimity is elevation of the soul.

56 Plant. 36 (II p. 140 f.).

57 Opif. mund. 157 (I p. 54f.); leg. all. II 4. 5. 60 (I p. 90 f. 91. 102).

58 Post. Cain. 51 (II p. 11).

59 Cher. 23–25 (I p. 175f.). Cf. praem. 65 (V p. 350).

60 Origen, in. Gen. hom. 2 (GCS Orig. 6, 22–39).

reading will enhance but does not contradict it; where the literal sense is obsolete or untenable, as in the *Homilies on Leviticus* or *the Song of Songs*, Origen's preferred expedient is homonymy rather than allegory.<sup>61</sup>

Origen and Theodore are at one in their reluctance to forgo the literal sense of historical narratives in Scripture, except where they find them for some reason incredible; it is not clear from the evidence that survives whether Origen was more disposed to incredulity. Certainly he performs the homonymic substitution of the inner man for the outer man, or of the universal for the particular, more frequently than Theodore, though the latter does not condemn all such devices for the augmentation of the literal sense. What Theodore condemns outright – the substitution of B for A where there is no homonymity – is also a frequent stratagem in Origen, but not with the intention of overruling or supplanting the literal sense. For him, no less than for Theodore, the literal sense is the proper basis of doctrine: no higher sense can be validly elicited from a text unless it corroborates the teachings which have been built upon the literal sense of this or some other text.

## 5. How to Read Paul

Theodore and Origen are thus quite at one in their willingness to receive as history almost all that purports to be historical in the Scriptures. One might indeed argue that Origen places a greater reliance than Theodore on the historicity of the most momentous event recorded in the Scriptures, the Incarnation of the Word in body, soul and spirit. It is this that enables the Christian reader (and only the Christian reader) to discern the body, soul and spirit of the written word. By contrast, Theodore seems to rely on his natural powers of determining what may not, what may and what must be read in a tropic sense – not least in his notorious pronouncement that it was only in seeming (*δοκῆσαι*) that the Word became flesh. Certain avenues of interpretation are therefore closed to him which were open to Origen, even when both were applying only the trope of homonymity: Origen's exegesis of the Song of Songs, for example, is made possible by two homonymies, that of Christ as prince of peace with Solomon and that of Christ as Logos with the text that speaks of him. The omnipresence of the revealing word in the word revealed justifies the identification of Christ with Isaac, Joseph, Jeremiah and any other saint whose journey into affliction has been followed by deliverance, as by a rising from the dead.

61 See further Tina Dolidze, 'Equivocality of Biblical Language in Origen', in: Markus Vincent (ed.), *Studia Patristica LXVI*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole 2013, 65–72, esp. 69: "Origen replaces the principle of diversity in essence of traditional homonyms with the principle of ontological affinity."

In contrast to Theodoret and Chrysostom, Origen describes Paul's application of the story of Hagar and Sarah as allegorical and typical. He appears to make no distinction between these terms, here or elsewhere, just as many other passages he either couples *ἀλληγορία* with a synonymous term or employs the synonym alone where he might instead have written *ἀλληγορία*. *Τυπικῶς*, as Peter Martens shows,<sup>62</sup> is an ambiguous term in his usage, as it sometimes betokens the enlightened reading which understands the type to be merely a type, and sometimes the carnal or ingenuous reading which mistakes the type for the substance. *Ἀλληγορικῶς* too is ambiguous, inasmuch it can characterize both a mode of sacred writing and a mode of exegesis. In his comment on Gal. 4:24 both adverbs signify a mode of exegesis, and nothing is said to imply that one is being employed more accurately than the other. Theodore, on the other hand, does not adopt the term *τύπος* as a palliative to Paul's distasteful use of *ἀλληγορία*, but suggests that the apostle departed even further from common speech than Chrysostom imagined:

“Hagar for her part brought forth according to the order of nature, whereas Sarah brought forth Isaac when she was unable to bear, and through grace; of these the one who was born according to grace was found to be very much the more honourable. Paul commemorates Hagar and Sarah, therefore, in order that he may show by such a comparison that now also that justification which is through Christ is much better than that [which is through the Law], inasmuch as it is acquired through grace.”<sup>63</sup>

Hagar and Sarah on this view are neither allegories nor types, as neither stands for anything other than herself. We are in the sphere of analogy, a figure which has in common with allegory only the element of likeness (*comparatio* in this text) without any hint of substitution. The relation between the bondwoman and her mistress, then, is analogous to that between the Old Testament and the New, and it is common Christian teaching that both testaments have as their subject the work of God in the midst and on behalf of his people. The sanctuary of God and his elect is called Jerusalem, and for Theodore the relation between the old and the new is closer than homonymity, for (in a sense not fully explained) they are not in fact two but one.<sup>64</sup>

62 Peter W. Mar tens , Revisiting the Typology/Allegory Distinction: The Case of Origen, in: JECS 16 (2008) 283–37.

63 Theodore, comm. in Gal. 4,25 (I p. 78 Swe te ): *Ideo memoratus est Agar et Sarram (ex quibus altera quidem secundum sequentiam naturae peperit, altera vero cum parere non posset, et per gratiam peperit Isaac; in quibus multum nimis ille qui secundum gratiam fuit natus praehonorabilior est inventus), ut ex comparatione tali ostendat, quoniam et nunc illa quae secundum Christum est iustificatio multo melior est ab illa, eo quia per gratiam adquisitur.*

64 Ibid. 4,26 (I p. 80 f.).

## 6. Second Thoughts on Theodore

In summary, we can say that the trope in Origen which we call allegory, and which he calls by various names, may involve any of four hermeneutic shifts:

1. Homonymically from the particular to the particular, as from Solomon to Christ the Prince of peace.<sup>65</sup>
2. Homonymically from the particular to the universal, as from Adam, or from the Bridegroom in the Song, to the inner man.
3. Heteronymically from the particular to the particular, as from “the child in the midst of you” to the Holy Spirit.
4. Heteronymically from the particular to the universal, as from paradise or Noah’s Ark to the soul.

The heteronymic shifts are the ones most likely to invite the charge of wilful misconstruction, but when Origen feels obliged not merely to amplify but to supersede the literal, he is apt to make use of the homonymic principle, as in his treatment of the Song of Songs. Theodore is uncommonly suspicious of any figure of substitution, as is evidenced by his choice of *comparatio* rather than *τύπος* as the most palatable description of the trope to which Paul gave the name allegory. We cannot even be sure that he would have countenanced the homonymic and hermeneutic shifts to which Theodoret was driven in his glossing of two notoriously enigmatic texts, the Song and the Book of Daniel.<sup>66</sup> If he intended, however, to accuse Origen of denying the plain historical sense of Scripture, his complaint was wide of the mark.

We ought to consider another possibility, that his bugbear is not the dead Alexandrian but his own contemporary Didymus the Blind.<sup>67</sup> The latter’s *Commentary on Zechariah*, discovered at Tura in 1951, would give some colour to a charge of throwing all rules of interpretation to the winds. Thus, it declines to provide the biblical text that Origen would surely have fetched from a distant quarter had he wished to maintain, with Didymus, that the piebald and dapple-grey horse in Zech. 1 represents the teachers of things material and spiritual, and the white a seemingly different class, the purveyors of truth about things incorporeal.<sup>68</sup> This

65 See further Christopher King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture*, Oxford 2005, esp. 70–73.

66 See Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, ed. by Robert Ch. Hill (Early Christian Studies 2), Brisbane 2001; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Daniel*, ed. by id. (WGRW 7), Atlanta GA 2006.

67 See Grant Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind*, Oxford 2015, 84–87.

68 Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on Zechariah*, trans. by Robert Ch. Hill (FaCh 111), Washington D. C. 2006, p. 32–36. The Greek text was edited in Didyme l’Aveugle, *Commentaire sur Zacharie*, 3 vols., ed. by Louis Doutreleau (SC 83–85), Paris 1962.

reasoning without norms, as Robert Hill styles it,<sup>69</sup> is in no way illuminated by his subsequent identification of Paul with the piebald horse on account of his versatile mode of teaching. We observe a clear contradiction of Theodore's method in Didymus' comments on Zech. 3, where he treats the high priest Joshua as a symbolic rather than a historical figure, multiplying parallels between his humiliation and the sufferings of Christ, and merely noting in a parenthesis that a literal interpretation is also tenable.<sup>70</sup> In Zech. 9 he does not consider the possibility that the king who enters Sion on an ass might be any contemporary of Zechariah:<sup>71</sup> Matthew's appropriation of the prophecy is reinforced by all the king's trappings as a warrior: the arrows are the shafts which inflame the love of the bride in the Song of Songs,<sup>72</sup> the slingshots foreshadow the punishment of the wicked,<sup>73</sup> and the trumpet, if it does not portend the last judgment, is the instrument that the saints are forbidden to blow when they surpass the Pharisees in their works of mercy.<sup>74</sup>

Didymus never falls into macaronic exegesis, holding with Origen that whatever is largely true in the literal sense is fully true only in a spiritual sense; in many cases he imitates Origen's practice of appealing to plainer texts elsewhere in Scripture to corroborate the occult sense that he attributes to a prophecy. He also exemplifies what we call typology, for example when he notes, in his comment on Zech. 9:11, that Joseph, Daniel and Jeremiah were all cast into waterless pits.<sup>75</sup> Assuming the historicity of all three, he is far more oblique than Origen in presenting them as harbingers of Christ. The distinction between typology and allegory, however, was (so far as we know) the preserve of the Antiochenes. While it was not Theodore but his friend Chrysostom who equated allegory with typology at Gal. 4:24, it was certainly Theodore's view that exegesis like that of Didymus fails to do justice, not only to the original import of the text, but to the work of God in history by which he proves the inerrancy of his Word.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

Even if Theodore's strictures were aimed at Didymus rather than Origen, they give no accurate notion of his understanding of paradise, which he seems to regard as a physical locality for beings of subtler bodies than those which human

69 Hill, *ibid.* p. 34.

70 *Ibid.* p. 66–83 on Zech. 3:2. On literalism see *ibid.* p. 71 = Didymus, in Zach. comm. I 208 (SC 83, 300).

71 *Ibid.* p. 213–217 on Zech. 9:9 = *ibid.* III 138 (84, 688).

72 *Ibid.* p. 222–225 = *ibid.* III 200 (84, 716).

73 *Ibid.* p. 228 f. = *ibid.* III 219 (84, 726).

74 *Ibid.* p. 227 = *ibid.* III 212 (84, 722). Cf Mt. 6:2.

75 *Ibid.* p. 218 = *ibid.* III 161–168 (84, 696–698).

beings have occupied since the fall.<sup>76</sup> It is likely enough that Didymus, like Philo and Origen, superimposed a topography of the soul on the Biblical garden; but Theodore does as much, without denying the historicity of the garden, when he offers a parabolic interpretation of the tree of life in his commentary on the first Psalm.<sup>77</sup> No simple horror of figurative readings can be imputed to him, and no simple contempt for history to Origen and his disciples; the truth appears to be rather that Theodore makes more use of history in expounding the literal sense, and is more inclined to fear that alternative readings can be purchased only at the expense of history.

While Chrysostom does not always agree that the author's situation places limits on our construal of his text, he is always conscious that the first task of a speaker is to retain his audience. He therefore admits that not everything in Paul is said for all time, and that he sometimes speaks in a tone that matches the temper of his audience or restricts himself to saying no more than they can bear in their present circumstances.<sup>78</sup> By contrast the Alexandrians held the apostle's own words, "it was done among them but written for us" (1 Cor. 10:11) to be true of all that the Spirit had dictated. Whatever allowance is made for rhetorical artifice and transient passions, the meaning of a sacred book, on this view, is not exhausted by the first occasion of writing. The Antiochene may not be a modern historicist nor the Alexandrian a post-modern pluralist; nevertheless, if we waive their common belief in the seamlessness of inspiration, the contrast between these ancient schools foreshadows the conflict between our modern attachment to the intention of the author and our post-modern recognition that a text becomes canonical only when the author shares the right of interpretation with posterity.

76 Bayliss, *Vision of Didymus* (n. 67) 103–107.

77 Theodore, *comm. in Ps. 1* (p. 11 Hill).

78 See e.g. John Chrysostom, *comm. in Gal. 4:24* (IV p. 6. 35. 40. 79 Field).



## Rufinus' Origenization of Eusebius in his Translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica*

STEPHEN C. CARLSON, MELBOURNE

Toward the end of the year 401, when Alaric and his army of Goths had just ravaged the northern Italian countryside and were threatening to do so again, Chromatius the bishop of Aquileia commissioned the presbyter Rufinus, already famous for his translations of Greek theological works, to turn Eusebius of Caesarea's *Church History* into Latin, in order to take the people's mind off their present troubles.<sup>1</sup> This was not the only crisis that Rufinus found himself emmeshed in. Just three years earlier, he had published his version of Origen's *On First Principles*, and this fueled the First Origenist Controversy with his former friend Jerome over his orthodox correction of the great third-century theologian.<sup>2</sup>

In particular, Jerome had charged that Rufinus' translation misrepresents the true Origen on a critical point of dogma, that is, on the subordination of the Son to the Father, so that his Latin readers would be misled into dropping their guard against a host of other dogmatic issues he did not similarly correct, including the fall of angels, the lapse of human souls, and the restoration of all things.<sup>3</sup> To make his point, Jerome produced a literal translation of *On First Principles* to clearly expose Origen's impious views and to demonstrate that Rufinus was not to be trust-

- 1 Rufinus, *Eus. hist. eccl. prol.* (GCS Eus. 2, 951): *Quod tu quoque, venerande pater Chromati, medicinae exsequens genus tempore, quo diruptis Italiae claustris Alarico duce Gothorum se pestifer morbus infudit et agros armenta viros longe lateque vastavit, populis tibi a deo commissis feralis exitii aliquod remedium quaerens, per quod aegrae mentes ab ingruentis mali cogitatione subtractae melioribus occupatae studiis tenerentur, iniungis mihi ut ecclesiasticam historiam, quam vir eruditissimus Eusebius Caesariensis Graeco sermone conscripserat, in Latinum verterem, cuius lectione animus audientium vincetus, dum notitiam rerum gestarum avidius petit, oblivionem quodammodo malorum quae gererentur acciperet.* Translation: Philip R. Amidon, *FaCh* 133, Washington D. C. 2017, 19. On the dating of Rufinus' translation, Caroline P. Hammond, *The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life and the Date of his Move South from Aquileia*, in: *JThS N. S.* 28 (1977) 372–429, here 373, argues that the bulk of the work took place in 402. The standard biography of Rufinus remains Francis X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345–410): His Life and Works* (SMH N. S. 6), Washington D. C. 1945.
- 2 On this controversy, see generally Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton NJ 1992.
- 3 E. g., Jerome, *apol. c. Rufin. II* 15 (SC 303, 138–141). Translation: John N. Hritzu, *FaCh* 53, Washington D. C. 1965, 127

ed as a translator.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, both Jerome's literal translation and Origen's original Greek of *On First Principles* have been lost except for fragments, leaving us with only Rufinus' version of the theological treatise at some crucial points.<sup>5</sup>

It is with this state of affairs in mind that John Oulton approached his study of Rufinus' translation technique in the *Church History* and intensified Jerome's verdict.<sup>6</sup> Noting that Rufinus "has preserved for all posterity many writings of which the Greek originals have been lost,"<sup>7</sup> Oulton compared Rufinus' version of the *Church History* with Eusebius' Greek composition, arguing that "Rufinus was not a satisfactory or a faithful translator [...]. Rufinus transgressed the bounds of freedom which every translator must be expected to observe [...]. He is continually taking unjustifiable liberties with the original. He omits, abbreviates, transposes, expands according to taste: and perhaps his favourite method is to produce a kind of paraphrase which gives the general sense."<sup>8</sup> For the student of Origen's theology, Oulton's conclusion that Rufinus "was an unfaithful exponent of Eusebian theology"<sup>9</sup> should raise the highest alarm. If Rufinus cannot be trusted where he can be checked, how can he be trusted where he cannot be checked?

Nevertheless, Oulton's evaluation of Rufinus' translation technique in the *Church History* is considerably more nuanced than his framing would suggest,<sup>10</sup> anticipating to some extent the re-evaluation and even the rehabilitation of Rufinus by several recent scholars. For example, Torben Christensen calls for a rehabilitation of Rufinus as a translator, arguing that Rufinus was not an "arbitrary" translator but one with a particular *ars interpretandi*.<sup>11</sup> Mark Humphries focused his rehabilitation of Rufinus on an evaluation of his translation together with his continuation, rather than both individually against Eusebius.<sup>12</sup> C. Michael Chin draws several conceptual parallels between Rufinus' literary career and Origen's

4 Ibid. I 6 f. (303, 18–21). Translation: p. 65f.

5 See generally the recent edition and translation by John Behr, Origen: *On First Principles*, 2 vols., Oxford 2017.

6 John E. L. Oulton, "Rufinus' Translation of the Church History of Eusebius," in: *JThS* 30 (1929) 150–174.

7 Ibid. 150.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. 174.

10 This is why Oulton's rather negative view of Rufinus as a translator ends with a more positive appeal to take Rufinus' work more seriously, *ibid.* 174: "Such material deserves a consideration which it has not hitherto received." This charge has hardly been heeded before the present generation of scholars.

11 Torben Christensen, *Rufinus of Aquileia and the Historia Ecclesiastica Lib. VIII–IX of Eusebius*, Copenhagen 1989, esp. 132f.

12 Mark Humphries, "Rufinus' Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin *Ecclesiastical History*," in: *J ECS* 16 (2008) 143–164. Though his summary of Rufinus' translation technique is mostly dependent on Oulton, he is a good representative for a more positive appreciation of Rufinus.

theology to argue that Rufinus' translational *ethos* itself embodies Origenism.<sup>13</sup> Among her other works, Françoise Thelamon has looked at the reception of Rufinus among Augustine and other Latin readers.<sup>14</sup> In his recent translation of the *Church History*, Philip Amidon argues that Rufinus "aims for a narrative that will be more coherent to his readers and listeners, and display more clearly the unity of the church in faith and order, than would be true (he evidently thinks) of one that cleaved more closely to the text of the original."<sup>15</sup> Finally, Sabrina Antonella Robbe stresses the literary character of Rufinus' translation, with particular focus on his treatment of persecutions and martyrs.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Oulton admits that "a closer examination of the version of Rufinus convinces us that it is of more value than appears on the surface [...]. When we have, rather wearily, noted his arbitrary omissions, paraphrases, and verbose expansions, we shall find that the sifting of so much valueless material leaves us with a *residuum* well worth the trouble."<sup>17</sup> Oulton classified this worthwhile *residuum* of material into six groups, of which only the last four he considered to be of a "more positive value."<sup>18</sup>

The first group of changes is of a theological character, and Oulton lists a number of passages from Book I of the *Church History* in which Rufinus censors Eusebius' subordinationism.<sup>19</sup> In effect, this amounts to a kind of de-Origenization of Eusebius. Oulton also alleges that Rufinus' lack of comfort with this unorthodox views is an ulterior motive for his elimination of Eusebius' panegyric to Constantine in Book X.<sup>20</sup> A similar theological concern drives a second set of changes through the *Church History* over the extent of the New Testament canon, where Rufinus updates Eusebius' discussion to reflect the settlement of the canon at the end of the fourth century.<sup>21</sup> Both of these Oulton condemns as follows: "We have

13 C.M. Chin, Rufinus of Aquileia and Alexandrian Afterlives: Translation as Origenism, in: JECS 18 (2010) 617–647. By contrast, this paper focuses on a much lower-level kind of Origenization during Rufinus' translation.

14 Françoise Thelamon, Rufin: *L'Histoire ecclésiastique et ses lecteurs occidentaux*, in: Maurizio Girolami (ed.), *L'Oriente in Occidente: L'opera di Rufino di Concordia* (Adam. Suppl. 4), Brescia 2014, 163–178.

15 Amidon, FaCh 133 (n. 1) 8.

16 Sabrina A. Robbe, Finalità e tecniche della traduzione della *Historia ecclesiastica*: Alcuni esempi, in: Girolami, *L'Oriente in Occidente* (n. 14) 179–200; and ead., *Ecclésiasticam historiam in Latinum vertere*: Rufino traduttore di Eusebio di Caesarea: persecuzioni e martiri (Adam. Suppl. 5), Brescia 2016.

17 Oulton, Rufinus' Translation (n. 6) 152.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. 152f. In particular, Oulton considers Rufinus' changes to hist. eccl. I 2,2; I 2,5; I 2,8; I 2,9; I 2,11; I 2,14; I 2,16; I 2,23; I 3,12; I 3,17f. and I 4,1.

20 Oulton, *ibid.* 152.

21 Ibid. 153–56. As Oulton explains, most of the changes reflect the fact that the content of the canon was no longer contested in Rufinus' day. Thus, Rufinus tones down Eusebius' doubts over the status of James in hist. eccl. II 23,5, of 2 Peter in hist. eccl. III 3,1–4, of

seen that where questions of theology or orthodoxy enter in, Rufinus is simply not to be trusted.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite this judgment, Oulton does find areas to commend Rufinus about. For example, Rufinus seems to convey a better knowledge of the works of Clement of Alexandria than Eusebius and updated or corrected two of the citations of now-lost *Hypotyposesis* with specific book numbers.<sup>23</sup> As for Eusebius’ discussion of Origen in Book VI, Oulton documents many cases where Rufinus supplemented the account with independently derived details.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Oulton found several cases where Rufinus updated Eusebius with topographical and historical details, including the location and nature of the memorials to Queen Helena of Adiabene in Jerusalem and to Paul and Peter in Rome.<sup>25</sup> Finally, Oulton points out a set of vivid details added to the accounts of various martyrdoms in the latter books of the *Church History*.<sup>26</sup>

Summarizing these updates, Oulton concludes that “the most notable of his additions are connected with the life and work of Origen.”<sup>27</sup> Yet the evidence for this as Oulton presents it is circumscribed to a small portion of the *Church History*. All but one of Oulton’s examples are found in Book VI, which is devoted to Origen and his contemporaries.<sup>28</sup> And the sole exception occurs at the beginning of Book III, where Rufinus expands Eusebius’ incomplete paraphrase of a passage from Origen’s *Commentary on Genesis* on the labors of the apostles with details about Matthew’s and Bartholomew’s missions.<sup>29</sup> In this paper, I argue that Oulton has understated Rufinus’ Origenization of Eusebius, by pointing out an overlooked case in the chapter on Papias of Hierapolis at the end of Book III.

Eusebius’ presentation of Papias in Book III, Chapter 39, has rightly attracted the attention of scholars of the earliest Christianity because it is there that Eusebius preserves Papias’ remarks from his lost five volumes of *Expositions of Domini-*

Hebrews in hist. eccl. III 3,5 and VI 20,3, and of Revelation in hist. eccl. III 25 and VII 25. Especially interesting for the present exposition is that Rufinus abbreviates Origen’s more cautious description of the canon in hist. eccl. VI 25,7–14.

22 Ibid. 158.

23 Ibid. 159 f. More particularly, Oulton notes that Rufinus adds a book number to the *Hypotyposesis* at hist. eccl. V 11,2 and presumably corrects the book number in hist. eccl. I 12,1f. Unfortunately, the loss of the *Hypotyposesis* makes it impossible to verify whether Rufinus was right in this instance.

24 Ibid. 160–164. Oulton’s discussion covers various passages in hist. eccl. VI 2,5; VI 3,1; VI 3,4; VI 3,9; VI 4,3; VI 8,3–5; VI 16,3 f.; VI 19,15; VI 23,2; VI 23,4; VI 31,1; VI 36,3.

25 Oulton, *ibid.* 164–168.

26 Ibid. 169–173.

27 Ibid. 173.

28 Ibid. 160–164. Indeed, Oulton’s section D, devoted to the life and works of Origen, covers only examples from Book VI.

29 Ibid. 165 f.

*cal Oracles* about such topics as the origin of the writings of Mark and Matthew as well as Papias' own, early second-century attitude to oral tradition.<sup>30</sup> Rufinus largely follows Eusebius' account, and at the verbal level he is more faithful to the words of Papias than to the wording of Eusebius' narrative matrix. In this light, Rufinus is reminiscent of the Gospel of Luke's rewriting of the Gospel of Mark.<sup>31</sup> The most famous alteration in this chapter is that Rufinus identifies the "woman accused of many sins before the Lord" mentioned by Papias as the woman caught in adultery we now know from Jn. 8.<sup>32</sup> There are other changes too. For example, Rufinus corrects Eusebius' mistaken identification of the Philip that lived in Hierapolis and had daughters who taught some traditions to Papias. Eusebius identifies him as the apostle, while Rufinus identifies him as the evangelist.<sup>33</sup>

These differences are fairly salient to the historian, but there is a more subtle difference, one which Oulton had presumably ignored as "among the colourless variations which exist between the Latin and the Greek."<sup>34</sup> This difference occurs in Eusebius' discussion of Papias' millenarian views, which he set forth as follows:

"And the same writer set forth other things as coming to him from an unwritten tradition, strange parables of the Savior and his teachings and some other more mythical things, among which he says that after the resurrection of the dead there will be a thousand years when the kingdom of Christ will be set up upon this earth in bodily form, which I believe he got from misconstruing the apostolic accounts, not seeing that they were spoken by them in figures mystically. For it is apparent that he was a man of a middling mind, to

30 The commentary of Enrico Nor elli (ed.), *Papia di Hierapolis, Esposizione degli Oracoli del Signore: I frammenti* (LCPM 36), Milan 2005, for example, devotes more than a hundred pages to this chapter of Eusebius: *ibid.* 230–335.

31 See, e.g., Mark Gooda cre, *Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas' Familiarity with the Synoptics*, Grand Rapids MI 2012, 11: "Overall, the evangelists are inclined to be more conservative with sayings material than they are with narrative material."

32 See Jennifer Knust /Tommy Wasserman, *To Cast the First Stone: The Transmission of a Gospel Story*, Princeton NJ 2018, 23f.

33 Many scholars hold that Eusebius simply conflated Philip the apostle and Philip the evangelist; e.g., Pierson Par ker, *John and John Mark*, in: *JBL* 79 (1960) 97–110, here 107 n. 31; Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, trans. by John Bowden, London 1989, 7; Richard Bauckh am, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, Grand Rapids MI 2017, 411 ("deliberately"). This holding is better than the alternative of Monte A. Shanks, *Papias and the New Testament*, Eugene OR 2013, 296–298, that there were two Philips who both had prophetic daughters and who both settled in Hierapolis. It is also better than the alternative of Christopher R. Mat the ws, *Philip, Apostle and Evangelist: Configurations of a Tradition* (N.T.S 105), Leiden 2002, 3. 8. 15. 33, that there was only one Philip all along, both apostle and evangelist. Eusebius had probably made this conflation under the influence of Polycrates since Eusebius' statement in *hist. eccl.* III 39,9, "That Philip the apostle spent time in Hierapolis with his daughters has been explained before," refers back to his citation of Polycrates *ibid.* III 31,3.

34 Oult on, *Rufinus' Translation* (n. 6) 152.

judge from the very words he says, except that he became part of the reason for why such a large number of the clergy after him had a similar opinion, who cited the man's antiquity in defense, as did Irenaeus or anyone else who appeared with similar views."<sup>35</sup>

Eusebius thus castigates Papias for misinterpreting "mystical" statements in "bodily" terms.<sup>36</sup> Now the distinction between a bodily reading and a mystical reading is commonplace among patristic exegetes, but Origen is a famous proponent of it. Indeed, Eusebius' criticism of Papias' millenarianism is consistent with Origen's criticism of the doctrine in Book II, Chapter 11, of his *On First Principles*, also translated by Rufinus. There, Origen condemns the "more simple" Christian for believing that the divine promises will be fulfilled in material terms:

"So some students of the letter alone, rejecting the effort of intellect and pursuing a certain shallowness of the letter of the law, and indulging more in their delight and desire, suppose that the future promises are to be expected in the pleasure and luxury of the body; and because of this they principally desire such a flesh again after the resurrection, in no way lacking the capability to eat, drink, and do everything that is of flesh and blood, not following the judgment of the apostle Paul on the resurrection of the spiritual body."<sup>37</sup>

Origen goes on to itemize several passages which are misinterpreted by these *simpliciores*, concluding with "and they proffer many other examples from the Scriptures, whose force they do not feel they have to understand figuratively or spiritually."<sup>38</sup> Although Origen does not name names, the argument and the citations fit, among others, Irenaeus' discussion of his millenarian views in Book V

35 Eusebius, hist. eccl. III 39,11–B (GCS Eus. 2, 290): *Καὶ ἄλλα δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς ὡς ἐκ παραδόσεως ἀγράφου εἰς αὐτὸν ἦκοντα παρατίθεται ξένας τέ τινας παραβολὰς τοῦ σωτήρος καὶ διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ καὶ τινὰ ἄλλα μυθικώτερα· ἐν οἷς καὶ χιλιάδα τινὰ φησιν ἐτῶν ἔσεσθαι μετὰ τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν, σωματικῶς τῆς Χριστοῦ βασιλείας ἐπὶ ταυτησί τῆς γῆς ὑποσησομένης· ἃ καὶ ἠγοῦμαι τὰς ἀποστολικὰς παρεκδεξάμενον διηγήσεις ὑπολαβεῖν, τὰ ἐν ὑποδείγμασι πρὸς αὐτῶν μυστικῶς εἰρημένα μὴ συνεορακότα. σφόδρα γάρ τοι σμικρὸς ὦν τὸν νοῦν, ὡς ἂν ἐκ τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων τεκμηράμενον εἰπεῖν, φαίνεται, πλὴν καὶ τοῖς μετ' αὐτὸν πλείστοις ὅσοις τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν τῆς ὁμοίας αὐτῶ δόξης παραίτιος γέγονεν τὴν ἀρχαιότητα τάνδρὸς προβεβλημένοις, ὥσπερ οὖν Εἰρηναῖοι καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος τὰ ὅμοια φρονῶν ἀναπέφηνεν.* Translation mine.

36 For a discussion, see Nor elli , Papias (n. 30) 290 f. n. 20.

37 Origen, princ. II 11,2(II p. 268f. Behr ): *Quidam ergo laborem quodammodo intelligentiae recusantes et superficiem quandam legis litterae consectantes et magis delectationi suae quodammodo ac libidini indulgentes, solius litterae discipuli, arbitrantur reprobatione futurae in voluptate et luxuria corporis exspectandas; et propter hoc praecipue carnes iterum desiderant post resurrectionem tales, quibus manducandi et bibendi et omnia, quae carnis et sanguinis sunt, agendi nusquam desit facultas, apostoli Pauli de resurrectione spiritualis corporis sententiam non sequentes.*

38 Ibid. II 11,2(II p. 270 f.): *et multa alia ex scripturis exempla proferunt, quorum vim figuratiter vel spiritaliter intellegi debere non sentiunt.*

of his *Against Heresies*.<sup>39</sup> It is not clear how much of Papias' rather than Irenaeus' exegesis is being conveyed by Origen, but even if Irenaeus was Origen's main target, it is important to keep in mind that Irenaeus had cited Papias in that section for support. Thus Origen was well-aware that Papias also had these views, as was Eusebius, who even quoted Irenaeus' citation of Papias at the beginning of his Chapter 39.<sup>40</sup>

In Rufinus' version, the connection between Papias' views and Origen's condemnation of them has been made more apparent by rephrasing and glossing the discussion to include more of Origen's characteristic language and collocations:

"Moreover, he speaks of very many other miracles handed down to him by his elders and some new parables of the Savior, and of an unfamiliar and even more fanciful teaching, that after the resurrection there will be a thousand years, in which the kingdom of Christ will exist on this earth in bodily form. But I think he took the apostles' spiritual and mystical traditions in a bodily and literal sense, nor could he discern what they were saying figuratively, as if to nursing infants and children, who, even from the minor works he composed, is shown in truth to be a man with little sense and less understanding. That is, by bestowing doctrinal authority to him based just on his antiquity but not on their logic of his statements, he was the reason for many of the clergy after him to make this mistake, as did Irenaeus and anyone else who has been seen to follow him on this."<sup>41</sup>

The key redactions are evident in the following synoptic table:

#### Eusebius

12 ἐν οἷς καὶ χιλιάδα τινὰ φησιν ἐτῶν ἔσεσθαι μετὰ τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν, **σωματικῶς** τῆς Χριστοῦ βασιλείας ἐπὶ ταυτησί τῆς

#### Rufinus

12 mille annos futuros post resurrectionem, quibus corporaliter regnum Christi in hac terra futurum sit. sed ego puto eum **spiritales**

39 On this point, see Stephen C. Carlson, Origen's Use of Papias, in: Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony et al. (eds.), *Origeniana Duodecima: Origen's Legacy in the Holy Land – A Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem* (BETL 302), Leuven 2019, 535–545.

40 Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* III 39,1 (GCS Eus. 2, 286–288): *Τούτων καὶ Εἰρηναῖος ὡς μόνων αὐτῶ γραφέντων μνημονεύει, ὧδέ πως λέγων· ταῦτα δὲ καὶ Παπίας ὁ Ἰωάννου μὲν ἀκουστής, Πολυκάρπου δὲ ἐταῖρος γεγινώς, ἀρχαῖος ἀνὴρ, ἐγγράφως ἐπιμαρτυρεῖ ἐν τῇ τετάρτῃ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ βιβλίων. ἔστι γὰρ αὐτῶ πέντε βιβλία συντεταγμένα.*

41 Rufinus, *hist. eccl.* III 39,11–B (GCS Eus. 2, 291): *Dicit autem et alia plurima a maioribus sibi tradita miracula et novas quasdam parabolas salvatoris et doctrinam incognitam magisque fabulosam, mille annos futuros post resurrectionem, quibus corporaliter regnum Christi in hac terra futurum sit. sed ego puto eum spiritales et mysticas apostolorum traditiones corporaliter et secundum litteram suscepisse, nec potuisse discernere ea, quae illi in figuris velut lactantibus et parvulis loquebantur, qui et re vera etiam ex ipsis quae conscripsit opusculis exigui sensus vir et minus capacis ostenditur. multis tamen post se ecclesiasticis viris erroris huius praebuit causas, auctoritatem dogmatis tantum ex vetustate tribuens, non etiam ex ratione dictorum, sicut Irenaeus et si quis alius eum in hac parte visus est sequi.* Translation mine.

**Eusebius**

γῆς ὑποσησομένης· ἃ καὶ ἡγοῦμαι τὰς ἀποστολικὰς παρεκδεξάμενον διηγήσεις ὑπολαβεῖν, τὰ ἐν ὑποδείγμασι πρὸς αὐτῶν μυστικῶς εἰρημένα μὴ συνεορακότα.

12among which he says that after the resurrection of the dead there will be a thousand years when the kingdom of Christ will be set up upon this earth **in bodily form**, which I believe he got from misconstruing the apostolic accounts, not seeing that they were spoken by them in figures **mystically**.

**Rufinus**

*et mysticas apostolorum traditiones corporaliter et secundum litteram suscepisse, nec potuisse discernere ea, quae illi in figuris velut lactantibus et parvulis loquebantur.*

12that after the resurrection there will be a thousand years, in which the kingdom of Christ will exist on this earth in bodily form. But I think he took the apostles' **spiritual and mystical traditions in a bodily and literal sense**, nor could he discern what they were saying figuratively, **as if to nursing infants and children**.

Accordingly, Rufinus expands Eusebius' 'bodily-mystically' exegetical contrast into a much fuller contrast of the 'spiritual and mystical' versus the 'bodily and literal'. These collocations are replete in the works of Origen that Rufinus brought with him from Egypt to Italy and translated. The collocation of spiritual and mystical is found in *On First Principles* III 5,<sup>42</sup> which he translated before the *Church History*, as well as in his homilies and commentaries on Romans, the Song of Songs, Leviticus, and Genesis,<sup>43</sup> which he translated afterwards. Likewise the collocation of bodily and literal is found in *On First Principles* I 1 and II 11 (quoted above),<sup>44</sup> as well as in the *Commentary on Romans* and the *Homilies on Leviticus*.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the additional phrase "to nursing infants and children" picks up another favorite trope of Origen's derived from 1 Cor. 3:1,<sup>46</sup> found in *On First Prin-*

42 Origen, princ. III 5,1(II p. 424 Behr ): *Quae licet maiora quaedam intra se contineat, quam historiae narratio videtur ostendere, et spiritalem in quam maximis contineat intellectum atque in rebus mysticis et profundis 'velamine' quodam litterae utatur: tamen nihilominus hoc indicat sermo narrantis, quod ex certo tempore creata sint omnia quae videntur.*

43 In Rom. comm. VII 9,2 (SC 543,336): *mysticae et spiritalis*; in Cant. comm. I 3,B (OWD 9/1, 148): *spiritalis scilicet intelligentia et mystica*; II 8,36 (9/1,274): *spiritalia et mystica*; in Lev. hom. 3,8 (GCS Orig. 6, 315): *ad mysticum et spiritalem respiciens sensum*; in Gen. hom. 7,6 (GCS Orig. 6, 76): *intelligentia spiritalis et mystica*; 13,2 (6, 114): *spiritalem ac mysticam*.

44 Princ. I 1,2(I p. 26 Behr ): *Consuetudo est scripturae sanctae, cum aliquid contrarium corpori huic crassiori et solidiori designare vult, spiritum nominare, sicut dicit: Littera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat. Ibid.: per litteram corporalia.*

45 In Rom. comm. VI 13,1(SC 543,216): *In superioribus ubi dixit: Vos autem in carne non estis sed in spiritu; si tamen spiritus Dei habitat in uobis, duplici modo quid est in spiritu esse explanauimus, id est uel legem non secundum litteram sed secundum spiritalem sensum intellegere; uel etiam mortificato corpore spiritus et non carnis legibus uiuere. In Lev. hom. 5,1 (GCS Orig. 6, 333f.): veluti ex corpore quodam, litterae scilicet.*

46 For further background on this trope, see generally Benjamin A. Edsall , *The Reception of Paul and Early Christian Initiation: History and Hermeneutics*, Cambridge 2019, 163–168, and John D. Penniman , *Raised on Christian Milk: Food and the Formation of the Soul in Early Christianity*, New Haven CT 2017.

*ciplis* II 5,<sup>47</sup> and his homilies and commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and the Song of Songs.<sup>48</sup> In this way, then, Rufinus not only has spotted Origen's influences upon Eusebius but also brought them out more explicitly in his rendering with Origen's favorite tropes and expressions.

The question whether Rufinus was a faithful witness of Origen's theology in his translations has attracted much attention because in many cases the original Greek of Origen's theological writings has been lost and cannot be checked against his translations. Indeed, this is the question that led Oulton to his study of Rufinus' translation technique in the *Church History* in the first place, and the main way that Oulton attempted to answer this question is to compare how Rufinus faithfully rendered expressions of Origen's distinctive theology by Eusebius in the *Church History* that fell out of favor by the end of the fourth century.<sup>49</sup> In this respect, Oulton found Rufinus not to be reliable. In a recent, more focused study, Robbe argued that Rufinus emended such expressions of Origenism in the *Church History* in order to produce an orthodox text and protect himself from suspicions of heresy.<sup>50</sup> Carla Noce, moreover, contextualized Rufinus' rendition of Origenistic statements in the *Church History* by comparing his translation of Eusebius into Latin with the Syriac translation of the *Church History*, finding that the Syriac translator was even more censorious of subordinationism than was Rufinus.<sup>51</sup> This study, by contrast, aims to understand Rufinus' Origenism, not from how he finessed the few doctrinal statements that were in controversy at the end of the fourth century, but by observing how his study of Origen influenced his rendering of Eusebius to make the text even more Origenistic than before. Accordingly, the judgment whether Rufinus was a faithful exponent of Origen's theology must be nuanced. At least in the Papias chapter of the *Church History*, his translation betrays a profound internalization of Origen's language and thought.

47 Origen, princ. II 5,2 (II p. 190 Behr): [...] *qui innocentes parvulos et lactantes simul cum inmanibus et impiis gigantibus extinguebat?*

48 In Gen. hom. 4,6 (GCS Orig. 6, 56): *parvulos et lactantes*; in Ex. hom. 2,4 (GCS Orig. 6, 160): *parvula est et infans et lactantium*; in Lev. hom. 10,1 (GCS Orig. 6, 442): *parvulus et lactans in fide*; in Num. hom. 19,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 179): *parvulos et lactantes*; in Cant. comm. II 3,16 (OWD 9/1, 214): *ut parvulis quibusque et his, [...] utpote infantes adhuc et lactantes in Christo*.

49 Oulton, Rufinus' Translation (n. 6) 153–156.

50 Sabrina A. Robbe, Rufino difensore dell'ortodossia niceno-costantinopolitana: La versione latina di *H. E.* 1,1–3 a confronto con l'originale, in: Aug. 59 (2019) 257–284.

51 Carla Noce, Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* in Syriac and Latin: A First Comparison, in: AS 14 (2016) 98–117.

Sébastien Morlet, when reflecting on whether Rufinus was a negligent translator or an author in his own right,<sup>52</sup> observes that neither answer to this question is able to forget the problem of deciding to what extent Rufinus was a philological witness to the text of Eusebius, and presumably of other Greek authors he turned into Latin.<sup>53</sup> This may well be the case, especially for editors of his sources, but let us also not forget that this is asking more of Rufinus than his goals or context should allow. After all, he is not responsible for the eventual loss of the original Greek of his sources. What he is responsible for, by contrast, was bringing a large body of Origen's theological and exegetical works to a much larger audience. The modest contribution of this paper is a reminder that – however beholden to the orthodoxy of the late fourth-century – Rufinus was still an Origenist, bringing the Origenism of his day to his Latin readers and eventually to us.

52 Sébastien Morlet, *Addendum* to Laetitia Ciccolini: La version latine de l'*Histoire ecclésiastique*, in: Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire ecclésiastique. Commentaire, vol. 1: Études d'introduction, ed. by Sébastien Morlet / Lorenzo Perrone, Paris 2012, 256–266.

53 Ibid. 261.

# A Liturgical Update in Rufinus' Translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans?*

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## 1. Introduction

As a translator of Origen, Rufinus of Aquileia provides scholars not only access to many otherwise lost works but also sufficient reason to be suspicious of the works he preserved in his translations. The debates about the fidelity or sufficiency of Rufinus' translations have been ongoing from the very beginning, being inaugurated by the arguments between Jerome and Rufinus himself.<sup>1</sup> While no one denies that Rufinus altered the texts that he translated – what translator does not? –, intractable questions remain about the extent and quality of his alterations. Judgments, of course, run the gamut: from Rufinus as a disingenuous apologist for Origen to Rufinus as a “faithful user,” if not faithful translator, of the Alexandrian's work.<sup>2</sup> What scholars appear increasingly to agree on, however, is that Rufinus' motives for his translational interventions extend beyond the theological bugbears of the late fourth/early fifth century to matters of pastoral and pedagogical concern.<sup>3</sup> In short, Rufinus was writing and translating for his contemporaries.

In that light, even on the most optimistic view of his work, at every moment Rufinus gives something of the source text and something of himself in his translations. The latter half of that equation – something of himself – is perhaps

- 1 See the summary discussion of this material, modern reception of Jerome's criticisms, in M. Monica Wagner, *Rufinus, the Translator: A Study on his Theory and his Practice as Illustrated in his Version of the Apologetica of St. Gregory Nazianzen* (PatSt 73), Washington D.C. 1945, 1–4.
- 2 Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Einige Bemerkungen zu den Aussagen des Rufinus von Aquileia und des Hieronymus über ihre Übersetzungstheorie und -methode*, in: Patrick Granfield (ed.), *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. 2, Münster 1970, 532–547, here 547; Antonio Grapone, *Omèlie tradotte e/o tradite*, in: Maurizio Girolami (ed.), *L'Oriente in Occidente: L'opera di Rufino di Concordia* (Adam. Suppl. 4), Brescia 2014, 59–115, here 115.
- 3 Wagner, *Rufinus* (n. 1) 6. 29; Michel Fédou/Luc Brésard, SC 532, Paris 2009, 41f.; Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbrieftext des Rufin und seine Origenes-Übersetzung* (VL.AGLB 10), Freiburg i.Br. 1995, 44; Grapone, *Omèlie* (n. 2) 116f.; but note Winkelmann's criticism of the explanatory value of appeals to 'spiritual advancement': Winkelmann, *Bemerkungen* (n. 2) 544.

exacerbated in the case of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* for at least two reasons. First, as Rufinus notes in his preface, his task involved abridging Origen's fifteen original books down to the extant ten books in Latin. Second, also noted in the preface, certain books were lacking from all the copies Rufinus could consult and it appears that he filled in the missing material at least partially on the basis of Origen's comments on those same passages elsewhere in his writings though, again, in the selection, arrangement, translation and editorial work Rufinus' agency and hand are inevitably at work.<sup>4</sup> Moreover – and more to the point for the passage in question here, for which Rufinus evidently had access to Origen's Greek text – in the epilogue to his translation, Rufinus employs the metaphor of construction to explain the relationship between his Latin commentary and the work of Origen:

“Truly, even if I, who defer to my conscience more than my name, appear to have added some things and filled out those things that are wanting or shortened those that are long, nevertheless I do not think it right that I should steal the reputation of him who laid the foundation for the work and provided the materials for constructing the building.”<sup>5</sup>

This metaphor effectively constitutes an admission on the part of Rufinus that the work that still bears Origen's name is indeed the work of the Latin translator to a significant, but ultimately unknown, degree.<sup>6</sup>

Given that Rufinus *did* alter and update Origen's *Commentary on Romans* for his contemporary audience, questions inevitably remain about which parts of the Latin stem from Rufinus' mind and which parts correspond to his Greek source texts. Francesca Cocchini summed up the state of things like this. Rufinus' interventions “that are easily recognizable are the additions and specifications of a doc-

4 See esp. Hammond Bammel, *Römerbrieftext des Rufin* (n. 3) 59–65, who is following the work of Henry Chadwick, and also the comments in Francesca Cocchini, *Il Commento alla Lettera ai Romani* di Origene: Traduzione e interventi di Rufino, in: Giròlami, *Rufino di Concordia* (n. 2) 45–58, here 51f.

5 Rufinus, *Orig. in Rom. comm. epil. 2* (III p. 861 Hammond Bammel): *Verum ego, qui plus conscientiae meae quam nomini defero, etiam si addere aliqua uideor et explere quae desunt, aut breuiare quae longa sunt, furari tamen titulum eius qui fundamenta operis iecit et construendi aedificii materiam praebuit, rectum non puto* (my translation).

6 Hammond Bammel's investigations regarding what Greek texts were available to Rufinus remain unsurpassed: Hammond Bammel, *Römerbrieftext des Rufin* (n. 3) 58–104. Note that the Greek extracts of Origen in the *Philocalia* and *catenae* are valuable but not without their own issues surrounding selection and alteration; see Éric Junod, *Questions au sujet de l'anthologie origénienne transmise sous le nom de Philocalie*, in: Sébastien Morlet (ed.), *Lire en extraits: Lecture et production des textes de l'Antiquité à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Cultures et Civilisations Médiévales 63), Paris 2015, 149–166, and Ronald E. Heine, *Can the Catena Fragments of Origen's Commentary on John Be Trusted?*, in: *VigChr* 40 (1986) 118–34.

trinal kind that refer to problems that arose from the Arian crisis which had not yet arisen in the time of Origen but were current in Rufinus' time. However, nothing can be done about the substantial number of abridgements and omissions he made.<sup>7</sup> To this I would add that linguistic clarifications can often be easily recognized and other non-doctrinal additions from Rufinus can also be identified with varying degrees of plausibility, insofar as they too appear to fit better in his context at the turn of the fifth century than in Origen's early third-century context. In what follows I will argue for one such intervention (possibly two) on the part of Rufinus, updating a brief discussion of baptism to speak to the mystagogical practice contemporary with the translator.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Commentary on Romans V 8 and its Contexts

In the course of discussing Romans 6 and Paul's comments about being "baptized into Christ's death" (Rom. 6:3), Origen's commentary pauses its theological exposition to comment briefly on a difference between Paul's time and what "we see happening now" with respect to baptismal teaching:

"Indeed, it seems to me that the apostle did not begin this section idly when he said, 'or are you ignorant?' Through it he showed that then, that is in the time of the apostles, it was not just the *typus*<sup>9</sup> of the mysteries that was handed over to those who were being baptized, as

7 Francesca Cocchini, Paul and the Destiny of Israel in Origen's *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, in: Tobias Nicklas/Andreas Merk/Joseph Verheyden (eds.), *Ancient Perspectives on Paul* (NTOA 102), Göttingen 2013, 279–296, here 279; and cf. her slightly expanded list of Rufinus' tells in Cocchini, *Traduzione e interventi* (n. 4) 51, though the doctrinal still dominates. Note esp. Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, *Philocalia IX*, Jerome, Epistle 121, and Origen's Exposition of Romans VII, in: *JThS* 32 (1981) 50–81, addressing Rufinus' Latin in comparison with the Tura Papyrus, Jerome's Latin version and the *Philocalia* on Rom. 7.

8 This argument expands on passing comments made in Benjamin A. Edsall, *The Reception of Paul and Early Christian Initiation: History and Hermeneutics*, Cambridge 2019, 160 n. 149, which demurred from taking any strong stance on the passage in question.

9 A Greek loan term that shows up in Rufinus' translations and also in ben. patr. II 29 (CChr. SL 20, 226): *Beniamin – inquit – filius doloris interpretatur: sorte hereditatis accipit eum locum in quo terrena Ierusalem typum habens et formam caelestis illius Ierusalem, conlocata est*; cf. *ibid.* II 5 (20, 206); apol. c. Hieron. I 26 (CChr.SL 20, 61), where Rufinus glosses Jeremiah's calling in Jer. 1:5, *in typo Christi*. Origen's use of the term is often related to the physical/spiritual dynamic whereas the present distinction is one between form and content. It is fair to say that the term is neither very common nor notably unusual for either author; the use in the present passage is atypical of either. Rufinus uses *forma* more often (the passage above from his *De benedictionibus patriarcharum* has both, back to back), though that may translate Origen's *μορφή*, which is about equally common for him as *τύπος*. There may, here, be an allusive reference to the phrase *τύπος διδαχῆς* from Rom. 6:17.

we see happening now, but also their power and rationale, and on the grounds that they knew and had learnt that those baptized are baptized into Christ's death."<sup>10</sup>

The self-referential and contemporary quality of these comments raise the question, "to whom does Paul's discussion not seem 'idly' done and whose view of what is 'now happening' is at stake?" On the face of it, these questions appear intractable; there is no extant Greek for this passage against which to check Rufinus' work.<sup>11</sup> There is no clear reference to datable theological controversies, and the critique of contemporary teaching practice is brief. Even so, three preliminary observations will help to outline a path to an answer.

First, while the mechanics of simultaneously translating and abbreviating another work means that in every passage Rufinus necessarily makes his own mark, it is worth noting that our passage stands out as a digression in the logic of the larger exposition<sup>12</sup> – interrupting a continuous exegetical commentary with an excursus on apostolic and contemporary practice.<sup>13</sup> On its own, of course, it is possible that Origen offered some digression in the midst of his exposition to speak about the difference between baptismal instruction in the apostles' time

10 Origen, in Rom. comm. V 8 (II p. 426f. Hammond Bammel): *Mihi uero ne illud quidem otiose praemisisse in hoc capitulo uidetur apostolus quod dicit: "aut nescitis?" Per quod ostendit quia tunc, hoc est apostolorum temporibus, non ut nunc fieri uidemus typus tantummodo mysteriorum his qui baptizabantur sed et uirtus eorum ac ratio tradebatur et tamquam scientibus et edoctis quia qui baptizantur in morte Christi baptizantur* (my translation). The enumeration of this work differs from one edition/translation to another. In Rom. comm. V 8, p. 426f. in Hammond Bammel's edition, is Heitherr, FC 2/3, 142–144 (who reproduces and translates the text from Migne); Fédo u/Brésar d, SC 539, 472: V 8,9; Scheck, FaCh 103, 357: V 8,8.

11 See Heitherr, FC 2/3, 8. Nor does the vocabulary provide any clear evidence; see the comments on *typus* in n. 9 above.

12 In fact, Scheck's division of the passage is useful here; in Rom. comm. V 8,1–9 in Scheck, FaCh 103, 353–358: After the lemma (Rom. 6:3f.), introduction of the passage in light of its context and a reference to Origen's previous interpretation of baptism: V 8,1–3 (353–355), the exposition works logically through the question of being baptized into Christ's death: what does it mean: V 8,4 (355); how does it relate to passages which speak of being baptized with Christ: V 8,5 (355f.); the matter of Christ's own baptism: V 8,6 (356); baptism into Christ in relation to the tripartite baptismal formula in Mt. 28:19: V 8,7 (356f.); and a spiritual interpretation of being buried with Christ: V 8,9 (357f.).

13 Perhaps especially notable given the clear evidence of Rufinus' intervention that opens the section; e.g., the distinction between Latin and Greek terminology that takes place at the beginning of the section, in Rom. comm. V 8 (II p. 423 Hammond Bammel). The comments from Rufinus begin with *Quod enim nos Latini habemus* and appear to end with his retranslation of the Latin lemma of Jn. 3:3 with *superioribus* rather than *denuo* in line with his comments on the meaning of *ἀνωθεν*, *et ideo rectius legeremus in euangelio: si qui non fuerit renatus de superioribus non potest introire in regnum Dei; hoc enim est in Spiritu Sancto baptizari.*

and his own. Even so, the subtle disjunction between this passage and its immediate context opens a small fissure that subsequent observations can help to expand.

Second, the phrase *his qui baptizabantur* specifies a context for the critique of what “we see happening now.” The form, power and rationale of the mysteries, in the author’s view, should be taught to all who were baptized. The force of the imperfect *baptizabantur* is not entirely clear, though it may not require further nuance than noting that baptism was commonly viewed as a process in antiquity, related to an extended practice of Christian initiation. On any reading, however, it is those who have undergone the process of initiation through baptism that should have been taught the *virtus* and *ratio* in addition to the *typus* of the ritual.<sup>14</sup> Michel Fédou and Luc Brésard recently argued that this passage is “without doubt an allusion to the *disciplina arcani* and its power,” which is to say, that the passage presumes that *only* “those who are being baptized,” or perhaps who have been baptized, should be taught the *virtus* and *ratio* of baptism.<sup>15</sup> The context of this teaching, then, is situated in the liturgical experience of the church’s baptismal preparation, though Fédou and Brésard do not inquire further about *whose* liturgical experience is in view – that of Origen or Rufinus.

Third, as scholars of early Christian Church Order documents like the *Apostolic Constitutions* have repeatedly noted, liturgical materials are particularly prone to being updated in the course of transmission. Since the work of Marcel Metzger, scholars often refer to this material as “living literature”<sup>16</sup> – each version

14 This kind of comment could well fall within what Wagner, Rufinus (n. 1) 7 referred to as Rufinus’ “practico-ethical purposes” for intervening in Origen’s commentary.

15 Fédou/Brésard, SC 539, 472f. n. 1. Cocchini, Traduzione e interventi (n. 4) 282 n. 50, had already suggested a connection with catechesis in her 1985 translation and introduction though, rather than *disciplina arcani*, she saw here a reference to Origen’s general emphasis on progressing past a rudimentary understanding of the mysteries of faith.

16 Marcel Metzger, Nouvelles perspectives pour la prétendue *Tradition apostolique*, in: EO 5 (1988) 241–259, here 257, followed by Maxwell E. Johnson, The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation, Collegeville 2007, 102; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *Traditio apostolica: The Liturgy of Third-Century Rome and the Hippolytean School or Quomodo historia liturgica conscribenda sit*, in: SVTQ 48 (2004) 233–248, here 241 n. 21, and Paul F. Bradshaw, The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy, New York 2002, 91f., among others. The differences in accounts of the baptismal rite in the various versions and appropriations of the *Traditio apostolica* are the case in point. See the recent discussion of the textual transmission in Anders Ekenberg, Initiation in the Apostolic Tradition, in: David Hellholm et al. (ed.), Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity, vol. 2 (BZNW 176), Berlin 2011, 1011–1060, here 1012–1018; see also Christoph Markschies, Wer schrieb die sogenannte *Traditio Apostolica*? Neue Beobachtungen und Hypothesen zu einer kaum lösbaren Frage aus der altkirchlichen Literaturgeschichte, in: Wolfram Kinzig / Christoph Markschies / Markus Vinzent (eds.), Tauffragen und Bekenntnis: Studien zur sogenannten “Traditio apostolica”, zu den “Interrogationes de fide” und zum “Römischen Glaubensbekenntnis” (AKG 74), Berlin/New York 1998, 1–74, and

is a new work, with a different liturgy for another place and time. The benefit of this is that it gives scholars some purchase in tracing the development of certain liturgical practices and gain a better triangulation for the chronology and geography of variations in such practices.

These three points – an apparent digression, a baptismal setting for instruction, and the eminently updateable quality of liturgical materials – can help provide some guidance on the question of whose time-period is at stake within the comment “as we see happening now.” What follows is a brief discussion of *disciplina arcana* in the Early Church, as it relates specifically to baptismal instruction, before turning to a few other passages from Origen to assess his witness to this practice elsewhere.

### 3. *Disciplina arcana* and Mystagogy

In the development of the catechumenate,<sup>17</sup> it is not until the late fourth century that the practice of *disciplina arcana* comes into its own, with institutional expression in the form of mystagogy.<sup>18</sup> In the mystagogical catechesis of John II of Jerusalem,<sup>19</sup> the homilies of John Chrysostom, and Ambrose of Milan’s treatise on the mysteries, there is a clear effort to reserve certain theological explanations for the initiated.<sup>20</sup> Ambrose, who was known to Rufinus, speaks of this restric-

Paul F. Bradshaw/Maxwell E. Johnson/L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary (Hermeneia)*, Minneapolis MN 2002, 13.

17 On this process, see the recent discussion in Edsall, *Reception of Paul* (n. 8) 20–65.

18 See Edward J. Yarwood, *Baptism and the Pagan Mysteries in the Fourth Century*, in: *HeyJ* 13 (1972) 247–267, here 258, though his appeal to trad. apost. 23 (§ 26 in Bradshaw/Johnson/Phillips, *Apostolic Tradition* [n. 16] 142f., who reorganized Dix’s enumeration in relation to the manuscript order; Latin § 75; Sahidic § 48; Arabic § 36) is problematic for its presumed link with Hippolytus. Note the similar account in Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *Catechumenate and Contra-Culture: The Social Process of Catechumenate in Third-Century Africa and its Development*, in: *SVTQ* 47 (2003) 289–306, here 301–305, and see also Juliette J. Day, *The Bishop as Mystagogical Teacher*, in: Peter Gemeinhart / Olga Lorangeux/Maria Munkholt Christensen (eds.), *Teachers in Late Antique Christianity (SERAPHIM 3)*, Tübingen 2018, 56–75, here 56, who refers to mystagogical catechesis as a “new genre” in the late fourth and early fifth century.

19 See Day, *ibid.* 56, with further references there.

20 Laconic allusions to knowledge available only to initiates is found variously in Chrysostom’s homilies, e.g., in *Rom. hom.* 3 (I p. 31.8–10Field); in *1 Cor. hom.* 24 (II p. 295.26–296.21Field); in *1 Tim. hom.* 5 (VI p. 46.11–5Field). Further examples are given in Yarwood, *Baptism* (n. 18), and note the extended discussions in Josef Knupp, *Das Mystagogieverständnis des Johannes Chrysostomus (BBSt 4)*, München 1995; Philippe de Roten, *Baptême et mystagogie: Enquête sur l’initiation chrétienne selon s. Jean Chrysostome (LWQF 91)*, Münster 2005, and Paul L. Gavriluk, *Histoire du catéchuménat dans l’Église ancienne*, Paris 2007, 220–230. On Cyril and John II of Jerusalem, see Cyril of Je-

tion in terms reminiscent of the passage from Origen's *Commentary on Romans*: "Now the time admonishes us to speak about the mysteries and to explain the very rationale (*ratio*) of the sacraments which, if we had decided to introduce before baptism to those not yet initiated, we would be considered to have betrayed rather than explained."<sup>21</sup> Prior to baptism, the order of events and the symbol of faith were indeed transmitted; they were prerequisites for being able to undergo baptism in the first place.<sup>22</sup> What was supposedly withheld for the initiates was precisely the *ratio*, the explanation of what John II of Jerusalem referred to as "the holiest of all matters."<sup>23</sup> In the period preceding Origen, however, such pedagogical secrecy was not particularly evident in relation to baptismal instruction.<sup>24</sup>

Granting Origen's well-known, graduated pedagogical framework – offering instruction in accordance with the hearer's spiritual progress<sup>25</sup> – the question

rusalem, procat. epil. (I p. 26 Reischl/R upp), and Cyril [John II] of Jerusalem, cat. myst. 1,1(II p. 344–346 Reischl/R upp). Day, *Mystagogical Teacher* (n. 18) 61f., notes that the structure of the mystagogical lectures is "provided by the liturgy of baptism and eucharist experienced as a single event [...] and their significance."

- 21 Ambrose, myst. 1,2 (CSEL 73, 89): *Nunc de mysteriis dicere tempus admonet atque ipsam rationem sacramentorum edere, quam ante baptismum si putassemus insinuandam nondum initiatis, prodidisse potius quam edidisse aestimaremur*. Note also the connection drawn between Rufinus and Ambrose in their explanation of the creed in Francis X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345–411): His Life and Works* (SMH N. S. 6), Washington D. C. 1945, 180 n. 90.
- 22 See the comments in Day, *Mystagogical Teacher* (n. 18) 62f., on the lack of total secrecy concerning the rites.
- 23 John of Jerusalem, cat. myst. 1,11(SC 126, 102): *Θεοῦ δὲ θέλοντος, ὅταν ἐν ταῖς ἐξῆς μυσταγωγίαις εἰς τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἀγίων εἰσέλθωμεν, ἐκεῖ εἰσόμεθα τῶν αὐτόθι ἐπιτελουμένων τὰ σύμβολα*.
- 24 In addition to the information in n. 20 above, cf. Justin, apol. I 61 (p. 237–243 Minns/Par vis), in which he openly describes the rite and theology of baptism, from the moral pre-requisite, to washing from sins, being born again, and illumination in an apology to Emperor Antoninus Pius. Even for Clement of Alexandria – who is well known for his graduated approach to instruction, only passing on to one's students what they are capable of handling – there is no clear evidence for a restriction of baptismal theology for the baptized alone. In the *Paedagogus*, a handbook for Christian teachers oriented particularly around elementary instruction that supplies the foundation for Christian living, Clement does not hesitate to lay out a philosophical and theological account of the link between baptism, eucharist, eschatological judgment, and the Christian life; e.g. paed. I 32,1 (GCS Clem. Al. I<sup>3</sup>, 109): *Τὸν αὐτὸν οὖν τρόπον καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἡμαρτημένοις μετανοηκότες, ἀποταξάμενοι τοῖς ἐλαττώμασιν αὐτῶν, διωλιζόμενοι βαπτίσματι, πρὸς τὸ αἰδῖον ἀνατρέχοντες φῶς, οἱ παῖδες πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*. See the discussion of Clement and the catechumenate in Edsall, *Reception of Paul* (n. 8) 92–118.
- 25 This graduated pedagogy relates to Origen's two-tier construal of the church comprising the *simpliciores* and the more advanced. See esp. Adele Monaci Castagno, *Art. Semplici*, in: ead. (ed.), *Origene. Dizionario: la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, Rome 2000, 440–443, and Gunnar Hällström, *Fides Smpliciorum* according to Origen of Alexandria (*Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 76), Helsinki 1984. It is further linked with his em-

must be asked, does Origen elsewhere demonstrate a concern to restrict certain teachings about the mysteries of baptism for those who are already baptized (or are nearing the end of the baptismal preparation)? That is, does he provide evidence in line with the later arcane mystagogical practice? The answer, it seems, is no. If one looks at Origen's homilies, which were delivered to a mixed audience of baptized and non-baptized listeners,<sup>26</sup> we find multiple expositions of Rom. 6:1–5 regarding the “mystery” of baptism into Christ's death as well as explicit clarifying comments about the “mystery” (or “mysteries”) of baptism. Brief mention of these will have to suffice.

In both the *Homilies on Jeremiah* and the Greek fragments from his *Homilies on Luke*, Origen refers to baptism as a *μυστήριον*, and offers expositions of dying and rising with Christ. In the first homily on Jeremiah, Origen borrows Paul's rhetoric to ask: “Or are you not aware that the resurrection of the dead is already foreshadowed for each person? ‘We were buried’ with Christ ‘through baptism,’ and we have risen with him.”<sup>27</sup> Later in the same series, Origen returns to burial and resurrection with Christ in baptism, noting “it is a mystery to be buried with Christ.”<sup>28</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> homily on Luke, Origen speaks of John the Baptist as a “servant of the mystery of baptism,” though he says no more on it at that point.<sup>29</sup> In his 14<sup>th</sup> homily on Luke, Origen broaches the topic of paedo-baptism, referring to it as “the mystery of baptism” which cleanses the child.<sup>30</sup> He goes on, however, to

phasis on moral formation as a pre-requisite for spiritual knowledge; cf. Origen, in *Iud. hom.* 9,2 (GCS Orig. 7, 519); in *Hier. hom.* 5,B (GCS Orig. 3<sup>2</sup>, 42f.); *Cels.* III 51 (GCS Orig. 1, 247f.). See Edsall, *ibid.* 133. 53–56, *passim*.

26 On Origen's audience for his homilies, see Edsall, *ibid.* 147–151; Christoph Mar kschie, “... für die Gemeinde im Grossen und Ganzen nicht geeignet ...”? Erwägungen zu Absicht und Wirkung der Predigten des Origenes, in: *id.*, *Origenes und sein Erbe: Gesammelte Studien* (TU 160), Berlin 2007, 35–62, and the still classic treatment in Adele Monac i Ca sta gno, *Origene predicatore e il suo pubblico*, Milan 1987.

27 Origen, in *Hier. hom.* 1,16 (GCS Orig. 3<sup>2</sup>, 15): ἡ οὐχ ὄρας τὴν ἀνάστασιν τῶν νεκρῶν ἤδη προοιμιαζομένην καθ' ἕκαστον; ‘συνετάφημεν’ τῷ Χριστῷ ‘διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος’ καὶ συνανέστημεν αὐτῷ. Translation: Smith, *FaCh* 97, 21.

28 *Ibid.* 19(18), 4 (3<sup>2</sup>, 172). Translation: *ibid.* 216. This use of *μυστήριον* is not a clear reference to the sacramental quality of baptism itself, but may well be a reference to a scriptural “mystery,” that is to say, baptism/death/resurrection with Christ is a mystery in Scripture, something to be understood as speaking ‘mystically.’ See further on in *Luc. hom.* 14 below.

29 In *Luc. hom.* 11 (GCS Orig. 9<sup>2</sup>, 69) = 11,4 (SC 87, 192). The Greek reads: ἀλλ' ἀνεχώρησεν φεύγων τὸν ἐν πόλει θόρυβον καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς ὄχλοις ἀηδίαν, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἐρημίαις τυγχάνων, ἐπεὶ μηδέπω ἐβούλετο αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς ὑπηρετεῖν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ βαπτίσματος, εὐχαῖς σχολάζῃ παραδόξως ἀνατρεφόμενος. Jerome's Latin reads similarly: *et abiit in deserta, ubi purior aër est et caelum apertius et familiarior Deus, ut quia necdum sacramentum baptismi nec praedicationis tempus advenerat, vacaret orationibus et cum angelis conversaretur.*

30 *Ibid.* 14 (GCS Orig. 9<sup>2</sup>, 88) = 14,5 (SC 87, 222): τὸν ῥύπον δὲ ἀποτίθεται τις διὰ τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ βαπτίσματος, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὰ παιδία βαπτίζεται. Jerome's Latin reads: *et quia per baptismi sacramentum natiuitatis sordes deponuntur, propterea baptizantur et parvuli.*

interpret the purification of Jesus and Mary at the temple “mystically.”<sup>31</sup> Origen suggests that humans are fundamentally sullied by sin and that even after the resurrection we would require a “mystery” to cleanse us or, perhaps better, that resurrection itself contains some cleansing “mystery” within it that is analogous to baptism. “In this rebirth, then, there is some kind of mystery of purification, just as Jesus accomplished at his birth.”<sup>32</sup> These scriptural “mysteries” about baptism are not withheld by Origen, but expounded for all congregants to hear, whether baptized, catechumens, or other attendees.

Other examples are more difficult, stemming as they do from Rufinus' translations of Origen's homilies, though a few points are relevant for the present discussion. In his fifth homily on Exodus, Rom. 6:3 is explicitly identified as teaching rightly about the “mysteries of baptism,” which leads to an exposition of the prefigurement of the post-baptismal heavenly enthronement of believers (Eph. 2:6) in the Israelite itinerary of desert wandering.<sup>33</sup> Here, *baptismi mysteria* might be better rendered “mysteries about baptism” insofar as the mystical interpretation of Scripture is at stake.<sup>34</sup> It may be worth noting that the plural “mysteries” is not used in relation to baptism anywhere else in Origen's extant Greek corpus and in Latin only in the passage from his *Commentary on Romans* under discussion here.

Finally, in Origen's fourth homily on Joshua, in which he explicitly addresses himself to catechumens, he provides an extended account of the significance of baptism into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3) in a “mystical” interpretation of Josh. 3, the crossing of the Jordan.<sup>35</sup> As in the previous examples, stemming from the extant Greek, Jerome's translation and Rufinus' own work, there is no evidence that the “mystery” of baptism is in fact being withheld. This point makes an earlier comment in the same homily particularly perplexing:

“If indeed you have come to the mystical baptismal font and, with the attendant priest and the Levitical order, you were initiated by the venerable and magnificent sacraments – which

31 Ibid. (GCS Orig. 9<sup>2</sup>, 88) = 14,6 (SC 87, 224): *μυστικῶς δὲ ἡμέραι πληρούμεναι*. Latin: *explentur dies et mystice*.

32 Ibid. (GCS Orig. 9<sup>2</sup>, 88f.) = 14,5f. (SC 87, 222–224): *τάχα δὲ ἐν ἀναστῶμεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, <δεόμεθα τοῦ> μυστηρίου <τοῦ> καθαιρόντος ἡμᾶς [...] θανμάζω, εἴ τις ἀνίσταται παν- <τός> ῥύπου καθαρῶν ἐν <τῇ> παλιγγενεσίᾳ οὖν τα<ύτῃ> τοιοῦτόν τι ἔσται μυστήριον καθαρισμοῦ (unde in regeneratione baptismi assumitur sacramentum), ὅπερ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐπὶ τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ* (my translation).

33 In Ex. hom. 5,2 (GCS Orig. 6, 186), with its reference to *baptismi mysteria*. Note that the presence of catechumens is confirmed in a later homily in the same series: *ibid.* 10,4 (6, 250–252).

34 Cf. the reference to the “mysteries of Scripture” in Luc. hom. 22,5 (SC 87, 304): *scripturarum mysteria*, which are being expounded to catechumens addressed *ibid.* 22,8 (87, 306): *Et vobis, qui venitis ad baptismum*.

35 In Ios. hom. 4,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 309): *secundum mysticam rationem*.

those know, for whom it is proper to know – then, with the Jordan parted, by the ministry of the priests you will enter the promised land, in which Jesus receives you after Moses and becomes your leader for the new way.”<sup>36</sup>

The phrase of note – *quae norunt illi, quos nosse fas est* – is striking not only for its implication and possible link with the passage in the *Commentary on Romans*,<sup>37</sup> but also for its brevity and obscurity. Who are those who know, what do they know, and when did they learn whatever it is that they know? The mysteries being withheld here do not appear to be the meaning of baptism into Christ’s death, given its subsequent exposition. How can one account for this apparent discrepancy? Two options present themselves immediately. The first is that the “knowledge” in question refers to what is gained in the actual experience of baptism, which is by definition only available to the baptized. The second is that we see here again the editorial hand of Rufinus. On this latter view, where he laments a lack of proper mystical instruction for the baptized in the *Commentary on Romans*, he merely hints at the typical fourth-century practice of mystagogy in this homily.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. Drawing the Threads Together

Where, then, does this leave the present argument? If definitive statements about Rufinus’ activity in *Commentary on Romans* V 8 are not available, the above observations nevertheless suggest that Rufinus’ contemporary concerns about proper mystagogical instruction have found their way into his translation of Origen’s commentary at this point. I agree with Fédou and Brésard that the passage in question alludes to the practice of restricting certain teaching for advanced baptismal candidates or neophytes, the *disciplina arcani*. It is this fact that points toward Rufinus’ activity. In the development and institutionalization of catechetical and mystagogical instruction, this restrictive practice is a clear and wide-spread feature of late fourth-century Christianity in a way that it was not in earlier periods. In Ambrose, moreover, we have precedent for referring to this reserved teaching precisely as the *ratio* of the rite. Of course, it remains possible in principle that Origen’s graduated approach to pedagogy allowed for reserving cer-

36 Ibid. (7, 309): *Si vero etiam ad mysticum baptismi veneris fontem et consistente sacerdotali et Levitico ordine initiatus fueris venerandis illis magnificisque sacramentis, quae norunt illi, quos nosse fas est, tunc etiam sacerdotum ministeriis Iordane digresso terram repromissionis intrabis, in qua te post Moysen suscipit Iesus et ipse tibi efficitur novi itineris dux* (my translation).

37 In Rom. comm. V 8 (II p. 426f. Hammond Bammel ).

38 Such a minor addition to Origen’s homily would be in keeping with his description of his translation activity regarding the homilies in Rom. comm. epil., as discussed above.

tain teachings about baptism for neophytes, but he does not tell us this. On the contrary, he expounds the mystery that seems to be at stake in *Commentary on Romans* V 8 publicly and on multiple occasions. On these grounds, it would seem that attributing this critique to Rufinus' intervention better fits the development of initiatory practice, and Origen's own comments elsewhere.



# God is the Spirit or the Spirit is God?

Origen's and Augustine's Interpretations of John 4:24 and  
their Understanding of God's Essence

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## 1. Introduction

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Jn. 4:24 is one of the most important episodes of the entire gospel, yet it is also one of the most underresearched. This article will focus on the patristic interpretation of Jesus' answer to the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth," showing how different exegeses are emblematic of the changing theological concerns regarding the role and functions of the Holy Spirit among early-third and fifth-century Christian theologians. The article will focus respectively on Origen's and Augustine's interpretations, showing to what extent the two authors considered these words revelatory of God's essence. By contrast with previous literature, I shall demonstrate three theses. First, I shall prove that the alleged dichotomy between a *hermeneutical* interpretation in Origen and a *Trinitarian* interpretation in Augustine is a modern construction. Secondly, I shall show that both Origen's and Augustine's interpretations are driven by the heated Trinitarian debate which characterized their times. Thirdly, I shall argue that their diverse attitudes toward the passage derive from the different theological concerns raised by the very message of the Gospel of John.

On the one hand, Origen aimed to defend the absolute transcendence of the Father against materialist and Gnostic interpretations. Therefore, the passage was used not only in a hermeneutical fashion to prove the inconsistencies of those who ascribed a material essence to the Godhead but also to speak about the very nature of God and of his Trinitarian ontology. As a matter of fact, Origen linked Jn. 4:24 to some of his strongest statements on Trinitarian subordinationism.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Augustine's exegesis reflects the suspiciousness with which pro-Nicene theologians treated those Trinitarian doctrines that implied any form of subordinationism. As a consequence, Augustine's interpretation focused on the ontological relations between the three persons of the Trinity, aiming to show that Jn. 4:24 reveals not only the divine nature of the Spirit but also the relational

1 See, for example, Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 25,151f. (GCS Orig. 4, 249).

essence of the Trinity. By identifying the Spirit with love, as the Johannine literature does, Augustine reached one of the most daring points of his Trinitarian speculation, suggesting that the passage might be interpreted as if the Spirit was the Father's and the Son's essence. The two authors' interpretations of this passage are therefore instrumental in enquiring about some of their most debated and influential Trinitarian doctrines.

## 2. Origen

Origen scholarship has never taken Origen's interpretation of Jn. 4:24 into due consideration.<sup>2</sup> Gaetano Lettieri read it in a hermeneutical fashion,<sup>3</sup> focussing particularly on the comparison between those who hold a literal interpretation of the Scriptures and those who have a spiritual understanding of them. Lettieri noted the frequent correspondence in Origen's exegesis between Jn. 4:24 and 2 Cor. 3:6<sup>4</sup> and claimed that Origen merged the ontological and hermeneutical significance of the two passages without discussing the proper work and specific role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity.<sup>5</sup> Allegedly, Origen would interpret the identification between God and the Spirit in Jn. 4:24 as representing the need for a *spiritual understanding* of God by those who aim to know God "through a mirror" but "face to face." As a consequence, the Holy Spirit does not have a particular function in this operation which is mainly the work of the Son who "recapitulates in himself all the mediating functions between the Father and the creation."<sup>6</sup> Jn. 4:24

- 2 Manlio Simonetti wrote an article on Origen's commentary on Jn. 4 which is nevertheless mainly focussed on the anti-gnostic interpretation of Jacob's well (Jn. 4:13f.): Manlio Simonetti, *Il pozzo di Giacobbe*, in: id. (ed.), *Origene esegeta e la sua tradizione*, Brescia 2004, 225–237
- 3 Gaetano Lettieri, *In spirito e/o verità: Da Origene a Tommaso d'Aquino*, in: *ASEs 12* (1995) 49–83. In this article, I will quote from the second version of the article, published one year later in: Pier Cesare Bori (ed.), *In spirito e verità: Letture di Giovanni 4,23f.*, Bologna 1996, 43–72.
- 4 2 Cor. 3:6: "(God) has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life."
- 5 On the connection between the passages Jn. 4:24 and 2 Cor. 3:6, cf. Origen, *Cels. VI 70* (GCS Orig. 2, 139f.); princ. I 1,1f. (GCS Orig. 5, 16); in *Ios. hom. 17,1* (GCS Orig. 7, 400); in *Rom. comm. I 12,2* (SC 532, 206–208); in *Ioh. comm. XIII 18,109* (GCS Orig. 4, 242). On Origen's and Augustine's interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:6, see Morwenna Ludlow, *Spirit and Letter in Origen and Augustine*, in: Paul S. Fiddes/Gunter Badier (eds.), *The Spirit and the Letter: A Christian Tradition and a Late-Modern Reversal*, London 2013, 87–102.
- 6 Lettieri, *In spirito e/o verità* (n. 3) 52: "Coerentemente, pertanto, se talvolta Origene accenna al ruolo vivificatore e santificatore, a un ruolo cioè operante e soggettivo dello Spirito Santo, come condizione necessaria per accedere alla vita eterna, questo riconoscimento rimane comunque piuttosto generico, essendo riassorbito nella funzione rivelativo-conos-

is also briefly mentioned by Christoph Bruns,<sup>7</sup> who confines his analysis to Origen's anti-Stoic polemic, thus contesting the material interpretation of God's spirit and the hermeneutical use of this verse. Therefore, current scholarship has read Origen's understanding of Jn. 4:24 as subordinated to the Pauline juxtaposition between the "letter that kills" and the "Spirit that gives life."

Lettieri is not the only scholar to ascribe such a peripheral role to the Holy Spirit in Origen's thought. Over the last century many have asserted that Origen had an immature pneumatology,<sup>8</sup> reducing it almost to an unnecessary frill. The main allegation is that Origen's system does not really need the Holy Spirit, for all his soteriological functions are performed by the Son/Logos.<sup>9</sup> To this lack of appreciation for the soteriological role of the Holy Spirit, some scholarship has added an even briefer consideration of its role in Origen's Trinity.<sup>10</sup> Although in recent years some scholars have criticised this paradigm, pointing out the importance of

citiva propria del Logos, che riassume in sé tutte le funzioni di mediazione tra il Padre e la creazione, o ancora più frequentemente venendo immediatamente subordinato alla accezione essenzialistica, oggettiva di Spirito che è Verità." Accordingly, Lettieri understands "truth" as that intelligible – essentially Platonic – truth that is revealed in and by the Son.

7 Christoph Bruns, *Trinität und Kosmos: Zur Gotteslehre des Origenes* (Adamantina 3), Münster 2013, 48, 187–243.

8 This is especially true in German scholarship from Harnack's times onward. See Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie* (BEvTh 63), München 1972, 86–150; id./Volker H. Dr e c o l l, *Pneumatologie in der Alten Kirche*, Bern 2004, xxi–xxii. Similarly, Henning Ziebr itzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: Das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origenes, Plotin und ihren Vorläufern* (BHTh 84), Tübingen 1994, 224, define's Origen's pneumatology as "a step in the air." This line of scholarship has been criticised in the last 20 years by a few scholars, e.g.: Andrew Rad de - Gall - witz, *The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity: Origen's Argument with Modalism and its Afterlife in Didymus, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nazianzus*, in: *VigChr* 65 (2011) 227–248; Christoph Mar ks chies, *Der Heilige Geist im Johanneskommentar des Origenes: Einige vorläufige Bemerkungen*, in: id., *Origenes und sein Erbe: Gesammelte Studien* (TU 160), Berlin 2007, 107–126. Others claim that early Christian authors showed little interest for the proper role of the Holy Spirit before the fourth century, see Kilian McD onnell, *Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?*, in: *Gr.* 75 (1994) 5–35, here 5.

9 See, for example, the marginal role ascribed to the Spirit in Origen's Trinity by Manlio Simonet ti, *Sulla teologia trinitaria di Origene*, in: id., *Studi sulla cristologia del II e III secolo* (SEAug 44), Rome 1993, 127–139.

10 Following Harnack's suggestion, some scholars assumed that Origen was not interested in the Trinity at all. See Adolf von Har na ck, *History of Dogma*, New York 1961, vol. 4, 110; Franz H. Ket tler, *Der ursprüngliche Sinn der Dogmatik des Origenes* (BZNW 31), Berlin 1966, 36; Georg Kr et schmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (BHTh 21), Tübingen 1956, 127. Because the Greek word *τριάς* (Trinity) occurs only three times in Origen's corpus, whereas the term *trinitas* (Trinity) is constantly used by Rufinus in his translation of *De principiis*, both Kettler and Kretschmar suggested that the term *trinitas* should always be considered an interpolation by Rufinus. This opinion is convincingly criticised by Manlio Simonet ti, *Origene: I Principi*, Varese 2010, 166 n. 10.

the Spirit in Origen's system,<sup>11</sup> the general scepticism over the role of the Spirit in Origen's pneumatology has resulted in a poor appreciation of the importance of his understanding of Jn. 4:24.

By contrast, I claim not only that Origen assigned a proper role to the Holy Spirit but also that Origen's understanding of the passage is primarily focussed on its ontological – that is, Trinitarian rather than hermeneutical – significance. In other words, not only does Jn. 4:24 teach us how to gain a spiritual understanding of God, but it also clarifies the true nature of God. This thesis should not be understood exclusively, as if Origen did not propose a hermeneutical reading of the passage based on the Pauline 2 Cor. 3:6. On the contrary, on many occasions Origen uses it to explain the shift from a literal and carnal to a spiritual and immaterial understanding of God. In his *Homilies on Genesis*, Origen makes use of the passage to explain that people should not worship God in a carnal way or in a specific place.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in the *Commentary on John* the citation of Jn. 4:23 is used to contrapose the spiritual worship to the carnal one.<sup>13</sup> In both the *Homilies on Leviticus* and the *Homilies on Ezekiel*, Origen explains that the passage exhorts people to understand God in a spiritual manner.<sup>14</sup> In all these quotations, the verse is cited in passing while Origen refers to worship “in spirit and truth” rather than to the locution “God is Spirit.” A more interesting use of the passage is found in *Homilies on Joshua*, where the Jewish Law and the Jewish Temple are defined as the “shadow and copy of truth” which is in heaven.<sup>15</sup> Origen explains that, since the Savior became incarnate and came to earth, it is no longer necessary to worship God in the Temple, as God can be worshipped “in Spirit and truth.”<sup>16</sup> In a different instance, in his *Commentary on Romans*, Jn. 4:23 is connected to Rom. 1:9 where Paul affirms “I serve God in my spirit.” Once again, the idea of worshipping God in Spirit relates to that of overthrowing the letter of the Law in favour of the spirit. However, it is worth noting that Origen's interpretation of the passage is

11 In addition to the aforementioned works of McDonnell, Marksches and Radde-Gallwitz see Tom Gr eggs , Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity, Oxford 2009, 152. 170. See also my forthcoming monograph: Giovanni Hermanin de Reichenfeld , The Spirit, the World and the Trinity: Origen's and Augustine's Understanding of the Gospel of John (StTT 40), Turnhout 2021.

12 Origen, in Gen. hom. 16,3 (GCS Orig. 6, 138).

13 In Ioh. comm. I 6,35 (GCS Orig. 4, 11); X 13,68 (4, 18).

14 In Lev. hom. 4,1 (GCS Orig. 6, 316); in Hiez. hom. 1,12 (GCS Orig. 8, 336).

15 In Ios. hom. 17,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 400).

16 Ibid.: “He was formed in the womb of the virgin by the Spirit of God.” However, it is worth noting that Origen refers to the Saviour's incarnation as an operation of the Holy Spirit, thus testifying that his interpretation of this passage does not only refer to the Spirit as a mere hermeneutical tool but also as the distinct person. On the role of the Holy Spirit in incarnation, cf. also in Ioh. comm. II 11,8 (GCS Orig. 4, 66 f.). On the temple as the body of Christ where the spiritual worship happens, cf. ibid. XX 30,268–275 (GCS Orig. 4, 367 f.).

here driven by the need to explain why Paul says “in my spirit.” According to Origen, Paul refers here to “the spirit” as one of the three constitutive parts of human beings.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Origen is referring to the highly problematic threefold division of human beings in body, soul and spirit and, for this reason, he uses Jn. 4:23 to back up his interpretation.<sup>18</sup>

The examples presented so far have shown a hermeneutical reading of the passage. However, in none of these instances did Origen aim to comment primarily on the passage; he rather used it to back up previously given interpretations of other places in Scripture. It should be further noticed that he mainly focuses on the *worship in Spirit and truth* (Jn. 4:23) rather than on the idea that *God is Spirit* (Jn. 4:24). By contrast, in the three instances where Origen comments at length on the passage – namely in *Against Celsus*, *On First Principles* and the *Commentary on John* – he interprets it from an utterly Trinitarian and ontological point of view. These three interpretations are very consistent with each other, thus showing a precise intention in Origen’s mind. Here, Origen’s main concern is enquiring about the very essence of God and about the way in which the Holy Spirit relates to the two other Trinitarian hypostases.

This is made clear by Origen in *Against Celsus* right from the first citation of the verse:

“He [i. e., God] revealed to his true disciples the nature of God and told them about His characteristics. We find traces of these in the Scriptures and make them the starting-points of our theology. In one place we hear, ‘God is light and in him is no darkness at all,’ and in another place, ‘God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.’”<sup>19</sup>

17 In Rom. comm. I 12,2(SC 532, 206–208): “Accordingly the Apostle serves God not in the body or in the soul but in his best part, in the spirit. For when he writes to the Thessalonians, he makes known that these three aspects are in man when he says, ‘May your whole body, soul, and spirit be preserved on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Thess. 5:23).” Translation: Scheck, FaCh 103, 79.

18 On the threefold division of human beings, cf. princ. III 4,2 (GCS Orig. 5, 264); in Rom. comm. I 21,5(SC 532, 252). On the proper role of human spirit, cf. in Ioh. comm. XXXII 18,218 (GCS Orig. 4, 455): “I have observed that the soul (*ψυχή*) is something intermediate (*μέσον*) and capable of both virtue and evil, but the spirit (*πνεῦμα*) of human being which is in him is incapable of receiving things that are inferior, for the best things are fruits of the spirit, and not, as one might think, of the Holy Spirit, but of human spirit.” Translations of Origen’s *Commentary on John* are from Heine, FaCh 80, 89 (frequently adjusted). On this topic see: Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Genesis 1–3as a Source for the Anthropology of Origen, in: VigChr 62 (2008) 213–232; Lavinia Cerioni, Bodily Souls? Paradoxical Bodies in Origen’s Theology of Progress, in: ZAC 23 (2019) 21–35.

19 Cels. II 71 (GCS Orig. 1, 193): *Εκεῖνος θεολογῶν ἀπήγγειλε τὰ περὶ θεοῦ τοῖς γνησίοις αὐτοῦ μαθηταῖς· ὧν ἕχνη ἐν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις εὐρίσκοντες ἀφορμὰς ἔχουεν θεολογεῖν, ὅπου μὲν ἀκούοντες· “Ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶ, καὶ σκοτία οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδεμία,” ὅπου δέ· “Πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν.”* Translation: p. 121 Chadwick.

Origen's understanding is that God intended to give humankind knowledge of his nature through this passage. But what kind of knowledge can we infer from it? In this regard, Origen's polemical targets are all those authors of Stoic tendencies who have a materialist understanding of God. These people are explicitly mentioned in *Against Celsus* and then hinted at both in *On First Principles* and *Commentary on John*. Origen accuses Celsus of taking "into his head the notion that when we say *God is spirit*, there is in this respect no difference between us and the Stoics among the Greeks who affirm that God is spirit that has permeated all things and contains all things within itself."<sup>20</sup> Origen replies that, on the contrary, the Scriptures use the word "spirit" to indicate everything which is *non* corporeal. Consequently, God is utterly incorporeal. Similarly, the Scriptures say that God is "fire" and "light." None of these appellatives should be understood in a physical sense but in a conceptual way as indicative of the incorporeal nature of God.

The importance of Jn. 4:24 in Origen's understanding of God is further emphasized by the fact that the whole discussion about the nature of God in *On First Principle* starts with a commentary on this verse, specifically on the Father's role. Origen attacks those who said that God is body, as God is spirit.<sup>21</sup> Once again, Origen's main concern is showing that the Johannine identification of God with spirit does not imply God's materiality but, on the contrary, his immateriality. To this end, he offers both a hermeneutical and a Trinitarian explanation. First, Origen says that God is "spirit" just as he is "fire" or "light." In this sense, Origen seems to treat "spirit" as an *ἐπίνοια* – that is, an aspect – of the Son without ascribing to the verse any reference to the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> However, just after this hermeneutical explanation, Origen explains that the passage refers to the Holy Spirit as a discrete Trinitarian person in which all the saints partake. Participation in the Holy Spirit, however, does not imply that it is material, as it is possible to partake of something without implying its bodily existence. To explain this idea, Origen refers to the art of medicine, which is shared by all doctors without being diminished in its essence. Then, Origen writes:

"But these illustrations from medicine are not to be reckoned similar in any way when compared with the Holy Spirit; they establish only this, that that of which a share is had

20 Ibid.: *ἐαυτῷ συνάπτει, οἰόμενος ἡμᾶς λέγοντας "πνεῦμα" εἶναι τὸν θεὸν μηδὲν ἐν τούτῳ διαφέρειν τῶν παρ' Ἑλλησι Στωϊκῶν, φασκόντων ὅτι ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμά ἐστι διὰ πάντων διεληλυθὸς καὶ πάντ' ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιέχον.* Translation: *ibid.*

21 Princ. I 1,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 16).

22 Once again, Origen connects Jn. 4:23f. with 2 Cor. 3:6, claiming that "spirit" is usually written in the Scriptures to indicate something that is purely intellectual. In this sense, God must be understood through a spiritual understanding rather than a literal one. Therefore, generally speaking, the word "spirit" in the Scriptures indicates intellectual things: *ibid.* I 1,2 (5, 17).

by many, is not immediately to be considered a body. For the Holy Spirit differs widely from the system or science of medicine, in that the Holy Spirit is an intellectual being, and subsists and exists distinctly, whereas medicine is nothing of the sort.”<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, “God is Spirit” is interpreted in a double fashion, both hermeneutical and Trinitarian. From a hermeneutical point of view, it aims to teach the need to worship God in the spirit and not in the letter. From a Trinitarian point of view, it shows that participation in the Holy Spirit is the first form of ontological participation in God, for all creatures partake of the divine essence by participating in the immaterial person of the Spirit. In this sense, the Spirit is a discrete ontological being possessing his own divine hypostasis.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the adoration in spirit is not a general exhortation to adore God in an immaterial manner, but a specific command to partake of the person of the Holy Spirit, thus showing the importance of this hypostasis in Origen’s theology.

In this regard, the most relevant Origenian passage is found in the *Commentary on John*.<sup>25</sup> This text presents a much longer commentary on the subject, and illustrates in depth Origen’s theological concerns about Jn. 4:24. Having quoted the verse, Origen starts the discussion with these words:

“Many have produced lengthy discussions of God and his essence (*οὐσία*). Some have even said that he has a bodily nature which is composed of fine particles and is like ether. Others have said that he is incorporeal and is of a different essence which transcends bodies in dignity and power. For this reason, it is worthwhile to see if we have resources from the divine Scriptures to say something about God’s essence. In this passage it is stated as if his essence were spirit, for it says ‘God is Spirit.’ But in the Law it is stated as if his essence were fire (Deut. 4:24); in John it is stated as if it were light.”<sup>26</sup>

23 Ibid. I 1,3(5, 18): *Sed haec non omnimodis similia exempla putanda sunt de medicina sancto spiritui comparata; sed ad hoc tantummodo conprobandum, quia non continuo corpus putandum est id, cuius participatio habetur a plurimis. Spiritus enim sanctus longe differt a medicinae ratione uel disciplina, pro eo quod sanctus spiritus subsistentia est intellectualis et proprie subsistit et extat; nihil autem tale est medicina.* Translation: p. 27–29 Behr.

24 In this regard, cf. also *ibid.* I 3 (GCS Orig. 5, 48f.). On the idea that only the saints can participate in the Holy Spirit, because its proper work is that of sanctifying creatures, cf. in *Ioh. comm.* XXXII 7,75 (GCS Orig. 4, 436); in *Ioh. frg.* 37 (GCS Orig. 4, 513f.); *princ.* I 3,5 (GCS Orig. 5, 54); in *Lev. hom.* 6,2 (GCS Orig. 6, 359f.); in *Num. hom.* 3,1 (GCS Orig. 7, 13); 6,3 (7, 32); in *Hiez. hom.* 6,5 (GCS Orig. 8, 383).

25 In this commentary, Origen refers also to the fourth Gospel as the “firstfruit of all the Scriptures” where the “eternal Truth are expounded,” to the point of considering it as the most important text of the entire Scriptures: in *Ioh. comm.* I 7,40 (GCS Orig. 4, 12).

26 *Ibid.* XIII 21,12Ξ (4, 244): *Πολλῶν πολλὰ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀποφηναμένων καὶ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ, ὥστε τινὰς μὲν εἰρηκέναι καὶ αὐτὸν σωματικῆς φύσεως λεπτομεροῦς καὶ αἰθερώδους, τινὰς δὲ ἄσωμάτου καὶ ἄλλους ὑπερέκεινα οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει, ἄξιον ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν εἰ ἔχομεν ἀφορμὰς ἀπὸ τῶν θείων γραφῶν πρὸς τὸ εἰπεῖν τι περὶ οὐσίας θεοῦ. Ἐνθάδε μὲν οὖν λέγεται οἰοῦναι οὐσία εἶναι αὐτοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα.*

Origen's discussion of the passage is directly approached as an ontological matter, for what is at stake here is the very essence of the Trinity. Firstly, just as he does in *Against Celsus* and *On First Principles*, Origen defends God's immateriality against materialist interpretations, such as those of Tertullian and others.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Origen smooths over – or even downplays – the significance of the scriptural identification of God with the Spirit by attributing a symbolic meaning to the passage, stating that God must be understood as light insofar as he is “apprehended by the intellect (*νοῦς*), and is invisible and incorporeal (*ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον*), because he is light of the mind.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, God is said to be fire insofar as he “consumes everything material” in the soul.<sup>29</sup> Correspondingly, God is said to be Spirit insofar as he is the “breath (*πνεῦμα*) of life,” which prevents spiritual death, that is, “the separation of the soul from God and from the Lord himself and from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>30</sup> Secondly, Origen rebuts the Gnostic interpretation of this passage proposed by his Valentinian opponent, Heracleon, who stated that “those who are of the same nature with the Father (*αὐτοὶ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ὄντες*) are themselves also Spirit and worship in truth and not in error.”<sup>31</sup> According to Origen, Heracleon makes two major mistakes. On the one hand, Heracleon's interpretation implies the consubstantiality between the spirituals and the Holy Spirit, which Valentinians considered an aeon of the divine Ogdoad.<sup>32</sup> From Heracleon's exegesis, it follows that the Spirit committed fornication, as the Samaritan woman is herself a spiritual being.<sup>33</sup> About such a preposterous suggestion, Origen writes:

“Now they do not see that everything which is of the same essence (*ὁμοούσιον*) is also capable of the same things. And, if the spiritual nature (*ἡ πνευματικὴ φύσις*), which is of the

27 Origen is particularly polemicizing against the Stoic philosophers who used to speak of God as ether or fire. Cf. Cicero, *nat. deor.* I 14f.; Porphyry as quoted in Eusebius, *praep. ev.* XV 16 (GCS Eus. 8/2, 380 f.). A similar view was held by some influential Christians, such as Tertullian, *adv. Prax.* 7 (CChr.SL 2, 116–117). For a full bibliography on Origen's discussion, see Heine, *FaCh* 89, 93–95 n. 123–31.

28 Origen, in *Ioh. comm.* XIII 23, 137 (GCS Orig. 4, 246).

29 *Ibid.* XIII 23, 139 (4, 247).

30 *Ibid.* XIII 23, 140 (4, 247).

31 *Ibid.* XIII 25, 148 (4, 249): *καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ὄντες τῷ πατρὶ πνευμά εἰσιν, οἵτινες κατὰ ἀλήθειαν καὶ οὐ κατὰ πλάνην προσκυνοῦσιν.*

32 See Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* I 2 (SC 264, 36 f.); I 30 (264, 366 f.).

33 Origen deemed the Valentinians to hold the doctrine of the fixity of the three natures. In this regard, see Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Origen's Exegesis of John 8:19–53: The Struggle with Heracleon over the idea of Fixed Natures*, in: *VigChr* 43 (1989) 138–154. The modern debate regarding the fixity of nature in Valentinianism is still very much open. For a proponent of the fluidity of natures in the Valentinian system, see Einar Thomassen, *Heracleon*, in: Tuomas Raasimus (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel*, Leiden 2009, 173–210. However, for the present scope, we can surely hold that Origen deemed the Valentinians to maintain the idea of the fixity of natures.

same essence (*ὁμοούσιος*) [with the divine nature], was capable of committing fornication, it is dangerous even to imagine how many unholy, godless, and impious things follow for the doctrine of God so far as they are concerned.<sup>34</sup>

However, the most interesting objection posed by Origen to Heracleon regards his affirmation of the consubstantiality between the Father and the spiritual Gnostics, as Heracleon explicitly claims that the spiritual ones are “those who are of the same nature with the Father.”<sup>35</sup> Such a position negates Origen’s own conception of the Trinity, according to which the source of divinity and power must be found in the Father only. Therefore, the spiritual ones can in no way be of the same essence with the Father because the Spirit and the spiritual ones are begotten, while the Father alone is unbegotten. Hence, Origen’s driving theological concern is affirming the absolute ontological transcendence of the Father, avoiding possible misunderstandings regarding the lack of consubstantiality between the three hypostases. He stresses it in the following passage:

“But we are obedient to the Saviour who says, ‘the Father who sent me is greater than I’ (Jn. 14:28). Indeed, although the Saviour and the Holy Spirit transcend all created beings, not by comparison, but by their exceeding pre-eminence, the Father exceeds (*ὑπερέχει*) the Saviour as much, or even more, as the Saviour himself and the Holy Spirit exceed the rest. And by the rest I do not mean ordinary beings, but also holy angels, spirits and just souls [...]. But, although the Saviour transcends in his essence (*ὑπερέχων οὐσία*), rank, power, divinity (*πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει καὶ θεϊότητι*) – for the Word is living – and Wisdom (*σοφία*), beings that are so great and of such antiquity, nevertheless, he is not comparable with the Father in any way.”<sup>36</sup>

34 Origen, in Ioh. comm. XIII 25, 50 (GCS Orig. 4, 249): *Ἄλλ' οὐχ ὁράωσιν <οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες> ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ὁμοούσιόν ἐστιν* > καὶ τῶν αὐτῶν δεκτικόν· εἰ δὲ ἐδέξατο τὸ πορνεῦσαι ἢ πνευματικὴ φύσις, ὁμοούσιος οὐσα ἀνόσια καὶ ἄθεα καὶ ἀσεβῆ ἀκολουθεῖ τῷ λόγῳ τῷ κατ' αὐτοῦς περὶ θεοῦ οὐδὲ φαντασιωθῆναι ἀκίνδυνόν ἐστιν.

35 Ibid. XIII 25,148 (4, 249).

36 Ibid. XIII 25, 51f. (4, 249): *Ἄλλ' ἡμεῖς πειθόμενοι τῷ σωτήρι λέγοντι*· “Ὁ πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με μείζων μου ἐστίν” [...] πάντων μὲν τῶν γενητῶν ὑπερέχειν οὐ συγκρίσει ἄλλ' ὑπερβαλλούσῃ ὑπεροχῇ φαμέν τὸν σωτήρα καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὑπερεχόμενον τοσοῦτον ἢ καὶ πλέον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς, ὅσῳ ὑπερέχει αὐτὸς καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τῶν λοιπῶν, οὐ τῶν τυχόντων ὄντων. Ὅση γὰρ δοξολογία τοῦ ὑπερέχοντος θρόνων, κυριοτήτων, ἀρχῶν, ἐξουσιῶν, καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι, πρὸς τούτοις καὶ ἀγίων ἀγγέλων καὶ πνευμάτων καὶ ψυχῶν δικαίων, τί δεῖ καὶ λέγειν; Ἄλλ' ὅμως τῶν τοσοῦτων καὶ τηλικούτων ὑπερέχων οὐσία καὶ πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει καὶ θεϊότητι – ἔμψυχος γάρ ἐστι λόγος – καὶ σοφία, οὐ συγκρίνεται κατ' οὐδὲν τῷ πατρί. The passage goes on by saying, *ibid.* XIII 25, 52f. (4, 249): “For he [i.e., Christ] is an image of the goodness and brightness not of God, but of God’s glory and of his eternal light (*εἰκὼν γὰρ ἐστίν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπαύγασμα οὐ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἰδίου φωτὸς αὐτοῦ*), and he is a breath, not of the Father, but of his power; and he is a pure emanation of God’s almighty glory, and an unspotted mirror of his activity (*ἀτμίς οὐ τοῦ πατρὸς*

Besides clarifying Origen's subordinationism, this passage also indicates Origen's pneumatology. By affirming that the Father is much "greater" than the Son and the Spirit, Origen is proving Heracleon's claim wrong and preserving the utter transcendence of God. Origen does not want to negate that the Spirit is God, nor does he interpret this passage from a merely hermeneutical angle, but he is driven by the need to downplay Heracleon's interpretation of John's Word by showing that the Spirit is divine to a lesser extent than the Father. However, Origen did not take his interpretation as far as denying the divinity of the Spirit. On the contrary, Origen repeatedly affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit in the *Commentary on John*, stating that he exists as an individual hypostasis in the Godhead.<sup>37</sup> In other words, Origen claims that, although the Spirit is divine, he is not consubstantial with the Father.<sup>38</sup>

Given the contemporary Gnostic and Stoic milieu, it makes sense to assume that the reason why Origen opted for a hermeneutical rather than Trinitarian interpretation when mentioning Jn. 4:24 only in passing is most likely to avoid

ἀλλὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀπόρροια εἰλικρινῆς τῆς παντοκρατορικῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς ἐνεργείας αὐτοῦ)."

37 In this regard, see in particular the Trinitarian confession of faith in *ibid.* II 10,74 (4, 65), where Origen writes: "We, however, are persuaded that there are three hypostases, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (ἡμεῖς μέντοι γε τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις πειθόμενοι τυγχάνειν, τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα), and we believe that only the Father is unbegotten (ἀγέννητον μηδὲν ἕτερον τοῦ πατρὸς εἶναι πιστεύοντες). We admit, as more pious and true, that the Holy Spirit is the most honoured of all things brought into being through the Word (τὸ πάντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου γενομένων τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα πάντων εἶναι τιμιώτερον) and that he is [first] in rank of all the things which have been brought into being by the Father through Christ (πρῶτον πάντων τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ Χριστοῦ γεγεννημένων)." See also *ibid.* XXXII 16,187–189(4, 451), where freedom is closely linked to the Holy Spirit as a fundamental truth that Christians have to believe. On the pivotal role of freedom in Origen's understanding of the relation between God and the *kosmos*, see Christian Hengs termann, *Origenes und der Ursprung der Freiheitsmetaphysik* (Adamantiana 8), Münster 2016; *id.*, *Being as Motion: The First Principles of Origen's Ontology of Freedom*, in: ZAC 23 (2019) 114–137.

38 It is worth reminding the reader of the distinction between *ὁ θεός* and *θεός*, set by Origen in the *Commentary on John*. According to Origen, only the Father can be called *ὁ θεός* with the article, while the Son can be rightly said to be God (*θεός* without the article), but not to be the one true God, because he is God by derivation. All the source of divinity and power comes from the Father only, *ibid.* II 2,17f. (4, 54): "We must say that at one time the God, with the article, is the God-in-himself (*αὐτόθεος ὁ θεός ἐστι*) [...]. On the other hand, everything besides the God-in-himself, which is made God by participation in his divinity, would more properly not be said to be the God, but God (*πάν δὲ τὸ παρὰ τὸ αὐτόθεος μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος θεοποιούμενον οὐχ "ὁ θεός" ἀλλὰ "θεός"*) [...]. The God therefore is the true God (*ἀληθινὸς οὖν θεός ὁ θεός*). The others are gods formed according to him as images of the prototype (*οἱ δὲ κατ' ἐκείνον μορφούμενοι θεοὶ ὡς εἰκόνες πρωτοτύπου*). But, again, the archetypal image of the many images is the Word with the God (*ὁ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐστι λόγος*) who was in the beginning. By being with the God he always continues to be God." Similarly to the Son, the Holy Spirit is a divine hypostases by participation in the Father.

Gnostic and Stoic/materialist inferences. He fears that the affirmation “God is Spirit” could hint at a materialist interpretation that would damage the Father’s absolute transcendence. It is also worth noting that when Origen speculates on the ontological composition of the Trinity, his reasoning is never mediated through a Pauline lens, as is the case in his hermeneutical readings, but rather through a Johannine lens – that is, Jn. 14:28 – where the ontological precedence of the Father over the Son and the Spirit is clearly stated. As far as the Trinitarian interpretation of the passage is concerned, Origen seems to use John, rather than Paul, as the hermeneutical framework for his understanding of God’s essence.

To summarize, in interpreting this passage Origen is driven by two theological concerns. Firstly, from an apologetic perspective, he fights against the materialist and Gnostic alternative interpretations. For this reason, he denies both that the Spirit is material and is fully God. Secondly, from a Trinitarian perspective, he denies that the Holy Spirit could be understood as God’s *ousia*. Hence, Origen defends the absolute transcendence and immateriality of the Father fully. As a consequence, the divinity of the Holy Spirit does not imply consubstantiality with the Father. Therefore, Origen interprets the saying “God is Spirit” as meaning “God is Spirit to us” – that is, we can know God through the Holy Spirit just like the Samaritan woman. Thus, the comparison made by Origen between Jn. 4:24 and other passages of the Scriptures where the God is said to be “light” and “fire” reveals Origen’s intention to interpret this passage in a way that excludes the possibility of referring it to God’s – that is, the Father’s – essence. Therefore, Origen’s main concern in commenting on this passage is to show that the true God, God-in-himself, the Father, is beyond the Spirit and is utterly unattainable and transcendent, thus saving himself from any materialist understanding of his essence.

### 3. Augustine

A little less than two centuries after Origen, Augustine proposed a very different interpretation of Jn. 4:24. Even at a first glance, it appears clearly that Augustine’s understanding of Jn. 4:24 reflects a different theological landscape from that of Origen, as the Nicene debate now dominated the theological scene. Just as in Origen, Augustine uses the verse to warn the reader against the materialist understanding of God held by the simple minded. However, by contrast with Origen, Augustine does not seem concerned that the verse “God is Spirit” might lead to a possible interpretation of God in Stoic and Gnostic ways. Unlike Origen, Augustine’s anti-materialist polemic is not directed against theologians but against the pagan understanding of the gods held by the simple minded. In a number of works, including his *Letters*, he quotes Jn. 4:24 as scriptural evidence of God’s

immateriality.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, this verse is frequently used in anti-Arian works to disprove their claim of the Son's and the Spirit's inferiority to the Father.<sup>40</sup> As materialist or Gnostic interpretations of the verse are no longer a concern, Augustine understands the ontological significance of this verse in a pro-Nicene Trinitarian fashion that rules out all subordinationist interpretations. Augustine's concern is, therefore, to understand *how* "God is Spirit." Is this merely an indication of the way in which humans understand the Trinity? Or does it indicate an internal quality of the immanent Trinity? Should the word "spirit" be understood as an attribute of the whole Trinity or is it a reference to the Holy Spirit as a distinct person? Should one consider the Holy Spirit as the "essence" of the other two Trinitarian persons? This last question is particularly pressing, and it is in the midst of the contemporary scholarly debate on Augustine, although with opposing conclusions held by different advocates.<sup>41</sup> My analysis aims to cast some light on this much debated matter by discussing what theological concerns drove Augustine in interpreting Jn. 4:23f., focussing particularly on his *Tractates on John, On the Trinity* and *On Faith and Creed*. It will show that this verse bears a fundamental value in Augustine's understanding of the Trinity.

In answering these questions, it is first worth noting that Augustine's interpretation is grounded in the identification between the Holy Spirit and God's gift (Jn. 4:10). Speaking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus says: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked

39 Augustine, in Ioh. tract. 15,24 (CChr.SL 36, 160f.); 23,9 (36, 238f.); epist. 92,5 (CSEL 34/2, 441); expos. in Ps. 50,17 (CChr.SL 38, 612); Gen. litt. XII 7,18 (CSEL 28/1, 388); serm. 21,2 (CChr.SL 41, 277f.); 215,8 (PL 38, 1076). In civ. XIII 24 (CChr.SL 48, 408–414) he discusses the different meanings of the Greek terms *πνεῦμα* and *πνοή*.

40 On Augustine's usage of the passage in the anti-Arian polemic it is particularly worth noting the debate against Maximinus: conl. Max. 15,15 (CChr.SL 87A, 444–447); c. Max. II 15,2 (CChr.SL 87A, 589–592); II 22,3 (87A, 636–639).

41 It is not possible to produce here a full bibliography on the scholarly discussion on Augustine's Trinitarian thought. In this article, I will mainly refer to the debate between Lewis Ayres and Joseph O'Leary regarding the alleged relational essence of Augustine's Trinity. According to Ayres, Augustine proposes a paradigm according to which "each person is the essence of the other," thus reconciling relationality and identity in his Trinitarian thought. Therefore, Ayres states that the Spirit in Augustine's Trinity is the very essence of the Father and of the Son. This perspective is highly criticised by O'Leary, who points out that book VII of Augustine's *De trinitate* opposes this idea as it would imply that Father and Son are not holy without the Holy Spirit. In this regard, see Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, Cambridge 2010, 61–88, 91; Joseph O'Leary, 'Review of 'Augustine and the Trinity' by Lewis Ayres, in: *JThS* 62 (2011)755–759. For a clear and comprehensive analysis of the contemporary scholarship regarding Augustine's *De trinitate*, see the unprecedented work of classification by Roland Kany, *Augustins Trinitätsdenken: Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu "De trinitate"* (STAC 22), Tübingen 2007. On the role of the Holy Spirit in the inner life of the Trinity, see Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De trinitate*, Oxford 2008, 125–146.

him, and he would have given you living water.” Commenting on this verse in the fifteenth book of his *Tractates on John*, Augustine explicitly states that *donum dei est spiritus sanctus*.<sup>42</sup> This identification through which Augustine relates God’s gift to love (1 Jn. 4:8) lays the foundation for his relational Trinitarian speculation.

In *On the Trinity*, after having explained that everything we can predicate of God is referred to the three persons equally, as in God is found one essence in three persons (*unam essentiam, tres substantias*),<sup>43</sup> Augustine explains that, for God, *to be great* or *to know* are the same as *to be*.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, we do not find any predicate in God that is external to his very essence. Rather, *greatness* or *knowledge* in their true meaning pertain only to God. However, although all attributes can be predicated of the three persons of the Trinity, Augustine says that each discrete person of the Trinity has some specific properties that pertain to it alone. However, these properties do not relate to the *substance* of the Trinity but rather to its internal *relations*. In this sense it is not possible to call the entire Trinity “Father,” as this title pertains to the Father only. However, Augustine states:

“Neither can the Trinity in any wise be called ‘Son,’ but it can be called, in its entirety, ‘Holy Spirit,’ according to that which is written, ‘God is Spirit’ (Jn. 4:24); because both the Father is spirit and the Son is spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son is holy. Therefore, since the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, and certainly God is holy, and ‘God is Spirit,’ the Trinity can be called also the Holy Spirit.”<sup>45</sup>

42 In addition to the identification of the Spirit with the gift of God, Augustine identifies it with love: in Ioh. tract. 9,8 (CChr.SL 36, 94): “A thorough investigation of the Scriptures does show that the Holy Spirit is love” (*scrutatae Scripturae indicant quod Spiritus sanctus caritas est*). Therefore, in Ioh. tract. 15, Augustine identifies the Spirit as the Trinitarian agent who pours out his love on the Samaritan woman, symbolising in turn the Church which is yet to be justified. Translations of Augustine’s *Tractates on John* are from Retting, FaCh 78. 79. 88. 90. 92 (sometimes adjusted).

43 Trin. V 12 (CChr.SL 50, 218–220). Augustine takes it to be the best translation of the Greek *μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις*: *ibid.* V 10 (50, 216f.). It is worth noting that *ibid.* VII 5 (50, 252–254) Augustine draws a distinction between the words *essentia* and *substantia*. He states that God is called “substance” improperly, for the idea of *subsistere* (to subsist) points to something that constitutes the underlying nature of a subject. On the contrary, the word *essentia* comes from *esse* (to be), thus referring to the proper nature of God, “for he alone truly is, because he is unchangeable.” On the use of *essentia* and *substantia* in Augustine, see Roland J. Teske, Augustine’s Use of “Substantia” in Speaking about God, in: *ModSch* 62 (1985) 147–163; Ayres, Augustine and the Trinity (n. 41) 89f.

44 In my forthcoming monograph, I explain that this identification comes from Augustine’s understanding of the verse of Jn. 5:26. See Hermanin de Reichenfeld, *The Spirit, the World and the Trinity* (n. 11).

45 Trin. V 12 (CChr.SL 50, 219): *Trinitas autem Filius nullo modo dici potest. Spiritus uero Sanctus, secundum id quod scriptum est: Quoniam Deus Spiritus est potest quidem uniuersaliter dici quia et Pater Spiritus et Filius Spiritus, et Pater sanctus et Filius sanctus. Itaque Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, quoniam unus Deus et utique Deus sanctus est, et Deus Spiritus est potest appellari Trinitas et Spiritus et Sanctus.*

The Holy Spirit, therefore, derives his name from the fact that in him the relation between the Father and the Son is expressed. A very similar argument is uttered by Augustine in his *Tractates on John*. Commenting on Jn. 16:B, Augustine explains why the Spirit does not speak on his own, but only repeats what he hears.<sup>46</sup> Here Augustine discusses his hypothesis that the Spirit also proceeds from the Son, finding evidence for this doctrine in Jn. 4:24. Augustine explains that the *proper work* of the Spirit is indicated by his name, which does not suggest a one-way relationship (to the Father and the Son) but rather a *commonality of nature* between the three persons. The Spirit, more than any other person, does not ‘speak on his own’ insofar as he is the very love that binds the other hypostases together:

“And for no other reason I think that he [i. e., God] is properly called ‘Spirit,’ since, even if we are asked about them individually, we can only say that Father and Son are spirit. For ‘God is Spirit’ (Jn. 4:24), that is, God is not body, but spirit. What, therefore, they are called in common or even as individuals, this he ought to be called, I mean the one who is not one of them, but in whom the community of nature of both is evident. Why, therefore, should we not believe that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son since he is also the Spirit of the Son (Jn. 20:22)?”<sup>47</sup>

Here Augustine points out the fact that “spirit” is a name common to Father and Son;<sup>48</sup> therefore, ontologically, the name refers to the commonality of essence between the two. Thus, in Augustine’s interpretation, God is eminently called “spirit” because the Holy Spirit is that person of the Trinity where the perfect communality of nature between the Father and the Son is manifested. According to Augustine, such communality of nature is chiefly expressed by the fact that the Spirit is called the “gift of God” which is identified with “love.” The identification between God and love proceeds alongside that of the Holy Spirit and love in Augustine’s corpus. In *On the Trinity*, Augustine connects the two Johannine

46 Jn. 16:B: “He [i. e., the Spirit] will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears.”

47 In Ioh. tract. 99,7 (CChr.SL 36, 586): *Nec ob aliud existimo ipsum uocari proprie Spiritum: cum etiamsi de singulis interrogemur, non possumus nisi et Patrem et Filium spiritum dicere; quoniam spiritus est Deus, id est, non corpus est Deus, sed spiritus. Quod ergo communiter uocantur et singuli, hoc proprie uocari oportuit eum qui non est unus eorum, sed in quo communitas apparet amborum. Cur ergo non credamus quod etiam de Filio procedat Spiritus sanctus, cum Filii quoque ipse sit Spiritus?* As Scriptural evidence of the double procession of the Spirit Augustine quotes Jn. 20:22: *Si enim non ab eo procederet, non post resurrectionem se repraesentans discipulis suis insufflasset dicens: “Accipite Spiritum sanctum.”*

48 Regarding the use of Jn. 4:24 and the speculation on the proper work of the Holy Spirit, cf. also *ibid.* 122,8(36, 673): *Nempe enim sanctitas uel sanctificatio ad sanctum proprie pertinet Spiritum: unde cum et Pater spiritus sit, et Filius spiritus sit, quoniam “Deus spiritus est” (Jn. 4:24); et Pater sanctus, et Filius sanctus sit: proprio tamen nomine amborum Spiritus uocatur Spiritus sanctus.*

passages – 1 Jn. 4:8–16, where God is said to be love, and Jn. 4:24, where God is said to be Spirit:

“The Scriptures, accordingly, have not said, The Holy Spirit is love [...]. But they have said, God is love; so that it is uncertain and remains to be inquired whether God the Father is love, or God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit, or the Trinity itself which is God. For we are not going to say that God is called love because love itself is a substance worthy of the name of God, but because it is a gift of God [...]. And it is not said, ‘O Lord my love,’ or, ‘You are my love,’ or, ‘God my love;’ but it is said thus, ‘God is love,’ as it is said, ‘God is Spirit.’”<sup>49</sup>

From this passage it is quite clear that Augustine’s identification of the Holy Spirit with love comes from the interconnections of three different Johannine *loci* where God is called Spirit and love and where the very Spirit is called gift. Hence, Augustine does not understand the appellative ‘love’ as something we can predicate of God in reference to our understanding of him. Rather, God is said to be love in the same way in which he is said to be Spirit – that is, in a way related to his very being. However, it is yet to be determined whether God can be predicated “to be Spirit” only from a relational point of view or also from a substantial point of view. Is it something that we should understand as related to the very essence of God or is it just something which concerns the relation between Father, Son, and Spirit? Further on in his analysis, Augustine adds:

“If, then, any one of these three is to be specially called love, what more fitting than that this should be the Holy Spirit? In the sense, that is, that in that simple and highest nature, substance is not one thing, and love another thing, but that substance itself is love, and that love itself is substance, whether in the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, and yet that the Holy Spirit is especially called ‘love.’”<sup>50</sup>

This quotation leads us to the main question in interpreting Augustine’s understanding of the passage. It seems that Augustine is here hinting at the idea that love should not be thought of as distinct from the very substance of God because

49 Trin. XV 27 (CChr.SL 50A, 502): *Non itaque dixit Scriptura, Spiritus Sanctus caritas est [...], sed dixit: Deus caritas est; ut incertum sit, et ideo requirendum, utrum Deus Pater sit caritas, an Deus Filius, an Deus Spiritus Sanctus, an Deus ipsa Trinitas. Neque enim dicturi sumus, non propterea Deum dictum esse caritatem, quod ipsa caritas sit ulla substantia, quae Dei digna sit nomine; sed quod donum sit Dei [...]. Non est autem dictum: “Domine caritas mea;” aut: “Tu es caritas mea;” aut: “Deus caritas mea;” sed ita dictum est: Deus caritas est; sicut dictum est: Deus Spiritus est.* Translation: p. 199 McKenna.

50 Ibid. XV 29 (50A, 504): *Si ergo proprie aliquid horum trium caritas nuncupanda est, quid aptius quam ut hoc sit Spiritus Sanctus? Ut scilicet in illa simplici summaque natura, non sit aliud substantia et aliud caritas; sed substantia ipsa sit caritas, et caritas ipsa sit substantia, siue in Patre, siue in Filio, siue in Spiritu Sancto, et tamen proprie Spiritus Sanctus caritas nuncupetur.* Translation: *ibid.* p. 200.

the *relationship* between the three persons in the Trinity should be considered his own *substance*. Augustine is here understanding love, that is, the communality of Father and Son instantiated in the Holy Spirit, as the very essence of God. In this sense, Augustine is opening the possibility of interpreting Jn. 4:24 – “God is Spirit” – as meaning that the Holy Spirit ought to be considered the substance of the other two hypostases. The problem is much debated in contemporary scholarship, and scholars like Lewis Ayres would admit this possibility.<sup>51</sup> Other scholars, like Joseph O’Leary, disregard it, saying that this would make the Holy Spirit a contingent attribute of the Father and of the Son. Augustine can neither admit an extrinsic bond between Father and Son, as this would negate the simplicity of the Trinity, nor can he postulate the idea that the Spirit is a universal of which Father and Son are particulars. For this reason, in *On the Trinity* Augustine denies that the attributes of the single persons (that is, the relational attributes) should be considered in any way to be the essence of the Trinity.<sup>52</sup> If attributes like “Wisdom” were attributed to the Son only, this would imply that the Father *is not* God without the Son. On the contrary, Augustine repeatedly states that each of the Trinitarian persons is fully divine, although together they are one God. All these considerations lead O’Leary to “rule out the possibility of treating essence as relational” in Augustine’s thought.<sup>53</sup>

However, in the seventh book of *On the Trinity*, Augustine does not rule out the possibility that relationality *as such* could be the Trinity’s essence. Rather, he states that there are some *relational* attributes – e. g., “Word” – that do not pertain to God’s essence. Other attributes, like “Wisdom,” are predicated essentially, so that both the Son and the Father are wise. In this sense, Augustine does not utterly rule out the idea that the Spirit is the essence of the two other persons because both his being *holy* and his being *Spirit* are attributes of the whole Trinity.

51 Ayres, Augustine and the Trinity (n. 41) 258–262.

52 Augustine, trin. VII 1,2; 2,3 (CChr.SL 50, 244 f. 249 f.).

53 O’Leary, Review of ‘Augustine and the Trinity’ (n. 41) 755–759. In addition to opposing the idea that Augustine deemed the Trinity’s essence to be relational, O’Leary backs Karl Rahner’s position regarding the relation between the immanent and economic trinity in Augustine’s thought. Against the opinion of scholars like Johannes Arnold and Basil Studer, who both detected in Augustine’s Trinitarian theology an integrated link between economy and immanence, O’Leary’s criticism is once more based on Augustine’s alleged incapacity to link the economic and the immanent Trinity together, to the point of defining Augustine’s *De trinitate* as a “disappointing conclusion to the great period of Trinitarian thought.” Joseph O’Leary, *The Invisible Mission of the Son in Origen and Augustine*, in: Wolfgang Biener t /Uwe Kühnweg (eds.), *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des vierten Jahrhunderts* (BETL 137), Leuven 1999, 605–622, here 621. See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, New York 1970, 17f.; Johannes Arnold, *Begriff und heilsökonomische Bedeutung der göttlichen Sendungen in Augustinus’ De trinitate*, in: *RechAug* 25 (1991) 3–69; Basil Studer, *Augustins De trinitate, eine christliche Botschaft*, in: *Aug. 45* (2005) 501–517.

In this sense it is worth exploring Augustine's use of Jn. 4:24 in his work *On Faith and Creed*. Here Augustine refers explicitly to the possibility of considering the Holy Spirit as the deepest essence of God:

"Some, however, have gone so far as to believe that the communion of the Father and the Son and, so to speak, their Godhead (*deitas*), which the Greeks designate *θεότης*, is the Holy Spirit; so that, inasmuch as the Father is God and the Son God, the Godhead itself, in which they are united with each other – to wit, the former by begetting the Son, and the latter by cleaving to the Father – should [thereby] be constituted equal with him by whom he is begotten. This Godhead, then, which they wish to be understood likewise as the love and charity subsisting between these two [Persons], the one toward the other, they affirm to have received the name of the Holy Spirit. And this opinion of theirs they support by many proofs drawn from the Scriptures; [...] Above all, however, that testimony is employed by the upholders of this opinion, where it is thus written, [...] 'God is Spirit' (Jn. 4:24)."<sup>54</sup>

Augustine attributes this interpretation to some wise theologians, making this passage even more problematic for interpreters. At a first sight, Augustine does not seem to take a definitive position on the matter; looking more closely, it is worth considering two factors. Firstly, as noted by Eginhard Meijering,<sup>55</sup> Augustine does not use the expression *ausi sunt* in a negative fashion. On the contrary, he openly criticises those theologians who oppose this idea – namely "those who think that the said communion, which we call either Godhead, or love, or charity, is not a substance"<sup>56</sup> – by claiming that they are influenced by a bodily understanding of the Godhead. Secondly, it is worth stressing the utter originality of Augustine's use of Jn. 4:24 in relation to his predecessors, which he implicitly mentions in the abovementioned citation.<sup>57</sup> For instance, in his work *On the Holy Spirit*, Ambrose

54 Augustine, *fid. et symb.* 19 (CSEL 41, 23f.): *Ausi sunt tamen quidam ipsam communionem Patris et Filii, atque, ut ita dicam, deitatem, quam Graeci θεότης appellant, Spiritum Sanctum credere; ut, quoniam Pater Deus et Filius Deus, ipsa deitas, qua sibi copulantur et ille gignendo Filium et ille Patri cohaerendo, ei a quo est genitus aequetur. Hanc ergo deitatem, quam etiam dilectionem in se inuicem amborum caritatemque volunt intellegi, Spiritum Sanctum appellatum dicunt. Multisque Scripturarum documentis adsunt huic opinioni suae [...]. Maxime autem illo testimonio utuntur assertores huius sententiae, quod scriptum est: Quod natum est de carne, caro est; et quod natum est de Spiritu, spiritus est: quoniam Deus Spiritus est.* Translation: p. 129f. Meijer ing. Before the quotation of Jn. 4:24 Augustine inserts that of Jn. 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." However, he does not relate Jn. 3:6 with the essence of the Trinity but rather with our regeneration that occurs through the Holy Spirit.

55 Augustine, *De fide et symbolo*: Introduction, Translation, Commentary by Eginhard P. Meijer ing, Amsterdam 1987, 129f.

56 Augustine, *fid. et symb.* 20 (CSEL 41, 25–27).

57 The peculiarity of Augustine's interpretation compared with that of his alleged sources is also noted by Olivier Du Roy, *L'Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin: Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire* jusqu'en 391, Paris 1966, 486 f.

writes that Jn. 4:24 refers to the *deitas* (θεότης) of the Holy Spirit,<sup>58</sup> meaning only that the Holy Spirit is divine and not that it is God's substance. Later on, he affirms that the Spirit might be the godhead of the Father, just as the Son is said to be his eternal power.<sup>59</sup> In this instance, Ambrose proposes an interpretation of the passage that is much closer to Origen's idea of the divine nature of the Spirit than to Augustine's affirmation that the Spirit is God's relational substance. Similarly, Marius Victorinus, in *Against Arius*, interprets Jn. 4:24 as meaning that the Trinitarian persons are all spirit and are all consubstantial.<sup>60</sup> However, Victorinus' affirmation that the "spirit" is the substance of the three persons proceeds alongside the consideration that the three persons are expressions of the movements or moments of God. Therefore, God is said to be spirit, but this does not imply that the Holy Spirit, as a discrete person, is the true substance of God.

Augustine, therefore, is here twisting the interpretations given by these two previous theologians. The instrumental use of Ambrose and Victorinus suggests that Augustine's theological concern is to show that the deity of God is the Holy Spirit. This is further confirmed by Augustine's subsequent words which might be taken as the conclusion of his argument:

"Wherefore, if in this passage mention is made of the Holy Spirit, when it is said, 'for God is Spirit' (Jn. 4:24), they maintain that we must take note that it is not said, for the Spirit is God, but, 'for God is Spirit;' so that the very Godhead of the Father and the Son is in this passage called God, that is, the Holy Spirit. To this is added another testimony which the Apostle John offers, when he says, 'For God is love.' For here, in like manner, what he says is not, love is God, but, God is love; so that the very Godhead is taken to be love."<sup>61</sup>

Augustine specifies that we should not interpret the passage as meaning God's identification with the Spirit but rather as recognising that "God is the Holy Spirit." This seems to me a good indication of a tentative understanding of God's relational essence. According to Augustine, Jn. 4:24 is communicating not only the idea that the Holy Spirit is divine but also that the deity of God itself is the same in the Father and the Son because it is instantiated in the Holy Spirit. In this sense, his instrumental use of previous theologians might indicate his concerns about being misunderstood. Augustine says that Father and Son are Spirit as they are

58 Ambrose, spir. III 10,59 (CSEL 79, 174).

59 Ibid. III 3,13 (79, 155f.).

60 Marius Victorinus, adv. Arium I 57f. (CSEL 83/1, 155–158).

61 Augustine, fid. et symb. 19 (CSEL 41, 25): *Quapropter si Spiritus Sancti hoc loco facta est commemoratio, cum dictum est: Quoniam Deus Spiritus est; animadvertendum dicunt, non dictum esse: Quoniam Spiritus Deus est; sed: Quoniam Deus Spiritus est; ut ipsa deitas Patris et Filii hoc loco dicta sit Deus, quod est Spiritus Sanctus. Huc accedit aliud testimonium quod dicit Ioannes apostolus: Quoniam Deus dilectio est. Etiam hic enim non ait: Dilectio Deus est; sed: Deus dilectio est; ut ipsa deitas dilectio intellegatur.* Translation: p. 129 f. Meijer ing.

bonded together by their very essence – that is, the Spirit who is love. The Holy Spirit is God's essence because of his relational nature; insofar as he is communion and love, the Spirit shows that the very deity is communion of the three persons. Thus, Augustine deems the Spirit to be God in a very privileged sense: not only "God is Spirit," but the Spirit is also "love," which is the proper definition of God in the Scriptures.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Augustine's main theological concern is to show the absolute consubstantiality of the three persons of the Trinity against possible subordinationist interpretations of the Trinity. As the Spirit is unity in relation – that is, communion – so he instantiates the entire divinity in his person, which is indeed unity in relation. The depiction of the Trinity as the eternal process of generation and relationality represents the very essence of the Augustinian Trinity and is fully understood in the Holy Spirit.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article has shown that both authors understood Jn. 4:24 in a Trinitarian fashion, although they were driven by different theological concerns. Origen defended the absolute transcendence and immateriality of the Father, as opposed to any Gnostic and materialist interpretations. Origen is representative of an early period of Christian speculation, where the unity in the Trinity could be explained simply by the affirmation of the utter transcendence and unity of the Father, whereas the Son and the Holy Spirit were divine solely by participation. By contrast, Augustine needed to defend God's unity with regard not only to his action but also his essence. Locating God's unity in the Holy Spirit, he rebutted any subordinationist interpretation, like that of Origen. His reference to the Holy Spirit as God's essence represented a daring theological suggestion that arose from his understanding of the Johannine gospel. Augustine's interpretation responded to a post-Nicene concern to explain the Trinitarian unity not only by affirming the inseparability of its works but also the utter consubstantiality of its hypostases. In conclusion, while Origen's interpretation of Jn. 4:24 allows the interpreter to affirm that "the Spirit is God," it still does not allow him to say that "God is the Spirit." On the contrary, Augustine not only affirms that "the Spirit is God," but also that God is such because of the Spirit.

62 In this regard, see Adam Kotzko, *Gift and Communion: The Holy Spirit in Augustine's De trinitate*, in: SJTh 64 (2010) 1–12.



## *Secundum propositum hominis*

Augustine's Refutation of a Popular Interpretation of Rom. 8:28\*

MORTEN KOCK MØLLER, PRAGUE

### 1. Introduction

In this article, I would like to discuss an element in Augustine's exegesis of the Epistle to the Romans that could possibly constitute an example of his interaction with Origen's *Commentary on Romans*. We encounter in Augustine's anti-Pelagian works and other of his later writings several instances of apparent reception of this *Commentary*. These instances are always discrete and the source of inspiration (or object of criticism) is never openly stated. Augustine's interaction with Rufinus of Aquileia's recent Latin translation of the *Commentary* (traditionally dated to about 405/6) appears to have been most intense in his earliest anti-Pelagian treatises *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo paruulorum* (411/12) and *De spiritu et littera* (412/B). In two articles published in 1992, Caroline Hammond Bammel documented a number of possible instances of reception of the Latin *Commentary* in these works.<sup>1</sup> Commenting on the limited nature of her own inquiry, Bammel stated that it "would be interesting to continue looking at further works of Augustine" in order to ascertain the extent of the influence of the *Commentary* on Augustine's thought and his exegesis of Romans in particular.<sup>2</sup> Bammel's suggestion has only been partially fulfilled by subsequent studies.<sup>3</sup> In an article published posthumously in 1996, Bammel herself claimed to have detected inspiration from the *Commentary* in Augustine's second exposition of Psalm 32 in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (the date of this sermon is disputed but Bammel assigns it to 411)<sup>4</sup>. While

\* This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 676258.

1 See Caroline Hammond Bammel, Rufinus' Translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans and the Pelagian Controversy, in: *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concordia* (AAAd 39), Udine 1992, 131–50; ead., Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul, in: *Aug. 32* (1992) 341–368.

2 Ibid. 362.

3 See Thomas P. Scheck, Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans, *Notre Dame IN* 2008, 86–103; Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo*, 396–430, Oxford 2012.

4 Caroline Hammond Bammel, Justification by Faith in Augustine and Origen, in: *JEH* 47 (1996) 223–235.

some of the alleged instances of reception posited by Bammel can be drawn into question, I believe that a good number of them stand up to scrutiny.<sup>5</sup>

In his works *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* (420/21) and *De correptione et gratia* (426/27), Augustine examines the controversial phrase *secundum propositum* (κατὰ πρόθεσιν) from Rom. 8:28 and gives a relatively detailed refutation of the idea that this “purpose” should be ascribed to human beings and not to God. Paul’s example of Jacob and Esau (Rom. 9:10–B) plays a crucial role in Augustine’s argument. I will consider whether Augustine’s comments on this question could plausibly be seen as a reaction to the interpretation of *secundum propositum* given by Origen in the *Commentary*. But before examining this question, it would be worth providing some context for my inquiry by briefly describing the general character of Augustine’s reception of the *Commentary*.

## 2. Augustine’s Reception of the Latin *Commentary on Romans*

When we examine the possible instances of reception of the Latin *Commentary* in the early anti-Pelagian works, it becomes fairly obvious that Augustine cherry-picked elements of exegesis that could be useful in the polemical battle at hand.<sup>6</sup> The possible instances of reception in *De peccatorum meritis* are all related to the disputed issues concerning infant baptism, the transmission of sin and the possibility of living a sinless life.<sup>7</sup> In *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Augustine appears to borrow elements from Origen’s exegesis of Rom. 4:1–8 demonstrating that good works have faith as their basis.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to these examples of a positive reception of the *Commentary*, Bammel also detected a ‘reaction’ against some of the views expressed by Origen in Augustine’s *De spiritu et littera*.<sup>9</sup> Thomas P. Scheck has taken Bammel’s work a step further by examining Augustine’s subsequent

5 In some cases, Hammond Bammel failed to consider how sources other than the Latin *Commentary on Romans* could potentially account for the similar exegetical ideas which she found between this work and Augustine’s anti-Pelagian treatises and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. Likewise, some of Augustine’s apparent ‘reactions’ against Origen’s exegesis might be ascribed to other influences (such as his recent reading of Pelagius’ *Expositiones in XIII epistulas Pauli*). For a detailed examination of the parallels given by Hammond Bammel, see my forthcoming PhD dissertation: Morten Kock Møller, *Echoes of Origen: Augustine’s Reception of the Commentary on Romans*.

6 Hammond Bammel, *Augustine* (n. 1) 39; Scheck, *Origen* (n. 3) 90.

7 Hammond Bammel, *ibid.*

8 Ead., *Justification* (n. 4). Hammond Bammel’s suggestion (*ibid.* 224 f.), however, that Augustine’s understanding of Paul’s syllogism in Rom. 4:2 is inspired by Origen’s exegesis is not unobjectionable. A similar understanding of Paul’s syllogism can be found in Ambrosiaster’s *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles* which Augustine also knew: Ambrosiaster, *comm. in Rom. 4,2* (CSEL 81/1, 129).

9 Hammond Bammel, *Augustine* (n. 1) 31.

work *De fide et operibus* (412/B). Scheck likewise claims that Augustine found inspiration in Origen's insistence that faith and good works are intimately connected.<sup>10</sup> But he also points out that Augustine appears to correct Origen's exegesis of Rom. 2:12.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, Dominic Keech has claimed that Augustine's anti-Pelagian exegesis of Rom. 8:3 is inspired by the *Commentary*.<sup>12</sup>

Since my article deals with a possible instance of 'negative' reception, I will now briefly characterize Augustine's apparent criticisms of the *Commentary on Romans*.<sup>13</sup> He seems to be critical of Origen's eagerness to discover something of spiritual importance even in the smallest linguistic details in Romans. In his exegesis of Rom. 2:12, Origen draws a fine distinction between the parallel verbs "will perish" (*peribunt*) and "will be judged" (*iudicabuntur*) in an attempt to "soften" Paul's otherwise harsh statement about the Gentiles that "as many as have sinned without the law will also perish without the law" (Rom. 2:12). Origen asks if it might be possible to discover some hidden "divine goodness" (*diuina bonitas*) under the rough surface of Paul's words.<sup>14</sup> He insists that God does not actively cause anybody to perish and that *peribunt* should not be taken to imply this. Drawing on other scriptural texts (e. g., Lk. 19:10), Origen argues that *peribunt* has a different meaning than *iudicabuntur* and that it rather signifies God's concern to save those who are perishing on their own account. In *De fide et operibus*, Augustine appears to censure Origen's distinction between *peribunt* and *iudicabuntur*, as Scheck has pointed out.<sup>15</sup> Augustine states that the two verbs mean exactly the same thing and he stresses the severity of God's judgement.<sup>16</sup>

10 Scheck, Origen (n. 3) 96–98.

11 Ibid. 99.

12 Keech, Anti-Pelagian Christology (n. 3).

13 Hammond Bammel, Augustine (n. 1) 362, claims that in spir. et litt. 7,12 (CSEL 60, 163f.) Augustine "clearly corrects" the explanation of Paul's name given in the *Commentary on Romans*. But it is not easy to see why the explanation preferred by Origen would have been objectionable to Augustine. In my opinion, a more likely target of Augustine's criticism on this point is Pelagius' *Expositiones*. According to Pelagius, the biblical custom of receiving a new name (Abraham, Sarah and Peter are given as examples by Pelagius in addition to Paul) signifies the progress in virtue made by the person in question: expos. in Rom. 1,1 (TaS 9/2, 8). This explanation could well have been viewed as problematic by Augustine since it might seem to emphasize Saul's own spiritual progress without divine assistance. If Saul had 'earned' himself a new name from God by his virtuous deeds, grace could naturally be understood as a 'reward' obtained as a result of these good works. The explanation preferred by Origen, on the contrary, does not emphasize the aspect of virtue or merit. Instead he says that it was simply customary for Jews like Paul to carry several names. For practical reasons, the apostle used his native name Saul when he communicated with his fellow Jews and Paul when he addressed a non-Jewish audience: in Rom. comm. I 2,3f. (SC 532, 150–152).

14 Ibid. II 6,3 (532, 340).

15 Scheck, Origen (n. 3) 99.

16 Augustine, fid. et op. 23,42 (CSEL 41, 86): *Nec de his igitur uerbis mitior ulla condicio promittenda est sic in Deum credere uolentibus, ut permaneant in perditis moribus, multo mi-*

In *De spiritu et littera*, Augustine takes great pains to show that the “Gentiles” referred to in Rom. 2:14f. are actually Gentile Christians who have already received the gift of divine grace.<sup>17</sup> This passage was particularly troubling to Augustine since Paul could seem to say that non-Christian Gentiles are capable of fulfilling the “law” without the assistance of grace. Equally problematic is the apostle’s statement in Rom. 2:10 that there will be “glory, honour and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” In the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen discusses these verses at length and arrives at the conclusion that Paul here seems to promise some sort of heavenly “glory,” “honour” and “peace” even to non-Christians: “The unbeliever shall not lose the remuneration for the good works he has done, his unbelief notwithstanding.”<sup>18</sup> This exposition must have been “most objectionable” to Augustine, as Bammel has said.<sup>19</sup> It certainly seems likely that Augustine’s comments in *De spiritu et littera* are aimed at the *Commentary on Romans*. If one were to adopt the exegesis given by Origen, it would completely undermine Augustine’s doctrine of grace.

Augustine appears to correct another of Origen’s distinctions in Rom. 3:30, where the prepositional phrases “from faith” (*ex fide*) and “through faith” (*per fidem*) are given different meanings.<sup>20</sup> In the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen says that *ex fide* describes the Jewish path to salvation whereas *per fidem* describes the way of the Gentiles.<sup>21</sup> He suggests that the Gentiles “begin with good works” (*a bonis operibus exorsi*) and subsequently “reach the summit of perfection through faith” (*per fidem summam perfectionis accipiunt*), whereas the Jews are justified in the opposite order.<sup>22</sup> In *De spiritu et littera*, Augustine insists that the two prepositions *ex* and *per* in Rom. 3:30 merely constitute a “variety of expression” (*ad uarietatem locutionis*) on Paul’s part without any difference in meaning.<sup>23</sup> According to

*nus de illis, ubi apostolus ait: Qui sine lege peccauerunt, sine lege peribunt; qui autem in lege peccauerunt, per legem iudicabuntur, tamquam hoc loco aliquid distet inter perire et iudicari, cum alio uerbo hoc idem significatum sit.*

17 Spir. et litt. 26,43f. (CSEL 60, 196–198).

18 Origen, in Rom. comm. II 5,26 (SC 532, 334): *non credenti si quid boni operis egerit excepta infidelitate remuneratio non peribit*. Translation: Scheck, FaCh 103, 127

19 Hammond Bammel, Augustine (n. 1) 362.

20 It is a curious coincidence that Pelagius also appears to correct Origen’s distinctions in Rom. 2:12 and 3:30: expos. in Rom. 2,12 (TaS 9/2, 22f.); 3,30 (9/2, 35).

21 In the Tura Papyrus (which contains excerpts from Books V and VI of Origen’s original Greek *Commentary*), we also find an attempt at drawing a distinction between the corresponding prepositional phrases *ἐκ πίστεως* and *διὰ τῆς πίστεως*. See Jean Scherer (ed.), *Le commentaire d’Origène sur Rom. III.5–V.7 d’après les extraits du papyrus no. 88748 du Musée du Caire et les fragments de la Philocalie et du Vaticanus gr. 762 (Bibliothèque d’Étude 27)*, Cairo 1957, 170–174.

22 Origen, in Rom. comm. III 7,7 (SC 539, 162). Translation: Scheck, FaCh 103, 233.

23 Augustine, spir. et litt. 29,50 (CSEL 60, 205): *Unus enim Deus qui iustificat circumcisionem ex fide et praepitium per fidem; quod non ad aliquam differentiam dictum est, tamquam aliud*

Bammel, Augustine's motivation for criticizing the *Commentary on Romans* on this point could be that the interpretation "results in diminishing the distinction between law and grace."<sup>24</sup> The idea that Gentiles "begin with good works" would logically lead to the collapse of Augustine's rigid salvation-historical scheme with its clear demarcation line between life *sub lege* and *sub gratia*. Only with the assistance of divine grace are human beings given the capacity to perform works that are truly good.

There is reason to believe that Augustine paid special attention to the exegesis of Rom. 5:12–21 when he studied the Latin *Commentary*. Several of the elements which he seems to have borrowed and employed positively as exegetical arguments in the course of the Pelagian controversy come from the section of the *Commentary* dealing with the abovementioned passage.<sup>25</sup> However, Augustine's comments in *De peccatorum meritis* on Rom. 5:18f. and Paul's use of the word "many" (*multi*) could well be understood as a discreet criticism of the *Commentary*. Augustine finds it necessary to clarify that Paul actually refers to "all" (*omnes*) human beings when he says that "many" became sinners owing to Adam's disobedience (Rom. 5:19), the reason being that every single person is brought into this world by means of a "carnal generation" (*generatio carnalis*) through which Adam's sin is propagated to his descendants.<sup>26</sup> In the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen claims that the shift from "all" to "many" in Rom. 5:12, 5:15f. and 5:18f. is not motivated by stylistic concerns but that it rather contains a "hidden mystery" (*aliquid et latentis esse mysterii*).<sup>27</sup> He tries to resolve the apparent contradiction between Paul's earlier statement in Rom. 5:12 according to which "all have sinned" and Rom. 5:19 which says that only "many" have become "sinners." There is a difference, Origen explains, between "having sinned" (*peccasse*) and "being a sinner" (*peccator esse*).<sup>28</sup> In the last case, sinning has become a "habit" (*consuetudo*) for the person in question.<sup>29</sup> This distinction allows Origen to downplay the consequences of Adam's transgression significantly. Even though he admits that even the most righteous people sin occasionally, not all become habitual "sinners" as a result of Adam's disobedience. In his *Expositiones*, Pelagius shows a general tendency towards downplaying Paul's statements on the universality of human sin.<sup>30</sup> But he does not clearly reveal whether he thinks that Paul's shift from *omnes* to

*sit 'ex fide' et aliud 'per fidem,' sed ad uarietatem locutionis. Alio quippe loco cum de gentibus diceret, hoc est de praepotio: Praeuidens, inquit, scriptura, quia ex fide iustificat gentes Deus.*

24 Hammond Bammel, Augustine (n. 1) 362.

25 Ibid. 359–361.

26 Augustine, pecc. mer. et rem. I 15, 19 (CSEL 60, 19).

27 Origen, in Rom. comm. V 2, 6 (SC 539, 410).

28 Ibid. V 5, 2 (539, 436).

29 Ibid.

30 See, e. g., Pelagius, expos. in Rom. 3, 12 (TaS 9/2, 30); 5, 12 (9/2, 45).

*multi* has a significance in this regard.<sup>31</sup> So the target of Augustine's criticism is probably not Pelagius. But the situation becomes more complicated owing to the circumstance that Ambrosiaster also understands *omnes* as meaning *plures* and *multi*. He explains Paul's wording in Rom. 5:19 as referring to the fact that not all human beings have sinned in a manner similar to Adam (Rom. 5:14).<sup>32</sup> It is, of course, perfectly possible that Augustine's censure is aimed at both Origen and Ambrosiaster in this case.

In summary, a certain pattern seems to emerge when we consider the possible instances of 'negative' reception of the Latin *Commentary on Romans* in Augustine. The Bishop of Hippo appears to have been alert to interpretations of Paul's Epistle that tend towards breaking down his clearly drawn dichotomies between Law and Gospel and faith and works. If we understand the exegesis of Origen as the unspoken backdrop of Augustine's statements, it makes perfect sense that he would feel the need to comment on seemingly obscure exegetical details such as the abovementioned prepositional phrases in Rom. 3:30.

### 3. Augustine's Interpretation of Rom. 8:28 and 9:10–13 in *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*

In the second book of his work *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*,<sup>33</sup> Augustine attempts to refute the following doctrinal statement made by eighteen "Pelagian" bishops in a letter to bishop Rufus of Thessalonica: "We confess [...] that baptism is necessary for all ages, and that grace, moreover, assists the good purpose of each one; but yet that it does not infuse the love of virtue into a reluctant one, because there is no acceptance of persons with God."<sup>34</sup>

Augustine grants that this statement, taken by itself, could be "said in a catholic manner" (*catholice dictum*) and thus be acceptable, but, given the identity of

31 Ibid. 5,19 (9/2, 48): *Sicut exemplo inoboedientiae Adae peccauerunt multi, ita et Christi oboedientia iustificantur multi. Grande ergo crimen inoboedientiae est, quod tantos occidit.*

32 Ambrosiaster, comm. in Rom. 5,19 (CSEL 81/1,185): *Quos supra omnes dixit, hic 'plures' et 'multos' significat. Plures enim delictum Adae secuti sunt praevaricando, non omnes, et multi iusti constituentur per fidem Christi non omnes.*

33 For an introduction to the historical context of *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* and its content, see Otto Wermelinger, "Décision du concile africain de 418 sur la grâce et la liberté, présentée par Augustin à Boniface, évêque de Rome, in: Pierre-Yves Fux / Jean-Michel Roessli / Otto Wermelinger (eds.), *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin: africanité et universalité* (Paradosis 45/1), Fribourg 2003, 219–226.

34 Augustine, c. epist. Pel. II 5,10 (CSEL 60, 469): *baptisma, inquit, omnibus necessarium esse aetatibus confitemur, gratiam quoque adiuuare uniuscuiusque bonum propositum, non tamen reluctanti studium uirtutis inmittere, quia personarum acceptio non est apud Deum.* Translation: Wallis, NPNF 1/5, 395.

its authors, the intended meaning is clearly problematic.<sup>35</sup> According to Augustine, they wish to express the view that divine grace is given in response to the prior “good purpose” (*bonum propositum*) of human beings. In this way, Julian of Eclanum and his fellow bishops seek to uphold their notion of “free choice” (*liberum arbitrium*) against the perceived “fatalism” that they see in the position held by Augustine. He, on the other hand, finds the “Pelagian” doctrine seriously deficient because it implies that divine grace is given as a reward owing to human “merit.” Augustine never tires of repeating that such a notion contradicts the very definition of grace, since grace must be absolutely gratuitous.<sup>36</sup> In his attempt to refute the position held by the “Pelagian” bishops, Augustine examines a number of scriptural texts that are relevant to the question at hand. Among these passages is Rom. 8:28–30:

“For they [i. e., the ‘Pelagian’ bishops] think, perhaps, that the apostle thus said, ‘For we know that He works all things for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to the purpose’ (Rom. 8:28), so as to wish the purpose of human beings (*propositum hominis*) to be understood, which purpose, as a good merit, the mercy of the God that calls might follow; being ignorant that it is said, ‘Who are called according to the purpose,’ so that there may be understood the purpose of God, not human beings, whereby those whom He foreknew and predestined as conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29), He elected before the foundation of the world. For not all the called are called according to the purpose, since ‘many are called, few are chosen’ (Mt. 22:14).”<sup>37</sup>

Here Augustine cites an interpretation of the prepositional phrase *secundum propositum* in Rom. 8:28, according to which this “purpose” should be ascribed to human beings rather than God (*ut propositum hominis uellet intellegi*). Given this understanding of the phrase, Paul’s meaning could be that divine predestination takes the “good purpose” of individual human beings into account when deciding whom to elect. The motivation behind such an interpretation would clearly be to safeguard *liberum arbitrium*, in that it presumably would be up to us to cultivate such a “good purpose” in ourselves. Augustine’s “perhaps” (*fortasse*) probably reveals that he does not know for certain whether the Pelagian bishops actually

35 Ibid. IV 6,13 (60, 533).

36 Ibid. IV 6,15 (60, 536–538).

37 Ibid. II 10,22 (60, 483f.): *Putant enim fortasse ita dixisse apostolum: Scimus quia diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum his, qui secundum propositum uocati sunt, ut propositum hominis uellet intellegi, quod propositum tamquam bonum meritum sequatur misericordia uocantis Dei, ignorantes ideo dictum esse: Qui secundum propositum uocati sunt, ut Dei, non hominis propositum intellegatur, quo eos, quos praesciuit et praedestinauit conformes imaginis filii sui, elegit ante mundi constitutionem. Non enim omnes uocati secundum propositum sunt uocati, quoniam multi uocati, pauci electi.* Translation: Wallis, NPNF 1/5, 401 (modified).

ascribe to such an interpretation of *secundum propositum* or not. But he nonetheless finds it worth the effort to gainsay this exegesis of Rom. 8:28.

Augustine's hermeneutical procedure consists in marshalling two parallel Pauline passages where the term *propositum* is also used, namely Rom. 9:11 and 2 Tim. 1:9.<sup>38</sup> In both these cases, *propositum* is clearly ascribed to God through the noun *Dei* and the pronoun *suum*, respectively. These parallel texts thus help clarifying the meaning of *secundum propositum* in Rom. 8:28, where such an additional word is lacking. On the basis of the two aforementioned proof-texts, Augustine concludes that *propositum* also must be attributed to God in Rom. 8:28:

“This, then, is the purpose of God, whereof it is said, ‘He works together all things for good for those who are called according to the purpose’ (Rom. 8:28). But subsequent grace indeed assists the good purpose of human beings, but the purpose would not itself exist if grace did not precede.”<sup>39</sup>

Thus Augustine grants that grace does indeed assist the *bonum propositum hominis* but he also insists that even the very existence of this “good purpose” itself should be attributed to the workings of grace. In our current state of sin, a human being can only be converted to the good if he “is assisted by God’s grace so that he might will” (*gratia Dei [...] adiuuatur ut uelit*).<sup>40</sup> Paul’s example of Jacob and Esau (Rom. 9:10–B) plays a central role in Augustine’s argument. Paul’s statement that divine election is “not of works, but of him that calls” (*non ex operibus, sed ex uocante dictum est*, Rom. 9:12) demonstrates beyond a shadow of doubt that neither present nor foreseen future “works” are taken into account.<sup>41</sup> The same principle applies to the *bonum propositum* of human beings. Augustine states that there is absolutely nothing which “sets” one human being “apart” from another so as to merit election (*quis enim te discernit?*, 1 Cor. 4:7). Therefore, it would be a great mistake to think that one’s “faith,” “purpose” or “merit” can achieve this (*discernit me fides mea, propositum meum, meritum meum*).<sup>42</sup>

38 For the development of Augustine’s exegesis of Rom. 9:11, see Lenka Karfiková, *Is Romans 9,11 Proof for or against the Pre-Existence of the Soul? Origen and Augustine in Comparison*, in: Brouria Biton-Ashkelony et al. (eds.), *Origeniana Duodecima: Origen’s Legacy in the Holy Land – A Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem* (BETL 302), Leuven 2019, 627–641.

39 Augustine, c. epist. Pel. II 10,22 (CSEL 60, 484): *Hoc ergo est propositum Dei, unde dicitur: Omnia cooperantur in bonum his, qui secundum propositum uocati sunt. Hominis autem propositum bonum adiuuat quidem subsequens gratia, sed nec ipsum esset nisi praecederet gratia*. Translation: Wallis, NPNF 1/5, 401 (modified).

40 Ibid. I 18,36 (60, 453).

41 Ibid. II 7,15 (60, 477f.).

42 Ibid. (60, 476).

The “Pelagian” authors of the cited doctrinal statement are concerned that Augustine’s doctrine of unmerited grace logically leads to the troubling conclusion that God shows partiality towards some people and simply ignores others. If divine grace “infuses the love of virtue” (cf. *non tamen reluctanti studium uirtutis inmittere*) into the hearts of otherwise unwilling human beings, as Augustine’s doctrine could seem to suggest, this might draw the biblical affirmation that “there is no acceptance of persons with God” (*personarum acceptio non est apud Deum*, Rom. 2:11) into question. In the view of Augustine’s critics, grace does not force itself upon someone who has chosen to resist it. If grace is simply granted to someone without an active choice on the part of the receiver, God seems to show undue favouritism when this privilege is not given to everybody. Augustine attempts to answer this criticism by employing the Gospel parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1–16). As in his watershed work *Ad Simplicianum*, Augustine subtly adjusts the parable so that it does not concern the wages which the landowner (i. e., God) owes his workers but rather the “debt” which all human beings “owe” to God because of Adam’s transgression.<sup>43</sup> Just as the landowner is within his rights to pay his workers the same wage for different amounts of work, so God is free to remit the debt of those whom he wants to save and to retain it in the case of others. Augustine insists that God cannot fairly be charged with “acceptance of persons” (*acceptio personarum*) since there is no injustice in treating debtors differently.<sup>44</sup>

Augustine is aware that someone might object to his interpretation of Rom. 9:10–13 by pointing out that Paul does not explicitly rule out the possibility of election based on foreseen “future works” (*futura opera*). It is of course obvious that Jacob did not possess any merits when he was still in his mother’s womb. But it might be suggested that the apostle presupposed the doctrine of divine “foreknowledge” (*praescientia*) and thus that God already knew what kind of person Jacob would later become. In this way, divine election and predestination would not display “favouritism” but rather be based upon “future works.” Unsurprisingly, Augustine is eager to refute such an interpretation:

“On which account you are certainly foolish who, when the Truth declares, ‘Not of works, but of Him that calls, it was said’ (Rom. 9:12), say that Jacob was loved on account of future works which God foreknew that he would do, and thus contradict the apostle when he says, ‘Not of works;’ as if he could not have said, ‘Not of present, but of future works.’ But he says, ‘Not of works,’ that he might commend grace; ‘but if of grace, now is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace’ (Rom. 11:5). For grace, not due, but free, precedes, that

43 Simpl. I 2,16 (CChr.SL 44, 41f.).

44 C. epist. Pel. II 7,13 (CSEL 60, 474).

by it good works may be done; but if good works should precede, grace should be repaid, as it were, to works, and thus grace should be no more grace.”<sup>45</sup>

The notion of “future works” is equally problematic to Augustine since the hypothetically foreseen merits would still be logically prior to grace even if they were not temporally prior. Such a notion is unacceptable since it draws into question the gratuitous nature of grace. In Augustine’s view, Paul would surely have mentioned “future works” in the context of his discussion of Jacob and Esau if such merits could have explained the mystery of divine election.

In his later work *De correptione et gratia* (426/27), Augustine again criticizes the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation and uses very similar arguments.<sup>46</sup> Rom. 9:11 and 2 Tim. 1:9 are once more marshalled as proof-texts against the wrong-headed interpretation. In *De correptione*, Augustine even positively adopts the phrase *secundum propositum* as a useful shorthand for his own doctrine of predestination. The Pauline phrase becomes synonymous with the effectual “calling” that Augustine described as *uocatio congrua* or *apta* in *Ad Simplicianum*.<sup>47</sup> Only those human beings who receive this special “calling” which is “according to God’s purpose” accept the divine gift of faith and persevere in this faith “until the end” of their lives (*perseuerantia usque in finem*).<sup>48</sup> Augustine also briefly censures the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation in *De praedestinatione sanctorum* (428/29) but without discussing it in detail.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, in none of these works does Augustine reveal the source (or sources) of this interpretation, and he does not provide us with any obvious clues. I shall suggest that Augustine’s censure is aimed at Origen’s *Commentary on Romans*. As we shall see, however, a number of patristic authors interpret Rom. 8:28 in a manner similar to the Alexandrian. So it is quite possible that Augustine had other exegetes in mind in addition to Origen.

45 Ibid. II 7,15 (60, 477f.): *Propter quod profecto desipitis, quia dicente ueritate: Non ex operibus, sed ex uocante dictum est, uos dicitis ex futuris operibus quae Deus illum facturum esse praesciebat, Iacob fuisse dilectum, atque ita contradicitis apostolo dicenti: non ex operibus, quasi non posset dicere: non ex praesentibus, sed futuris operibus. Sed ait: Non ex operibus, ut gratiam commendaret; si autem gratia, iam non ex operibus; alioquin gratia iam non est gratia. Praecedit namque non debita, sed gratuita gratia, ut per illam fiant bona opera, ne, si praecesserint bona opera, tamquam operibus reddatur gratia ac sic gratia iam non sit gratia.* Translation: Wallis, NPNF 1/5, 398.

46 Corr. et grat. 7,15 (PL 44, 925).

47 Simpl. I 2,13 (CChr.SL 44, 37f.). See Lenka Karfiková, *Grace and the Will According to Augustine* (SVigChr 15), Leiden 2012, 76–78.

48 Corr. et grat. 9,23 (PL 44, 929 f.); 12,31 (44, 936 f.).

49 Praed. sanct. 18,37 (HL 44, 987f.).

4. The Notion of *propositum* in the Latin *Commentary on Romans*

The notion of *propositum* is a key concept in Rufinus' Latin version of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*. Already in the preface attributed to Origen, human *propositum* is presented as a doctrine that must be defended against "heretical" readings of Romans which seek to cast Paul as a proponent of determinism:

"He [Paul] stirs up very many questions in the letter and the heretics, especially propping themselves up on these, are accustomed to add that the cause of each person's actions is not to be attributed to one's own purpose but to different kinds of natures. And, from a handful of words from this letter they attempt to subvert the meaning of the whole of Scripture, which teaches that God has given human beings freedom of choice."<sup>50</sup>

These rival interpreters claim that "the cause of each person's actions is not to be attributed to one's own purpose but to different kinds of natures" (*uniuscuiusque gestorum causa non ad propositum debeat sed naturae diuersitatem referri*). One of the main goals of the Latin *Commentary* is to refute such interpretations of Romans. In the preface, the notion of "purpose" is used more or less synonymously with the "freedom of choice" (*libertas arbitrii*) which God has granted to human beings. Origen believes that the biblical writings clearly teach that we possess such a capacity for making significant existential and moral choices. The notion of "purpose" (*propositum*) is often equivocated with the human "will" (*uoluntas*) in the Latin *Commentary*.<sup>51</sup> The perhaps most interesting definition of *propositum* can be found in the discussion of the controversial passage Rom. 7:14–25. Here Origen explains Paul's concept of the "inner man" (Rom. 7:22) with reference to the notion of "purpose" (*interior homo, hoc est uoluntas et propositum*).<sup>52</sup> The moral value of one's *propositum* naturally depends upon how the divinely given capacity of free choice is used in practice. Origen can thus speak of an "evil purpose" (*malum propositum*) in cases where this capacity is used contrary to its intention. Judas' betrayal of Christ and Pharaoh's hardness of heart are given as examples of this.<sup>53</sup>

50 Origen, in Rom. comm. I 1,1 (SC 532, 138): *alia quod quaestiones in ea plurimas mouet et eas praecipue quibus innitentes haeretici astruere solent quod uniuscuiusque gestorum causa non propositum debeat sed naturae diuersitatem referri, et ex paucis huius epistulae sermonibus totius scripturae sensum qui arbitrii libertatem concessam a Deo homini docet conantur euertere*. Translation: Scheck, FaCh 103, 53 (modified).

51 Ibid. VI 5,3 (543, 118–120); 9,8 (543, 180–182); 9,9 (543, 182–184).

52 Ibid. VI 9,9 (543, 184).

53 Ibid. VII 6,5 (543, 318); 14,4 (543, 386–390).

## 5. The Interpretation of Rom. 8:28–30 in the Latin *Commentary on Romans*

In the section of the Latin *Commentary* dealing with the passage Rom. 8:28–30, we encounter a lengthy discussion of the concept of divine “foreknowledge” (*praescientia*) and how it is compatible with our human freedom of choice.<sup>54</sup> A portion of this discussion is dedicated to Paul’s phrase *secundum propositum* and to whom this “purpose” should be attributed. First, Origen considers the option of ascribing it to human beings:

“For those who are called in accordance with the good purpose and good will that they exhibit toward the worship of God are those who are called ‘according to the purpose’ (Rom. 8:28), and these are the ones who, having been called, are justified. For, the only thing missing from their good purpose was a calling. But those who do not have a good and fixed purpose either toward spiritual worship or toward good work are, to be sure, also called, lest an excuse should be left to them and they should be able to plead when they are judged.”<sup>55</sup>

According to this interpretation, the phrase *secundum propositum* refers to the “good purpose and good will” (*secundum propositum bonum et bonam uoluntatem*) that human beings can display toward the “worship of God” (*circa Dei cultum*). On the basis of his foreknowledge of this “purpose,” God “calls” and “justifies” (Rom. 8:30) those human beings who freely choose to conduct their lives in this manner. It seems fairly obvious that the motivation for ascribing *propositum* to human beings is to counter a “deterministic” reading of Rom. 8:28–30 that would leave little room for human agency. In the same context, Origen criticizes what he terms the “common understanding” (*communis intellegentia* or *intellectus*) of divine foreknowledge.<sup>56</sup> Such an understanding could lead the interpreter to the mistaken conclusion that in Rom. 8:28–30 Paul teaches an unconditional election that does not take the free choices of human beings into account. Instead, Origen proposes that the verb to “foreknow” (*praescire*) should be interpreted in accordance with the “usage of Scripture” (*consuetudo scripturae*). In the biblical Scriptures, Origen claims, the verb to “know” is customarily used as a term of affection and love (Gen. 4:1, Gen. 24:16 and 2 Tim. 2:19 are cited in support of this). The definition of to “know” in this sense is “to receive in affection and to unite

54 Ibid. VII 5,4–6,7 (543, 304–320).

55 Ibid. VII 6,3 (543, 316): *Nam hi qui secundum propositum bonum et bonam uoluntatem quam circa Dei cultum gerunt uocantur ipsi sunt qui secundum propositum uocati dicuntur, et isti sunt qui uocati iustificantur. Bono enim eorum proposito deerat sola uocatio. Hi uero qui non habent bonum fixumque propositum uel erga diuinum cultum uel erga opus bonum uocantur quidem et ipsi, ne eis excusatio relinquatur et haec ipsa possint causari cum iudicantur.* Translation: Scheck, FaCh 104, 89 f.

56 Ibid VII 6,1 (543, 310–312); 6,5 (543, 318).

with oneself” (*in affectum recipere sibi que sociare*).<sup>57</sup> On the basis of this “biblical” understanding, Origen construes foreknowledge as God’s capacity to foresee who will be worthy to enter into such a relationship with himself.<sup>58</sup> This understanding of “knowledge” and “foreknowledge” also serves to elucidate biblical statements such as 2 Cor. 5:21, according to which “Jesus is said not to have known sin” (*Iesus dicitur non cognovisse peccatum*).<sup>59</sup> Such statements do not mean that Christ did not know or understand the nature of sin but rather that he did not “entangle himself” in it (*peccato se non miscuit*).<sup>60</sup>

In his comments on Rom. 8:28–30, Origen also discusses an alternative interpretation of *secundum propositum*, namely that this “purpose” should be ascribed to God. While he clearly seems to favour the *propositum hominis* interpretation, the second option is also treated as a serious and valid possibility. Origen insists that it would not render invalid his proposed solution to the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom if the *propositum Dei* option could be shown to be correct. In that case, the divine “purpose” would still take foreseen human choices into account when deciding whom to elect:

“But even if ‘according to the purpose’ should be referred to God, that is, they are said to be called according to the purpose of God, who knows that a pious mind and the longing for salvation is in them, even this will not seem contrary to the things we have set forth. In this way, then, the cause of our salvation or destruction does not lie in the foreknowledge of God; nor will justification depend solely upon the calling; nor has being glorified been completely removed from our power. For even if we should conceive of foreknowledge according to the common understanding, it will not be because God knows that an event will occur that it happens; but, because something is going to take place it is known by God before it happens.”<sup>61</sup>

Origen thus finds the *secundum propositum Dei* interpretation acceptable as long as the divine “calling” (*uocatio*) is not understood in such a way as to exclude human agency. Based on foreknowledge of human choices, the divine “purpose”

57 Ibid. VII 6,6 (543, 318–320). Translation: Scheck, FaCh 104, 91.

58 Ibid. VII 6,2 (543, 312–314).

59 Ibid. VII 6,6 (543, 320).

60 Ibid. Translation: Scheck, FaCh 104, 91.

61 Ibid. VII 6,4 f. (543, 316–318) *Quod et si secundum propositum ad Deum referatur, hoc est ut secundum propositum Dei, qui sciens in eis religiosam mentem et salutis inesse desiderium, uocati dicantur non uidebitur his quae exposuimus etiam hoc esse contrarium. Hoc ergo pacto neque in praesentia Dei uel salutis uel perditionis nostrae causa consistit neque iustificatio ex sola uocatione pendebit neque glorificari de nostra penitus potestate sublatum est. Nam et si communi intellectu de praesentia sentiamus non propterea erit aliquid quia id scit Deus futurum, sed quia futurum est scitur a Deo antequam fiat.* Translation: ibid. 90 (modified).

would know in advance which people are going to display a “pious mind and a longing for salvation” (*religiosam mentem et salutis [...] desiderium*). Predestination to salvation would therefore not be the result of an arbitrary decree of the divine will. As long as the doctrine of human *propositum* and free choice is not compromised, the Latin *Commentary on Romans* leaves it to the reader to decide which of the two interpretations of *secundum propositum* appears most convincing.

## 6. Does *Philocalia* 25 Contradict the Latin *Commentary*?

Owing to the very fragmentary textual witnesses to Origen’s original Greek *Commentary on Romans*, we rarely find ourselves in a position where we can judge the reliability of Rufinus’ Latin version.<sup>62</sup> Bammel has aptly characterized Rufinus’ style of translation as a “rather prolix paraphrase,” and it is certainly not to be viewed as a translation in the modern sense of the word.<sup>63</sup> It is abundantly clear, for example, that Rufinus often waters down Origen’s sophisticated language and largely removes technical terms and concepts drawn from the Greek philosophical tradition.<sup>64</sup> In addition to these deficiencies in Rufinus’ method, an even more problematic aspect is the dogmatic prejudice with which he approached Origen’s works. Rufinus believed that some of the controversial teachings found in *De principiis* were a result of inauthentic “interpolations” on the part of “heretics.”<sup>65</sup> In such cases, the translator would simply suppress or remove the controversial material. Given Rufinus’ problematic credentials as a translator, it naturally raises suspicion when we encounter an apparent contradiction between the Latin translation and a Greek excerpt from the original *Commentary on Romans* found in chapter 25 of the *Philocalia*.<sup>66</sup> This Greek text is taken from Origen’s comments

62 Unfortunately, the excerpts from the Greek *Commentary* preserved in the Tura Papyrus only cover Rom. 3:5–5:7. Similarly, none of the preserved catenae based on the *Commentary* comment on Rom. 8:28. Beyond the *Commentary on Romans*, Origen cites Rom. 8:28 in *orat.* 29,19 (GCS Orig. 2, 393), in *Ioh. comm.* XX 23,196 (GCS Orig. 4, 357) and in *philoc.* 26,5 (SC 226, 248–254), an excerpt from the *Commentary on the Psalms*. But in none of these places does Origen discuss to whom the *πρόθεσις* should be attributed.

63 Caroline Hammond Bammel, *Philocalia* IX, Jerome, Epistle 121, and Origen’s Exposition of Romans VII, in: *JThS* 32 (1981) 30–81, here 53.

64 See, e.g., John M. Rist, The Greek and Latin Texts of the Discussion on Free Will in *De principiis*, Book III, in: Henri Cr ouzel /Gennaro Lomient o/ Josep Rius-Camps (eds.), *Origeniana* (QVetChr 12), Bari 1975, 97–112, here 104–107.

65 Rufinus, *Orig. princ. praef.* 3 (GCS Orig. 5, 5).

66 Juno d, SC 226, 224 f. n. 1, has noted the difference between *philoc.* 25 and the Latin *Commentary* with respect to the question of *κατὰ πρόθεσιν* but he does not discuss how the apparent discrepancy is to be explained.

on Paul's self-designation "set apart for the Gospel of God" (*ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ*, Rom. 1:1). In this Greek excerpt, Origen pays a great deal of attention to the passage Rom. 8:28–30 and even considers the phrase *κατὰ πρόθεσιν*:

"And let no one think that we have said nothing about the phrase 'according to the purpose,' because it may seem to hamper our argument; for Paul says, 'We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to the purpose' (Rom. 8:28). But it should be observed that the apostle also at once gave the reason for their being called according to the purpose, saying, 'Whom he did foreknow, them he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom. 8:29). And who is more fitting to be included in the justifying calling by the purpose of God (*τῇ προθέσει τοῦ θεοῦ*), than those who love Him? And that the cause of the purpose and foreknowledge lies in our freedom of choice is clearly shown by the words, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God' (Rom. 8:28); for Paul all but said that if all things work together for good, the reason is that they who love God are worthy of their working together."<sup>67</sup>

Origen's overall interpretation of Rom. 8:28–30 is very similar to what we have read in the Latin *Commentary*. We find the same emphasis on the compatibility between divine "foreknowledge" (*πρόγνωσις*) and the human freedom of choice (Origen employs the technical Stoic term *τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*, literally "what is up to us"). But to the surprise of the reader of the Latin *Commentary*, Origen here clearly ascribes the "purpose" in Rom. 8:28 to God (*τῇ προθέσει τοῦ θεοῦ*). He is aware that the troublesome phrase *κατὰ πρόθεσιν* might represent a difficulty for his proposed solution to the problem of divine election and human agency. In response to a critical inquirer, one would have expected Origen to say that the "purpose" mentioned by Paul does not belong to God but rather to the human beings who are "worthy" (*ἄξιοι*) of election. It would seem that he could easily have refuted a "deterministic" reading of Rom. 8:28–30 in such a manner. Faced with this apparent contradiction between the Greek excerpt from the *Commentary* and Rufinus' Latin version, one might conclude that the translator has tampered with the text and himself added the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation. But it is not easy to see what could have motivated Rufinus to make such an addition. As we

67 Origen, *philoc.* 25,3 (SC 226, 222–22A): *Μὴ νομιζέτω δέ τις ἡμᾶς τὸ Κατὰ πρόθεσιν σεσωπηκέναι ὡς θλιβὸν ἡμῶν τὸν λόγον· ἐπεὶ φησὶν ὁ Παῦλος· Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσι τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν. Ἀλλὰ προσεχέτω ὅτι τοῦ κατὰ πρόθεσιν εἶναι κλητοὺς τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος ἀποδέδωκεν εὐθέως, εἰπών· Ὅτι οὐδὲν προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ τίνα γε μᾶλλον ἐχρῆν ἐγκαταχωρισθῆναι εἰς τὴν δικαιοῦσαν κλήσιν τῇ προθέσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας αὐτόν; πάνυ δὲ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν αἰτίαν παρίστησι τῆς προθέσεως καὶ τῆς προγνώσεως τό· Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσι τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν. Σχεδὸν γὰρ εἶπεν ὅτι πάντα συνεργοῦντα εἰς ἀγαθὸν διὰ τοῦτο συνεργεῖ, ἐπεὶ ἄξιοι εἰσι συνεργίας οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν θεόν. Translation: p. 211 Lewis (modified).*

saw above, both interpretations of *secundum propositum* are deemed acceptable in the Latin *Commentary* as long as the role of human agency in the *ordo salutis* is not compromised. This means that the *secundum propositum Dei* interpretation is not wrong in itself provided that the divine “purpose” takes foreseen human choices into account when deciding whom to elect. It is clearly not a matter of an ‘orthodox’ interpretation of Rom. 8:28–30 versus a ‘deterministic’ one. Rufinus would therefore not have achieved much by adding a *secundum propositum Dei* interpretation which, in reality, does not differ greatly from the alternative in its substance.

Given Origen’s strong insistence on human “self-determination” (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) and responsibility, it would not be surprising if he actually proposed that κατὰ πρόθεσιν should be ascribed to human beings in the section of the Greek *Commentary* dealing with Rom. 8:28–30. The reason for the absence of such an interpretation in the excerpt from the *Philocalia* could perhaps be explained with reference to the polemical context in which the statement is found. When setting forth the reasons for Paul’s election, Origen is actually trying to refute a ‘deterministic’ view ascribed to certain “heretics.” In reference to these opponents, Origen says that “they introduce those who are saved by condition and nature” (οἴονται διὰ τούτων εἰσάγειν τοὺς ἐκ κατασκευῆς καὶ φύσεως σωζομένους).<sup>68</sup> Paul supposedly belongs to this group of elect people who are saved in virtue of their “nature.” It is possible that Origen, for the sake of argument, granted that κατὰ πρόθεσιν is attributed to God despite himself having a preference for the alternative interpretation. He would then be saying that *even if* the *secundum propositum Dei* interpretation turns out to be correct, this would still not undercut his proposed solution to the problem of divine election and human freedom. Despite the unfortunate circumstance that we possess no Greek fragment from the section of the *Commentary* dealing with Rom. 8:28–30, I would suggest giving Rufinus the benefit of doubt in this case. The *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation definitely feels like an element of exegesis that is authentically Origenian. Origen often proposes a number of different interpretations of scriptural texts but this does not mean that he discusses every single option whenever he comes across a certain biblical phrase or passage. Therefore, it should not surprise us that the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation is not mentioned in the excerpt from the *Philocalia*.

68 Ibid. 25,1 (226, 12).

### 7. The *secundum propositum hominis* Interpretation in Other Patristic Authors

It seems reasonable to suppose that Augustine was aware that the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation existed in the exegetical tradition and that he therefore felt the need to interact with it. It would be strange if he devoted energy to refuting an interpretation of Rom. 8:28 that no exegete (to his knowledge) had ever suggested. I find it more plausible that Augustine in *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* and others of his late works is consciously censuring an interpretation that he has encountered but without naming the source. His discrete criticisms of the exegesis found in Rufinus' Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* constitute precedents of such an approach. The question now becomes whether Augustine's comments on *secundum propositum* also could be seen as a possible instance of (negative) reception of the *Commentary*. Here it might be objected that in his early work *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex Epistula ad Romanos* (394) Augustine already dismisses the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation and that Rufinus' Latin translation of the *Commentary* had not yet appeared at this time. But Augustine's comment on Rom. 8:28 in the *Expositio* is so laconic that it is difficult to gather much from it. He says: "This purpose, it must be understood, is God's, not theirs" (*propositum autem Dei accipiendum est, non ipsorum*).<sup>69</sup> This brief comment could just be an attempt to clarify an ambiguity in the Pauline text where *propositum* lacks a subsequent noun or pronoun to specify it. There is no indication that Augustine here is consciously censuring a problematic interpretation from the exegetical tradition. The situation seems to have changed when Augustine again tackles the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation roughly 25 years later in *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*.

We can rule out the possible explanation that the 'Pelagian' bishops, whose letter Augustine is responding to, are themselves the source of this exegesis. Their letter to bishop Rufus of Thessalonica does not cite the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation of Rom. 8:28.<sup>70</sup> In addition, Augustine formulates the wrong-headed interpretation in a way that reveals that he does not know for certain (*fortasse*) whether the authors of the letter actually understand *secundum propositum* in such a manner. In other words, Augustine is only guessing. The 'usual suspect' with respect to Augustine's censure would, of course, be Pelagius

69 Augustine, *expos. prop. Rom. 47(55)*(CSEL 84, 40). Translation: Paula Fredriksen Landes, *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans; Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (SBL.TT 23), Chico CA 1982, 27.

70 A reconstruction of this letter can be found in CChr.SL 88, 336–340.

himself. But in his *Expositiones*, Pelagius clearly ascribes *secundum propositum* to God in Rom. 8:28.<sup>71</sup>

Following Origen, the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation became very widespread in the Greek exegetical tradition, as Karl Herman Schelkle has shown in his survey of Patristic exegesis of Rom. 1–11.<sup>72</sup> It can be found in authors such as Cyril of Jerusalem,<sup>73</sup> Isidore of Pelusium,<sup>74</sup> Diodore of Tarsus,<sup>75</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia,<sup>76</sup> John Chrysostom,<sup>77</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus<sup>78</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>79</sup> We also encounter representatives of this interpretation in the Latin tradition, which Augustine of course was more familiar with. We will therefore now examine the Latin exegesis in some detail.

In his *Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas*, Ambrosiaster states that “God knows the purpose of the heart of those” (*propositum cordis illorum sciens Deus*) whom he calls.<sup>80</sup> In his exposition of Rom. 8:28–30, Ambrosiaster first treats the subject of prayer and points out that God already knows what we need even before any prayer is uttered (Mt. 6:8). Subsequently, he addresses the more general question of the relation between divine foreknowledge and predestination. He explains that God “foreknows who will be worthy of him” (*praesciit Deus futuros sibi idoneos*) and that such people are called “according to the purpose.”

- 71 Pelagius, expos. in Rom. 8,28 f. (TaS 9/2, 68). This is somewhat surprising given the fact that Pelagius is normally happy to borrow interpretations from Origen's *Commentary on Romans* that can be used in support of his cherished doctrine of *liberum arbitrium*. See: Pelagius' *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Translated, Introduction and Notes by Theodore de Bruyn, Oxford 1993, 5.
- 72 Karl H. Schelkle, *Paulus, Lehrer der Väter: Die altkirchliche Auslegung von Römer 1–11*, Düsseldorf 1956, 310.
- 73 Cyril of Jerusalem, procat. 1 (PG 33, 332–336).
- 74 Cf. the *catena* fragment in: *Catena in Sancti Pauli Epistolam ad Romanos*, ed. by John A. Cramer, Oxford 1844, 263f.
- 75 Cf. the *catena* fragment in: *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche, aus Katnenhandschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben von Karl Staab* (NTA 15), Münster 1933, 95.
- 76 Cf. the *catena* fragment in *Staab*, *ibid.* 142.
- 77 John Chrysostom, in Rom. hom. 15 (PG 60, 539–548). It is worth noting that in his *Contra Iulianum* (421–423) Augustine quotes directly from John Chrysostom's 10<sup>th</sup> homily on Romans in order to support his own exegesis of Rom. 5:12:c. Iul. I 6,27 (PL 44, 658–660). See Berthold Altaner, *Augustinus und Johannes Chrysostomus*, in: *id.*, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, ed. by Günter Glockmann (TU 83), Berlin 1967, 302–311 here 309. There are no clear indications, however, that Augustine was familiar with Chrysostom's 15<sup>th</sup> homily and his exegesis of Rom. 8:28.
- 78 Theodoret of Cyrus, *interpr. epist. Rom.* 8,28 (PG 82, 140 f.).
- 79 Cyril's exegesis of Rom. 8:28 is actually the most similar to the interpretation found in the Latin *Commentary on Romans* in that he does not decide between the two alternatives. Instead, he holds both interpretations of *κατὰ πρόθεσιν* to be equally valid: Cyril of Alexandria, *explan. in Rom.* 8,28 (PG 74, 828): *ὡς κλητοὶ γεγόνασι τινες κατὰ πρόθεσιν, τὴν τε τοῦ κεκληκότος καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῶν*.
- 80 Ambrosiaster, *comm. in Rom.* 8,28 (CSEL 81/1, 289).

While Ambrose does not consider the specific phrase *secundum propositum* in his works,<sup>81</sup> in *De fide* he comments on Rom. 8:29 in the context of a discussion of Christ's statement, "To sit at my right hand and my left, this is not mine to give to you" (Mt. 20:23):

"Or take in another way the words: 'It is not mine to give to you' (Mt. 20:23), that is: 'It is not mine, for I came to teach humility; it is not mine, for I came, not to be served, but to serve; it is not mine, for I show justice, not favour.' Then, speaking of the Father, he added: 'For whom it has been prepared' (Mt. 20:23), to show that the Father also is not inclined to give heed merely to requests, but to merits; for 'God is not a respecter of persons' (Acts 10:34). For which reason also the apostle says: 'Whom he foreknew, he also predestined' (Rom. 8:29). For he did not predestinate them before he had foreknown them, but he predestinated the rewards of those whose merits he foreknew."<sup>82</sup>

In this passage, the Bishop of Milan appears to give voice to the precise notion that we have seen Augustine arguing *against*, even though he does not use the phrase *secundum propositum* to express it.<sup>83</sup> God the Father cannot fairly be called a "respecter of persons" (*personarum acceptor*), Ambrose says, exactly because he takes the "merits" (*merita*) of human beings into account when deciding whom to elect.<sup>84</sup> Interestingly, Ambrose employs Rom. 8:29 to make this exact point. In a manner similar to Origen, Ambrose bases his argument on the sequence of the verbs "foreknew" (*praesciuit*) and "predestined" (*praedestinauit*).<sup>85</sup> Paul intentionally mentions the act of "foreknowing" first because foreknowledge is logically

81 Ambrose cites Rom. 8:28–30 in hexaem. VI 8,46 (CSEL 32/1, 236–238) but in the context of a discussion of the "image of God" (*imago Dei*) and whether this "image" resides in the soul or in the body. He does not address the question of *secundum propositum* and to whom this "purpose" should be attributed.

82 Fid. V 6,82f. (CSEL 78, 246 f.): *Accipe aliter: Non est meum dare uobis, quod est: 'Non est meum, qui ueni humilitatem docere, non est meum, qui ueni non ministrari sed ministrare, non est meum, qui iustitiam seruo, non gratiam.' Denique et ad patrem referens addidit: quibus paratum est, ut ostenderet patrem quoque non petitionibus deferre solere, sed meritis, quia Deus personarum acceptor non est. Vnde et apostolus ait: Quos praesciuit et praedestinauit. Non enim ante praedestinauit quam praesciret, sed quorum merita praesciuit, eorum praemia praedestinauit.* Translation: de Romes tin , NPNF 2/10, 294 (modified).

83 It is no small irony that in *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* Augustine quotes at length from the writings of Ambrose in order to prove that the Bishop of Milan's doctrine of grace was essentially identical to his own. See Augustine, c. epist. Pel. IV 11, 3 (CSEL 60, 561–563).

84 See Schelkle , Paulus (n. 72) 310.

85 Cf. Origen, philoc. 25,2 (SC 226, 216): *Πρόσχωμεν οὖν τῇ τάξει τῶν λεγομένων. Δικαιοὶ ὁ θεὸς καλέσας πρότερον, οὐκ ἂν δικαιοῦσας οὐς μὴ ἐκάλεσεν· καλεῖ δὲ πρὸ τῆς κλήσεως προορισίας, οὐκ ἂν καλέσας οὐς μὴ προώρισεν· καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ ἀρχὴ τῆς κλήσεως καὶ τῆς δικαιοῦσεως οὐχ ὁ προορισμός· οὗτος γὰρ εἴ ἦν ἀρχὴ τῶν ἐξῆς, κἂν πιθανώτατα ἐκράτουσι οἱ παρεισάγοντες τὸν περὶ φύσεως ἄτοπον λόγον· ἀνωτέρω δὲ ἐστὶ τοῦ προορισμοῦ ἢ πρόγνωσις· Οὐς γὰρ προέγνω, φησὶ, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνοσ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.*

prior to predestination. God has foreordained that human beings with foreseen merits will obtain heavenly “rewards” (*praemia*).

The *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation plays an important role in the anonymous work known as *Liber de induratione cordis Pharaonis*. The fifth part of this treatise (chapters 48–53) is dedicated to the question of “those who are foreknown and predestined” (*de praescitis et praedestinatis*).<sup>86</sup> With reference to Rom. 8:28–30, the author on several occasions speaks of the “purpose of the mind” (*propositum mentis*) or the “purpose of a good will” (*propositum suae bonae uoluntatis*) belonging to those who are predestined to glory.<sup>87</sup> God knows in advance the identity of those who will persevere until the end of their lives owing to their “strength of mind” (*robusta mente*):

“These then are the ones who were shaped in the likeness of Christ spoken of above and foreknown, predestined, called and justified, so that they might become like Christ in all respects to die and to live with him who foreknew that, through their strength of mind they would endure to the end all that they suffered for his name’s sake and yet remain immovable.”<sup>88</sup>

As we saw above, the terms *mens* and *uoluntas* are also used to describe the concept of *propositum* in Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s *Commentary on Romans*. Another interesting aspect of the *Liber de induratione* is the author’s oft-repeated citations of and allusions to Rom. 2:1 and Acts 10:34.<sup>89</sup> The notion that God is no “respector of persons” (*personarum acceptor*) is clearly something akin to a theological axiom for this author and this conviction informs his understanding of Rom. 8:28–30 and predestination.

## 8. Conclusion

Given the popularity of the *secundum propositum hominis* interpretation in the patristic authors and especially given its presence in other Latin sources than Rufinus’ translation of the *Commentary on Romans*, it is not easy to ascertain whether Origen was Augustine’s particular object of criticism in this case. Regrettably, Augustine never reveals the identity of the source (or sources) behind the

86 Indur. 2 (CF N.S. 31, B9).

87 Ibid. 48–50 (31, 195–199).

88 Ibid. 51 (31, 199): *Hi sunt igitur ad supra dictam conformationem Christi praesciti, praedestinati, uocati, iustificati, ut conformes fierent per omnia Christo, ad commoriendum et ad conuiuendum ei, qui eos praesciuit robusta mente omnia, quae pro eius nomine passi sunt, immobiles perdurare*. Translation: Bryn R. Rees, On the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart, in: *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 6 (2012) 1–54, 49–51 (modified).

89 E. g., *ibid.* 14 (31, B1–B3); D–22 (31, 57–161); 26 (31, 16); 31 (31, 169–71); 36 (31, 177–179).

faulty interpretation of Rom. 8:28 which he is seeking to refute. As we have seen, in several of his writings Augustine appears to correct interpretations found in the Latin *Commentary* and he even shows familiarity with some relatively minor exegetical details in this work. If we take these earlier criticisms of the Latin *Commentary* into account, it would not be at all surprising if Augustine again felt the need to correct an interpretation from the *Commentary* when he composed *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*. Augustine clearly paid attention to the aspects of Origen's exegesis of Romans that could seem to threaten his understanding of grace. The use of *propositum* as a key term in the letter of the 'Pelagian' bishops to Rufus of Thessalonica apparently provoked Augustine to refute an interpretation of Rom. 8:28 that, in his estimation, undercuts the very essence of grace.

It is worth noting the fact that Julian of Eclanum and his allies sought to gain approval of their views from an Eastern bishop. It might not be a coincidence that Augustine chose to address an exposition of Rom. 8:28 that enjoyed immense support among the Greek Patristic writers. If Augustine was aware of this, his rebuttal to the 'Pelagian' letter provided him with an occasion for correcting a problematic aspect of Greek Pauline exegesis.

Even though the question of reception cannot be decisively answered owing to the multiplicity of possible sources, the divergent interpretations of *secundum propositum* still serve to highlight a crucial difference in the conception of human freedom in Origen's *Commentary* and Augustine's anti-Pelagian interpretation of Romans. The seemingly insignificant detail of *secundum propositum* contains in a nutshell the more fundamental question of whether it is "up to us" to cooperate with grace, or whether we must be "assisted to will" for this cooperation to even begin. Here the Latin *Commentary on Romans* (and indeed Origen himself) firmly opts for the former alternative, whereas the anti-Pelagian Augustine insists on the latter.

In Paul's example of Jacob and Esau (Rom. 9:10–13), Augustine believed to have found an effective antidote against the problematic notion of a *bonum propositum hominis* independent of divine grace. Not only does the apostle explicitly ascribe *propositum* to God in this passage (Rom. 9:11), but the example itself also clearly demonstrates that election of human beings to salvation does not depend on "works" in any way. According to Augustine, Paul's example not only rules out that divine election takes any previous merits into account. It also shows that the widely held notion of election based on foreknowledge of future merits is foreign to the thought of the apostle.

Augustine's interpretation of Rom. 8:28 provides us with yet another illustration of his remarkable independence as an exegete and as a thinker. He was not reluctant to go his own way whenever he felt that the teaching of Scripture compelled him to deviate from the opinions of his Christian predecessors and contemporaries.



# In Defence of Freedom of Choice

## The *Liber de induratione cordis Pharaonis* as a Case of Reception of Origen's Biblical Exegesis\*

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### 1. Introduction

In 1909, Germain Morin announced that he had rediscovered the treatise *De induratione cordis Pharaonis* (“On the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart”) in a manuscript at the Library of Metz. This text had also surfaced in five manuscripts in England and at the Vatican.<sup>1</sup> He noticed that the content of *De induratione* reflected the principles of so-called Pelagianism, a theological movement that was inspired by the teachings of the ascetic, exegete, and theologian Pelagius between the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>2</sup> The Pelagian movement put special emphasis on freedom of choice (*libertas arbitrii*) concerning moral agency; its supporters held that human beings can, through their free choices and effort, pursue virtue in life by imitation of Christ and achieve salvation in the after-

\* This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 676258.

1 Germain Morin, *Un traité pélagien inédit du commencement du cinquième siècle*, in: *RBen* 26 (1909) 163–188. Morin analysed manuscripts M (Metz Municipal Library 172), E (Eton College Library 21), C (Cambridge, Emmanuel College MS 56), W (Worcester Cathedral Library F 14), B (Rome, Vatican Library, Barberini Latini 552) and manuscript O (Oxford, Bodleian Library 757). Manuscripts M and E are dated, respectively, 11<sup>th</sup> and mid-12<sup>th</sup> century. Manuscripts C, W, B and O are all dated 15<sup>th</sup> century. Before Morin’s ground-breaking discovery, *De induratione* had been lost since the ninth century. In an epistle dated 850 (epist. 4: PL 112,1522b), Rhabanus Maurus stated that Hincmar, Archbishop of Reims, had been quoting from *De induratione* during the controversy about predestination that pitted Hincmar against Gottschalk. The treatise *De induratione* is also mentioned in the *Liber de tribus epistulis* (PL 121, 1053b), probably written by Florus of Lyon in 855; Florus supported Gottschalk in the controversy on predestination.

2 Born in Roman Britain or Ireland, Pelagius was active in Rome between the last two decades of the fourth and the first decade of the fifth century. Morin, *ibid.*, expresses the view that *De induratione* might have been composed either by Pelagius or by one of his followers around 408. For Pelagius’ biographical data, see for instance Winrich Löhr, *Pélagie et le Pélagianisme*, Paris 2015, 63–65.

life.<sup>3</sup> After Morin, all scholars who seriously studied *De induratione* confirmed that this text was a Pelagian work. Some scholars, such as George de Plinval and Giovanni Martinetto, claimed that Pelagius himself wrote *De induratione* at the end of the fourth century.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, scholars such as Bonifatius Fischer and Eugene TeSelle attributed *De induratione* to an anonymous Pelagian author who was active in the fifth century.<sup>5</sup> Bernard de Vregille and Louis Neyrand identified Aponius, the Pelagian author of a *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, as the author of this text,<sup>6</sup> but Carmine Iannicelli has since rejected Aponius' authorship.<sup>7</sup> The most recent studies of *De induratione* attribute the work to an anonymous Pelagian author who was active after Pelagianism became mired in controversy

- 3 For guidance on the Pelagian movement, see John M. Lamber igt s, Pelagius and Pelagians, in: Susan Ashbrook Harvey/David G. Hunter (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, Oxford 2008, 258–279, or the less recent Gerald Bonner, Art. Pelagius/Pelagianischer Streit, in: TRE 26 (1996) 176–185, and Flavio G. Nuvolone/Aimé Solignac, Art. Pélage et Pélagianisme 1. Les écrivains 2. Le mouvement et sa doctrine, in: DSp 12 (1986) 2889–2942. Ali Bonner, *The Myth of Pelagianism*, Oxford 2018, 3, questioned the existence of the Pelagian movement, arguing that “there is not sufficient homogeneity of ideas among surviving writings calling for ascetic imitation of Christ’s way of life in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century to enable a movement or group to be identified as a separately cohering entity.” Bonner received mixed reviews. Andrew C. Christenson, Ali Bonner, *The Myth of Pelagianism*, in: AugSt 51 (2020) 1B–1D, provides convincing arguments to reject Bonner’s theory that there was no Pelagian movement. Christenson, *ibid.* 1D, states that “from the work of Peter Brown and others” (e.g., Peter Brown, *Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment*, in: JThS 19 [1968] 93–114) “becomes clear that Pelagius was part of some sort of group intensely interested in discussing and circulating writings of an ascetic character [...]. Pelagius seems to have become a prominent (though not the only) supplier of writings to this group and thereby gained a certain amount of renown, finding himself looked to as a source of spiritual advice.”
- 4 Giovanni Martinetto, *Les premières réactions antiaugustinienne de Pélage*, in: REAug 17 (1971) 83–117; George de Plinval, *Essai sur le style et la langue de Pélage suivi du traité inédit De induratione cordis Pharaonis* (CF N.S. 31), Fribourg 1947. De Plinval published the Latin text of *De induratione* and offered a French translation (*ibid.* 136–203). His edition was reproduced in the first *Supplementum* to the *Patrologia Latina* series (PLS 1, 1506–1539). Flavio G. Nuvolone, *Problèmes d’une nouvelle édition du De induratione cordis Pharaonis attribué à Pélage*, in: REAug 26 (1980) 105–117, announced a critical edition of *De induratione*, but this has not hitherto been produced. Therefore, de Plinval’s edition is the text that still needs to be used.
- 5 Bonifatius Fischer, *Verzeichnis der Sigel für Handschriften und Kirchenschriftsteller*, Fribourg 1963, 397; Eugene TeSelle, *Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius: Explorations in the Prehistory of the Pelagian Controversy*, in: AugStud 3 (1972) 61–95, here 83.
- 6 Bernard de Vregille/Louis Neyrand, *CChr.SL 19*, Turnhout 1986, xcix–cv; Bernard de Vregille, *SC 420*, Paris 1997, 37. De Vregille and Neyrand highlight similarities in terms of language and style between Aponius’ *Commentary on the Song of Songs* and *De induratione*, hence they suggested that Aponius was the author of the treatise.
- 7 Carmine Iannicelli, *Sull’attribuzione ad Apponio del (pseudo) pelagiano De induratione cordis Pharaonis: Contributo biblico-esegetico*, in: Vichiana 2 (2000) 201–224. Iannicelli holds that the similarities between Aponius’ commentary and *De induratione* result from the authors’ use of the same biblical version.

in 41 f or possibly after it was officially condemned in 418, following the pleas of Jerome and especially of Augustine.<sup>9</sup>

In the preface, the anonymous author of *De induratione* stresses the difficulty of fulfilling his task; the text deals with topics in which “even the most skilled ones are stuck” (*etiam perfecti haerent*).<sup>10</sup> The author’s task concerns the provision of an explanation of some difficult biblical topics that originate most prominently from chapter 9 of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.<sup>11</sup> The biblical interpretations in *De induratione* emphasize that human beings are endowed with freedom of choice; they can correct themselves of their willfulness and achieve salvation eventually or they can surrender to vice and incur perdition. The author notices that his interpretations will displease some individuals who maintain that “human nature comprises two masses, the good and the bad, both made by God.”<sup>12</sup> The good mass cannot pursue evil, whereas the evil mass cannot turn towards good and undertake a process of correction. The author charges this idea with introducing fatal-

8 Sara Mat teo li , *Alle origini della teologia di Pelagio: Tematiche e fonti della Expositio-nes XIII epistularum Pauli*, Pisa 2011; Giuseppe Car uso/ Giovanni Mar cotullio (eds.), *Pseudo-Pelagio: Il cuore indurito del Faraone*, Rome 2014, 14.

9 As for the dates of the debate known as Pelagian controversy, see for instance Bryn R. Rees , *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, Rochester NY 1988, 141. The debate focussed on tenets ascribed to Pelagius such as grace as ‘external aid’ to freedom of choice, useful but not necessary to prevent sin; the denial of the biological transmission of Adam’s sin (*tradux peccati*); the possibility of human beings achieving sinlessness (*impeccantia*): see Francis Cl ark , *A New Appraisal of Late-Medieval Theology*, in: *Gr. 46* (1965) 733–765.

10 *Indur. 1* (p. 137 de Plinval ). Translation: Bryn R. Rees , *On the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart*, in: *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture 6* (2012) 1–54, here 15. For the present discussion, I will assume the anonymous author of *De induratione* (*indur.*) to be of the male gender. It is worth mentioning that, in *indur. 1*, the author points out that “a minister of Christ” (*Christi minister*) requested the composition of *De induratione*. The author also points out that the “minister of Christ” asked an intermediary to collect and bring him *De induratione*; the author cryptically refers to the intermediary as “one who scorns the world and leads the life of a monk under his cloak” (*ille qui saeculum ridet et sub chlamyde monachum gerit*). Mor in, *Un traité pélagien* (n. 1) 174, identified the “minister of Christ” as Julian of Eclanum. He also claimed that Pammachius hides behind the person who “scorns the world,” since Jerome, *epist. 66,6* (CSEL 54, 654), describes Pammachius in similar terms. De Plinval , *Essai sur le style* (n. 4) 133f., instead identified the person who “scorns the world” as Paulinus of Nola; de Plinval held that Paulinus asked Pelagius (who in de Plinval’s opinion is the author of *De induratione*) to provide him with an explanation of difficult biblical verses of the Epistle to the Romans; afterwards, he made the same request of Jerome, as Jerome, *epist. 85,2f.* (CSEL 55, 136 f.), testifies. These suggestions were not endorsed by the scholarly community; currently, the two figures remain nameless.

11 *Indur. 2* (p. 137f. de Plinval ) mentions five topics (*quinque causas*); the words in the decalogue “I shall expect payment for the sins of the fathers from the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me” (Ex. 20:5); the episode of Pharaoh (Rom. 9:18; Ex. 7:3; 4:21); Jacob and Esau (Rom. 9:11–B); the vessels for honour and for dishonour (Rom. 9:21–23); foreknowledge and predestination (Rom. 8:28–30).

12 *Ibid. 2* (p. 139): *duas massas humanae naturae, bonam et malam, a Deo esse factas*. Translation: p. 16 Rees .

ism;<sup>13</sup> the good mass is predestined to salvation, while the evil one is preordained for perdition. The author's opponents hold an idea that is similar to Manichean determinism, but Sara Matteoli notes that this reference is to those who followed Augustine's doctrine of grace. This doctrine (developed from about 397)<sup>14</sup> suggested that human beings, stained with the original sin, cannot prevent sin of their own volition and achieve salvation as the Pelagians believed; only the intervention of God's grace enables them to do so.<sup>15</sup> The Pelagian author of *De induratione* thus associates Augustine's followers with these determinists in a polemical way.<sup>16</sup>

The question arises as to whether, while developing his interpretations that focussed on freedom of choice, the author of *De induratione* drew on the older exegetical tradition that advocated this concept. This tradition includes a number of Latin commentaries produced between the fourth and fifth centuries that disputed Manichean determinism.<sup>17</sup> It also includes Origen's writings, and especially his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* and his theological treatise *On First Principles*, where he comments on the Epistle to the Romans in a way that combats astrological and Gnostic determinism.<sup>18</sup>

Origen's theological stance was subject to debate at the time of *De induratione*'s composition,<sup>19</sup> but his interpretations, which were available in their original

- 13 Ibid. states that the author's opponents bring forth different "destinies" (*fata*), "in the same way as the pagans did" (*more gentilium*), "albeit in a different guise" (*sub alio colore*). For an overview on the various concepts of fatalism in antiquity, see Aldo Magris, *Destino, provvidenza, predestinazione: Dal mondo antico al cristianesimo* (Filosofia N. S. 50), Brescia 2008.
- 14 Volker Henning Drecoll (ed.), *Augustin Handbuch*, Tübingen 2007, 255.
- 15 E.g. Augustine, *Simpl. I 2* (CChr.SL 44, 24–56).
- 16 Matteo Li, *Alle origini* (n. 8) 149, follows TeSelle, Rufinus the Syrian (n. 5) 85. This latter saw the term 'masses' as a reference to the idea of human beings as 'mass of sin' (*massa peccati*) due to the original sin in Augustine, *ibid. I 2,16* (44, 42).
- 17 These works include Augustine's exegetical works produced between 394 and 395, the commentaries on Romans by Pelagius (between 406 and 409), and those by the anonymous writers known as Ambrosiaster (between 366 and 394) and the Budapest Anonymous (between 396 and 405): Maria G. Mara, *Il significato storico-esegetico dei commentari al corpus paolino dal IV al V secolo*, in: *ASEs I* (1984) 59–74. As for the dates of the commentaries, see Theodore de Bruyn, *Pelagius' Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Oxford 1993, 1 n. 2.
- 18 As for Origen's polemical targets, cf. Origen, *princ. III 1,6* (II p. 296 Behr); *III 1,8* (II p. 304–306). See also Enrico Norrelli, *Art. Gnosticismo*, in *Adele Monaci Castagno* (ed.), *Origene. Dizionario: la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, Rome 2000, 209–216.
- 19 The debate known as Origenist Controversy was about certain teachings of Origen such as the subordination of Son and Spirit in the Trinity, the fall of souls, the nature of the resurrected body and the universality of salvation. The debate raged on in Palestine in 393, where John, bishop of Jerusalem, rejected the anti-Origenist propaganda carried out by Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis. Jerome and Rufinus of Aquileia (both residing in Palestine at that time) intervened in the dispute, aligning themselves with Epiphanius and John,

Greek and/or Latin translations,<sup>20</sup> were appreciated and re-used in new works.<sup>21</sup> The reception of Origen in *De induratione* is a virtually unexplored area of study; scholars have only touched on whether *De induratione* assimilated Origen's interpretations and used them in its own arguments.<sup>22</sup> Eugene TeSelle, for instance, suggested that some exegetical solutions in *De induratione* are in line with those in Origen's writings, and he argued that *De induratione* either drew on Origen's *On First Principles* and *Commentary on Romans* in their Latin translation or on the Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* exclusively.<sup>23</sup> Hermann Josef Frede agreed with TeSelle; he argued that the Latin translations of Origen's *On First Principles* and *Commentary on Romans* influenced *De induratione*.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, Sara Matteoli placed stress on the influence of the Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* in this text's development.<sup>25</sup>

This article, then, builds on these scholars' observations. It investigates whether *De induratione* drew on Origen's writings when commenting on the biblical concept of 'hardening.' In Scripture, this concept is conveyed by the verb *σκληρύνω* (translated into Latin as *indurare*), which means to 'make hard' lit-

respectively. The involvement of the former friends Jerome and Rufinus on opposite sides in the controversy carried the debate to Rome, where each of them had their allies. For a detailed analysis of the Origenist Controversy, see Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton NJ 1992.

20 The translation of Origen's writings was carried out by Jerome (starting from about 380) and by Rufinus of Aquileia. In 398, Rufinus produced the Latin translation of *On First Principles*; it is again Rufinus who translates Origen's *Commentary on Romans* in 405/6. As for Rufinus' translation work, see Samuel Fer nández, *Gli interventi dottrinali di Rufino nel De principiis di Origene*, in: Maurizio Gir olami (ed.), *L'Oriente in Occidente: L'opera di Rufino di Concordia* (Adam. Suppl. 4), Brescia 2014, 27–44; Francesca Co cchini, *Il Commento alla Lettera ai Romani di Origene: Traduzione e interventi di Rufino*, in Gir olami, *ibid.* 45–58.

21 As for the dissemination of Origen's writings, see for instance Manlio Simonetti, *Origene in Occidente prima della controversia*, in: *Aug. 46* (2006) 25–34, here 25f., and Emanuela Prinzivalli, *La controversia origeniana di fine IV secolo e la diffusione della conoscenza di Origene in Occidente*, in: *ibid.* 35–50.

22 As for the concept of 'reception,' see Charles Martindale, *Introduction: Thinking through Reception*, in: id./Richard F. Thomas (eds.), *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, Oxford/Malden MA 2006, 1–B; Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*, Cambridge 1993.

23 TeSelle, *Rufinus the Syrian* (n. 5) 84, notes that both Origen and *De induratione* use 2 Tim. 2:20f. in order to explain the meaning of Rom. 9:21–23; Origen, *princ.* III 1,23 (II p. 370–375 Behr); in *Rom. comm.* VII 15,4f. (SC 543,398–402); *indur.* 46–48 (p. 193–195 de Plinval); the reference to a "royal palace:" Origen, in *Rom. comm.* VII 14,1 (SC 543, 382); *indur.* 36 (p. 177–179 de Plinval); the interpretation of a number of verses from Rom. 9 as statements uttered by a virtual interlocutor of Paul: Origen, in *Rom. comm.* VII 14,2 (SC 543, 382); *indur.* 18. 34–38 (p. 155–57. 173–181 de Plinval).

24 Hermann J. Frede, *Kirchenschriftsteller: Verzeichnis und Sigel*, Freiburg<sup>3</sup> 1981, 478.

25 Matteo li, *Alle origini* (n. 8) 153.

erally and to ‘make stubborn’ or ‘disobedient’ figuratively.<sup>26</sup> The verb occurs in the Septuagint, where it refers to the disobedience of Pharaoh in rejecting God’s request to free the Hebrews from slavery. Some biblical verses (Ex. 7:3 and 4:21) cite God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, i. e., making Pharaoh disobedient. Paul refers to these verses when he claims that God has mercy on whom he wills and hardens others whom he wills (Rom. 9:18). For the purposes of this article, I will highlight any conceptual and/or textual connections (such as the same terminology, or the same biblical verses used in support of the same argument) between the interpretations of divine hardening in *De induratione* and those in Origen’s writings. The connections detected will provide a basis for claiming that Origen’s exegetical material exerted an influence on the biblical exegesis in *De induratione*. Thus, I will explore the aspects of Origen’s interpretation that the text uses and those that it passes over in silence. I will also investigate the purpose that drives the author to draw on the text(s) he uses and the context that shapes the text’s omissions.

## 2. Divine Hardening in *De induratione*: A Case of Reception of Origen?

### a) *De induratione*’s Interpretation of Rom. 9:18: “God has mercy on whom he wills, and he hardens whom he wills”

In addressing the issue of divine hardening, *De induratione* focusses on the words of Paul in Rom 9:18. It mentions that some “heretics”<sup>27</sup> hold that Paul interprets God as hardening and as having mercy. They express the view that “God has mercy on some by softening their heart towards belief, while he hardens others by not softening” (*aliis molliendo cor ad credendum miseretur, aliis non molliendo indurat*).<sup>28</sup> Augustine’s interpretation of Rom. 9:18 in his *Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician* (c. 397) underpins this idea. Augustine explains that, due to the original sin, human beings are a “mass of sin” (*massa peccati*) who are unable to embrace faith of their own volition.<sup>29</sup> God, then, pours out his mercy on one person “so that they may believe” (*ut credat*).<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, hardening happens “when he is unwilling to be merciful” (*nolle misereri*) towards another person. That is, God is unwilling to give faith, and he leaves this person

26 LSJ (1996) 1612 s.v. σκληρύνω.

27 Indur. 19 (p. 157 de Pliniv al ): *Haeretici [...] perversae fidei* (“of a distorted faith”).

28 Ibid. 20 (p. 159). My translation.

29 Augustine, *Simpl.* I 2,16 (CChr.SL 44, 42).

30 Ibid. I 2,9 (44, 34).

in his or her sinful condition as a consequence.<sup>31</sup> According to *De induratione*'s understanding of this interpretation, human hearts are hard, or evil, due to original sin. In some cases, God 'softens' hearts so that human beings show faith. In other cases, God does not do this but hands human beings over to their innate wickedness resulting from Adam's transgression. In *De induratione*'s view, this interpretation presupposes that human beings are not endowed with freedom of choice: embracing faith does not depend on human volition but on God's will.<sup>32</sup> It also presupposes that God "shows partiality towards human beings" (*personarum acceptor est*), i. e., God is unjust, because he allows some to have faith, lead a life of virtue and achieve salvation, while he leaves others in their sinful condition to await perdition.<sup>33</sup> *De induratione* claims that God's justice lies in saving those who have of their own volition embraced faith and lived a life of virtue or, *vice versa*, in condemning those who have chosen to pursue evil during their lives. As such, *De induratione* expresses this concept in the following passage: "God shows partiality for nobody (cf. Rom. 2:11) in acquitting or condemning, but everyone must be examined before the tribunal of Christ according to the quality of his deeds (*secundum gestorum suorum qualitatem*) (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10)."<sup>34</sup>

One should note that the Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* by Rufinus follows a similar argument. The exegesis of Rom. 2:11, "God shows no partiality," in this work states that a reward awaits the one who has performed a "good work" (*opus bonum*).<sup>35</sup> Then, it adds the following:

"Consider what the Apostle says, 'For all of us must stand before the tribunal of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what he has done in the body, whether good things or evil' (2 Cor. 5:10). After all, this is the reason why he [i. e., Paul] adds in this passage 'For God shows no partiality' (Rom. 2:11)."<sup>36</sup>

Both *De induratione* and the Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* argue that God judges human beings based on their works, although they use different terms (*gesta; opus*). Both also refer to the same biblical verse, i. e., 2 Cor. 5:10, in order to substantiate their argument. This offers a basis to claim

31 Ibid. I 2,15 (44, 40).

32 Indur. 19 f. (p. 157–159 de Pliniv al ).

33 Ibid. 20 (p. 159). Augustine, Simpl. I 2,16 (CChr.SL 44, 41), instead claims that God acts upon human beings "according to a mysterious justice" (*occultae aequitatis*).

34 Indur. 21 (p. 159 de Pliniv al ): *Deum personam neque in liberando neque in damnando nullius accipere sed unumquemque secundum gestorum suorum qualitatem ante tribunal Christi examinandum*. Translation: p. 28 Rees .

35 Origen, in Rom. comm. II 5,25 (SC 532, 332).

36 Ibid.: *Vide enim dicentem apostolum: quia omnes nos stare oportet ante tribunal Christi ut reportet unusquisque propria corporis prout gessit siue bona siue mala. Inde denique est quod et in hoc loco subiungit: Non enim personarum acceptio est apud Deum*. Translation: Scheck , FaCh 103, 126.

that the author of *De induratione* is acquainted with Origen's commentary in its Latin translation and draws on this work when stressing God's retributive justice, in opposition to Augustine's views.

In its focus on Rom. 9:18, *De induratione* attacks an exegesis that it sees as incorrect, and it also develops its own exegetical solutions. *De induratione* argues that in Rom. 9:18 Paul rebuts a virtual interlocutor, whom it defines as a "blasphemer" (*blasphemantem*).<sup>37</sup> Paul's rebuttal of a virtual interlocutor follows his expression of the interlocutor's views: God hardens some human beings, and he also has mercy on others in accordance with his will.<sup>38</sup> *De induratione* implies that the views of Paul's interlocutor are deterministic; when God hardens, he makes human beings disobedient. Thus, he destroys their freedom to choose either to obey or to disobey, to be virtuous or sinful or to be good or evil. In the same way as *De induratione* does, a number of Latin fourth/fifth century commentaries, including the Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*, attribute Rom. 9:18 to the person of an opponent.<sup>39</sup> Possibly, *De induratione* drew on this previous exegetical tradition and, specifically, on Origen's *Commentary on Romans* in its Latin translation while proposing the same idea. For *De induratione*, as well as for

37 Indur. 18 (p 157 de Plinv al ).

38 *De induratione* states: "In this context [i. e. in Rom. 9:18], Paul rebuts another person who blasphemes, and he [i. e., Paul] refutes him by saying, 'And you say to me: What does he [i. e., God] look for? Indeed, who resists his will?' (Rom. 9:19)" (my translation): *Paulus alium blasphemantem in hoc loco redarguat et reuincat, cum ait: "Dicis itaque mihi: Quid adhuc quaeritur: uoluntati enim eius qui resistit?"* (ibid.). *De induratione* implies that Paul expresses the views of his blasphemous interlocutor in Rom. 9:18 in order to reproach and refute him. Paul again expresses his interlocutor's views in Rom. 9:19: "Then, the apostle reduces him [i. e. his interlocutor] to silence by saying, 'Who are you, O human being, to answer back to God? Does what is molded say to its molder: Why have you made me like this? Does the potter not have the authority to make out of the same mass of mud one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?' (Rom. 9:20 f.)" (my translation): *huic ergo silentium imponit apostolus dicendo: "O homo, tu quis est, qui respondeas Deo; nunquid dicit figmentum ei qui se finxit: Cur me ita fecisti? An non habet potestatem figulus luti ex eadem massa facere aliud quidem vas in honorem, aliud vero in contumeliam?"* (ibid.). *De induratione* openly claims that Paul speaks Rom. 9:18 in the person of an interlocutor later in the text: "From this we may derive the firm conclusion that the blessed Paul, in the passage in which he says, 'So then he has mercy on whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills,' is not giving his own opinion, but that of an opponent [...] like a great orator he advances and explains for the sake of pious enquirers objections that he foresaw could be advanced by his opponents" (ibid. 34 [p. 175]): *unde certa sit ratio, beatum Paulum in loco isto ubi ait: Ergo cui uult miseretur et quem uult indurat non suam sed contrarii sententiam protulisse [...] quasi magnus orator ea, quae praeuidebat a contrariis posse conferri, ipse proponit et pie quaerentibus soluit.* Translation: p. 37 Rees (modified).

39 The idea that Paul speaks Rom. 9:18 in the person of an opponent is in Ambrosiaster, comm. in Rom. 9,18 (CSEL 81/1,325); Budapest Anonymous, comm. in Rom. 098(a) (p. 67 Fr ede); Pelagius, expos. in Rom. 9,18 (p. 77 Souter ); Origen, in Rom. comm. VI 14,2 (SC 543,382). One should note that Origen, princ. III 1,7–8 (II p. 300–332 Behr), does not attribute Rom. 9:18 to the person of an interlocutor.

Origen's commentary, Rom. 9:18 is a statement that endangers freedom of choice. Claiming that Rom. 9:18 is uttered in the person of an interlocutor is a very effective way of exonerating Paul from the suspicion of holding a deterministic stance.

b) *De induratione's* Interpretation of the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart  
(Ex. 7:3; 4:21)

*De induratione's* exegetical focus on the issue of divine hardening recurs in its treatment of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 7:3; 4:21). It sees some interpretations of this hardening as incorrect; namely, those that consider that God hardened Pharaoh's heart to ensure that Pharaoh would do evil.<sup>40</sup> This idea may be an indirect reference to Augustine's interpretation of divine hardening which associates itself polemically with deterministic understandings. *De induratione* stresses that this idea needs to be strongly refuted.<sup>41</sup> In line with this, *De induratione* provides its readers with a number of interpretations that address the hardening of Pharaoh's heart; all of these seek to stress the concept of freedom of choice. As such, the first interpretation suggests that the heart of Pharaoh "is allowed" by God "to harden itself" (*permittitur [...] indurari*).<sup>42</sup> This means that Pharaoh, who is an evil man, can proceed in his evil at will. *De induratione* argues that God allows this to happen "by withdrawing his plagues" (*suspendendo plagas*)<sup>43</sup> before they kill Pharaoh. *De induratione* then stresses that, after proceeding in evil, Pharaoh encounters his physical death in the Red Sea; this fate, it argues, is fair punishment given that Pharaoh had killed many Hebrew children in the same waters.<sup>44</sup> The text associates the manner of Pharaoh's death, moreover, with Jesus' speech in Jn. 15:22: "This suggestion of the reason for Pharaoh's death is in accord with the Saviour's words when he says of the Jews: 'If I had not come and spoken with them, they would have no sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin' (Jn. 15:22)."<sup>45</sup>

40 Indur. 25 (p. 163 de Pliniv al): *dicit Deus [...] Ego indurabo non ut [...] faciat mala*: "God says [...] 'I will harden' not in order for him [i. e., Pharaoh] [...] to do evil." My translation.

41 Ibid. 22–27 (p. 161–167).

42 Ibid. 23 (p. 161).

43 Ibid. 25 (p. 163).

44 Ibid. (p. 165): *ita enim exposcebat iustitia Dei, ut ipso aquarum supplicio necarentur Aegyptii, quo Hebraeorum filios trucidabant*: "For God's justice demanded that the Egyptians be slain by the same punishment, that is, water, which they had used to kill the Hebrews' children." Translation: p. 31 Rees.

45 Ibid.: *Nam similis est suspicio ista de interitu Pharaonis cum illa sententia Saluatoris, ubi ait de Iudaeis: Si non uenissem et adnuntiassem eis, peccatum non haberent; nunc autem excusationem non habent de peccato suo*. Translation: *ibid.*

This association adds new facets to *De induratione*'s exegesis on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.<sup>46</sup> *De induratione* reasons that, if Christ had not provided the Jews with teachings that sought to correct them, then they would not have sinned by rejecting them. Christ, however, did speak to them; they refused to accept his teachings, and they acquired sin as a consequence. In a similar way, if God had not visited Pharaoh with the plagues in order to bring about his repentance,<sup>47</sup> Pharaoh would have not sinned while persevering in his evil after the plagues ended. But God acted in such a way. Subsequently, Pharaoh persevered in his wickedness; he 'hardened' his own heart, and he prepared destruction for himself.

Here, *De induratione* implies that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, which consists of Pharaoh's voluntary perseverance in his wickedness, takes place since Pharaoh does not seize the opportunity to repent after the plagues. As such, this explanation is conceptually akin to that which is found in the Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*. In this work, it is stated that God, in his patience, sends his punishments upon Pharaoh so that he may repent.<sup>48</sup> But, "because God bore with patience, he [i. e. Pharaoh] hardened;"<sup>49</sup> he persevered in his wickedness willfully.<sup>50</sup> This interpretation is in line with Origen's thinking about the hardening of Pharaoh in *On First Principles*. Origen sees hardening (*σκληρυνμός/duritia*) as happening when human beings do not yield to God after they are visited by divine action; rather, they show disobedience.<sup>51</sup> This is the case when Pharaoh, after he is visited by God's plagues, stubbornly refuses to let the Hebrews go. One should stress that, in this work, Origen foresees Pharaoh's hardening – or voluntary disobedience – as part of a salvific plan (*οικονομία/providentia*).<sup>52</sup> Origen claims that, after their immersion in evil deeds, human

46 Here I follow Giuseppe Caruso, *Ramusculus Origenis: L'eredità dell'antropologia origeniana nei pelagiani e in Girolamo* (SEAug 130), Rome 2012, 3B.

47 As for *De induratione*'s idea that God sends his plagues in view of Pharaoh's repentance, see also Marialuisa Annetchino, *La volontà umana nel mistero della salvezza nel pelagiano De induratione cordis Pharaonis*, in: Luca Arca (ed.), *Acti Sanctorum Investigatori: Miscellanea di studi in memoria di Gennaro Luongo*, Rome 2019, 415–431, here 426.

48 Annetchino, *ibid.*, points out that, for Origen as well as for the author of *De induratione*, divine punishment is corrective and remedial.

49 Origen, in Rom. comm. VII 14,5 (SC 543,391): *Sed quod Deus gerebat per patientiam ex hoc ille indurabatur.*

50 Pelagius, expos. in Rom. 9,17 (p. 77 Souter), offers a similar explanation. As for the influence of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* on Pelagius, see Alfred J. Smith, *The Latin Sources of the Commentary of Pelagius on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, in: *JThS* 20 (1919/20) 127–177, here 164.

51 Origen, princ. III 1,11 (II p. 316Behr).

52 *Ibid.* III 1,14 (II p. 332).

beings expel sin, and they later attain purification.<sup>53</sup> He implies that all souls undertake a purification process, which can last many lifetimes, as the soul is immortal like its creator.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, his perspective is that all creatures, which include wicked ones, move towards purification and the final reunification with God (*ἀποκατάστασις*).<sup>55</sup>

*De induratione* does not advocate this theological scheme, but its acquaintance with Origen's exegetical solutions about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart that convey the idea of *ἀποκατάστασις* is still possible. *De induratione* might have accessed these interpretations but dismissed the idea of the final reunification with God. This would come as no surprise, given that Origen's doctrine was under attack at the time of *De induratione*'s composition.<sup>56</sup> Conversely, *De induratione* might have assimilated the idea, expressed in Origen's *Commentary on Romans* and *On First Principles*, that Pharaoh's heart hardens, insofar as Pharaoh wilfully goes further into evil after the plagues. Indeed, this idea enables the preservation of Pharaoh's autonomy, dispelling the suspicion that God, not Pharaoh, is responsible for Pharaoh's wickedness, as the determinist biblical readers believe.

*De induratione* specifies that Pharaoh's hardening (i. e. Pharaoh's voluntary perseverance in his wickedness) takes place after the plagues end, or, more specifically, when God suspends his plagues.<sup>57</sup> This designation offers *De induratione* the opportunity to develop another exegetical solution to the issue in question: the author suggests that hardening follows God's distancing of himself from human beings.<sup>58</sup> *De induratione* explains that, when God moves away from the wicked (including Pharaoh), the Devil approaches and dwells in their heart.<sup>59</sup> The Devil thus hardens the heart of the evil person in the same way as the rennet (*co-*

53 Ibid. III 1, B (II p. 328): *εἰ καὶ ἐπὶ πλείον ἐν κακοῖς γεγένηται, ὕστερον δυνηθῆ καθαροῦ τυχῶν τοῦ μετὰ τὴν κακίαν ἀναστοιχειωθῆναι*: "Even though one person may have been greatly immersed in evil deeds, this may later on, attaining to purification after their wickedness, be renewed." In Rufinus' translation: *ut etiamsi uideatur quis in grauioribus effici malis [...] possit tamen cessare aliquando et desinere et satietatem capere malorum et sic ad statum suum post multas molestias reparari*: "And so, even if someone seems to be afflicted with very serious evils [...] this may yet at some point be able to cease and desist and to reach satiety of evils and so, after many troubles, to be restored to his [proper] state." Translation: II p. 329 Behr . See also philoc. 27,4f. (SC 226, 279–287).

54 Princ. III 1,13 (II p. 328 Behr).

55 For guidance on the concept of *ἀποκατάστασις* in Origen, see Emanuela Prinzivalli, Art. Apocatastasi, in: *Monaci Castagno*, Dizionario (n. 18) 24–29.

56 The first Origenist crisis took place at the waning of the fourth century: Elizabeth M. Harding, Origenist Crises, in: John A. McGuckin (ed.), *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, Louisville KY 2004, 162–167.

57 Indur. 25 (p. 163 de Plinval).

58 Ibid. 28 (p. 167–169).

59 Ibid. (p. 167): *Dei utique prolongatio et diaboli uicinitas induratio cordis est*: "The hardening of the heart is the withdrawal of God, the proximity of the Devil." My translation.

*agulum*) combines itself with the milk (*lac*) in cheese and “turns it from a liquid to solid substance.”<sup>60</sup> For *De induratione*, this means that the Devil “bends the one in whose heart he dwells to his evil,”<sup>61</sup> i. e., he strengthens the person’s evil disposition in turn.

Later in the text, *De induratione* offers a similar explanation.<sup>62</sup> Pharaoh’s determination not to know God allows the Devil to insert himself into Pharaoh’s heart.<sup>63</sup> And “having inserted himself in his heart [...] the devil changed the goodness of his nature (*bonum naturae*) like gold into mud.”<sup>64</sup> By stressing Pharaoh’s original goodness and his being ‘gold’ before the Devil dwells in him, *De induratione* might be attacking the idea, expressed by Augustine, that human beings are a mass of mud (*massa luti*) due to Adam’s sin.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, human beings are not born into a ‘muddy’ condition; their hearts turn into mud once they have shown the impiety of their willfulness.

One should note that in *De induratione*’s interpretation God feels the horror (*perhorrescens*) of the heart’s transformation; he thus casts the heart into the fire.<sup>66</sup> The fire symbolizes the Devil, since the treatise explains that “it is he [i. e., the Devil] who is meant by the fire which the Saviour declared fell like lightning from heaven” (Lk. 10:18).<sup>67</sup> The tract then stresses that the fire/Devil hardens the muddy heart, i. e., strengthens Pharaoh’s impiety, as “the devil no longer allows him [i. e., Pharaoh] to think of his creator.”<sup>68</sup>

Importantly, *De induratione* highlights Pharaoh’s freedom of choice (*libertas arbitrii*) in this context.<sup>69</sup> Pharaoh remains free to oppose the activity of the Devil and embrace faith. Hence, he is free to ‘soften’ his heart again. This freedom contradicts what some interpreters believe, namely, that it goes against the idea that

60 Ibid.: *ex liquore in soliditatem mutetur. De induratione* 28 develops this image from the book of Psalms: *ut ait propheta dicendo: Coagulatum est sicut lac cor eorum* (Ps. 118[19]:70).

61 Ibid.: *ad suam malitiam constringit [...] in quo habitat cor[de]*.

62 Ibid. 28–32 (p. 167–171).

63 Ibid. 29 (p. 169): *ubi autem dedit dexteram diabolo dicendo: Nescio Deum, accipit eum diabolum possidendum*: “When he has given his right hand to the devil, saying: ‘I do not know God’ (Ex. 5:20), the devil receives him in his possession as his own property.” Translation: p. 33 Rees.

64 Ibid.: *cuius cordi insertus [...] bonum naturae ut aurum in lutum mutavit*. Translation: *ibid*. The concept of *bonum naturae*, the original goodness of human nature, is a cornerstone of Pelagian thought; for an analysis of the Pelagian anthropology, see Caruso, *Ramusculus Origenis* (n. 46) 176–378.

65 Augustine, *div. quaest.* LXXXIII 68,1 (CChr.SL 44A, 177).

66 *Indur.* 29 (p. 169 de Plinval).

67 Ibid.: *Qui ignis intelligitur qui, sicut fulgor, de caelo corruisse a Salvatore denuntiatur*: “It is he who is meant by the ‘fire’ which, the Saviour declared, ‘fell like lightning from heaven.’” Translation: p. 33 Rees.

68 Ibid.: *nunquam suum factorem cogitarem permittit*. My translation.

69 Ibid. 30 (p. 169).

God hardened Pharaoh's heart, i. e., made his heart evil, and that it disputes the idea that this is a condition that Pharaoh cannot change. Indeed, *De induratione* notices that, if this was the case, "once hardened, the heart ought never to have softened again (*molliri*);"<sup>70</sup> Pharaoh, then, ought not to have shown faith from his own will as he did "when he said to Moses [...] 'pray to the Lord for me' (Ex. 8:8) [...] nor would he have said 'I have come to know that God is just' (Ex. 9:27)."<sup>71</sup> This theme also occurs in Origen's *On First Principles*. For Origen, in some cases the plagues have an effect upon Pharaoh; on those occasions, Pharaoh's heart 'grows soft again.' That is, Pharaoh shows obedience to God's request to let the Hebrew people depart from Egypt. Origen expresses this idea in the following passage:

"And the succinctly recorded comment that the heart of Pharaoh was, as it were, softened (*μαλάσσεσθαι*) when he said 'You shall not go far; you shall go a three days journey, but leave your wives' (Ex. 8:27; 8:28; 10:9; 10:11) and whatever else he said, yielding slightly to the wonders, makes it clear that the signs had some effect upon him."<sup>72</sup>

The Latin version of the treatise translates this passage faithfully:

"Regarding what is written, that the heart of Pharaoh was gradually being softened (*edomaretur*), so that on one occasion he said 'You shall not go far; you shall go a three days journey, but leave your wives,' and any other passage according to which he seems to yield gradually to the powerful signs, what else is indicated but that the power has some effect on him?"<sup>73</sup>

Both *De induratione* and Origen's *On First Principles* suggest that Pharaoh's heart softens again. Intriguingly, they also both claim that this 'softening' rebuts those who believe that God has hardened Pharaoh's heart (i. e., that he has made Pha-

70 Ibid. 31(p. 171): *semel induratum nunquam debuit molliri*. Translation: p. 34 Rees (modified).

71 Ibid.: *dicendo ad Moysen: [...] Orate pro me ad Dominum [...] nec diceret: Cognoui quoniam Dominus iustus est*. Translation: p. 34 Rees.

72 Origen, princ. III 1,11(II p. 316–318Behr): *καὶ τὸ κατὰ βραχὺ δὲ ἀναγεγράφθαι οἰοῦναι μαλάσσεσθαι τὴν καρδίαν Φαραῶ λέγοντος· "ἄλλ' οὐ μακρὰν ἀποτενεῖτε, τριῶν γὰρ ἡμερῶν πορεύσεσθε, καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας ὑμῶν καταλείπετε," καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα κατὰ βραχὺ ἐνδιδοὺς πρὸς τὰ τεράστια ἔλεγε, δηλοῖ ὅτι ἐνήργει μὲν τι καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ σημεῖα*. Translation: II p. 37–38 Behr.

73 Ibid. (II p. 316): *Quod vero scriptum est quia paulatim edomaretur cor Pharaonis, ut aliquando diceret: "Non longe abeatis, iter tridui abibitis, sed uxores vestras relinquitte et infantes vestros et pecora vestra," sed et si qua alia scripta sunt, per quae paulatim videtur adquiscere signis et virtutibus: quid aliud ex his indicatur, nisi quod agebat quidem in eo aliquid signorum et mirabilium virtus?* Translation: II p. 37.

raoh evil)<sup>74</sup> and that evil is thus for Pharaoh a permanent condition. Origen's *On First Principles* may have influenced *De induratione* in this context. But different biblical verses inform the ideas that feature in the two texts: the latter treatise uses Ex. 8:8 and 9:27, whereas *On First Principles* uses Ex. 8:27; 8:28; 10:9; 10:11. Different terminology also occurs in these two texts: *De induratione*'s reference to the concept of 'softening' uses the verb *molliri*, whereas Rufinus' translation of *On First Principles* uses *edomari* – literally 'to be brought under control'.<sup>75</sup> Finally, *De induratione*'s explanation differs from *On First Principles*' explanation of the softening of Pharaoh's heart as a case of Pharaoh's voluntary obedience after the plagues; the explanation in regard to the Devil does not appear in Origen, which testifies to *De induratione*'s exegetical originality.

It is worth stressing that in *De induratione* the heart of Pharaoh softens, insofar as Pharaoh shows faith, when he says "I have come to know that God is just" (Ex. 9:27) and "Pray to the Lord for me" (Ex. 8:8).<sup>76</sup> *De induratione* then makes the following observation:

"God [...] always acts in such a way that by his blows he may bring to know him human beings who were previously far removed from his presence. Had this not been the method which he adopted, Pharaoh would have never come to recognize God as the maker of heaven and earth [...] though he had previously said 'I do not know God' (Ex. 5:2)."<sup>77</sup>

The text claims that the plagues are a tool used by God in order to stimulate knowledge of him in the impious. It stresses that before the plagues Pharaoh denies God; after punishment, he recognizes God and asks for prayers. And this reasoning also comes across in the Latin translation of Origen's third homily on Exodus: "He who now says, 'I do not know the Lord' (Ex. 5:2) will say later, when he shall have felt the force of the whip, 'Pray to the Lord for me' (Ex. 8:8)."<sup>78</sup> The

74 In this regard, Origen, *ibid.* (II p. 318), notices that "yet even this," i. e. the softening of the heart, or Pharaoh's (temporary) repentance, "would not have happened if, as supposed by the multitude, the saying 'I will harden the heart of Pharaoh' was wrought by him, that is by God:" οὐκ ἂν δὲ οὐδὲ ταῦτα ἐγίνετο, εἰ τὸ νοούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν "σκληρυνῶ τὴν καρδίαν Φαραῶν" ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐνηργεῖτο, τοῦ θεοῦ δηλονότι. Translation: II p. 319. The Latin version of the treatise translates this as: *Si enim talis erat induratio, qualem plurimi putant, non utique inueniretur vel in paucis adquiescere* (II p. 316): "If the hardening was as such as many reckon," namely, those who ascribe the hardening to God, "he [i. e. Pharaoh] would have not been found acquiescing even a few times." Translation: II p. 317.

75 OLD (1968) 587 s.v. *edomari*.

76 *Indur.* 31 (p 171 de Pliniv al).

77 *Ibid.*: *Deus [...] hoc agit semper [...] ut per uerbera ad suam notitiam adducat longe positos. Nam nisi per haec non agnouerat Pharaon Deum factorem caeli et terrae [...] qui ante uerbera dixerat: Nescio Deum.* Translation: p. 35 Rees (modified).

78 Origen, in Ex. hom. 3,3(SC 321,104): *Iste, qui modo dicit: "nescio Dominum," postea cum uim senserit uerberum, dicturus est: "orate pro me Dominum."* Translation: Heine, FaCh 71,255.

same passage from this homily also claims: “Let no one, therefore, be so ignorant of divine discipline [...]. Behold even Pharaoh, a most hard man; nevertheless, he profits when he has been scourged. He does not know the Lord before the scourgings; after being scourged he asks that Moses pray to the Lord for him.”<sup>79</sup>

The divine scourgings upon the ‘hard’ (i. e., evil by his own choice) Pharaoh have an educational value for Origen. They are aimed at the sinner’s spiritual progress while embracing faith in God.<sup>80</sup> One should note that Origen’s homily and *De induratione* express the same concept and they use the same biblical verses (Ex. 5:2 and 8:8) in support of their arguments. Possibly independently of one another, both *De induratione* and Origen derive from the biblical text the idea that Pharaoh asks for prayers after the plagues, hence they stress that God sends his plagues with the aim of promoting faith. But a link between Origen and *De induratione* is also possible. The author of *De induratione* might be acquainted with Origen’s homilies, and he might re-use the idea expressed in the third homily on Exodus that the plagues lead Pharaoh to the knowledge of God.

Intiguently, *De induratione* stresses that, similarly to the impious Pharaoh, the righteous Job attains knowledge of God through divine punishments (i. e., the plagues).<sup>81</sup> The plagues are a “plaster” (*emplastro*) that God uses in order to restore both individuals to health, i. e., in order to lead them to faith.<sup>82</sup> Such medical imagery also features in Origen’s writings on the actions of God upon human beings.<sup>83</sup> *On First Principles* offers several examples in this regard. In Book II, Origen states that “those who have sinned need to be treated with remedies [...] aiming at their improvement.”<sup>84</sup> Book III uses medical imagery when dealing with the concept of hardening; just as physicians who let the inflammation in patients’ bodies worsen in order for them to regain health more securely, God lets some sinners persevere in their evil ways (i. e., he hardens them).<sup>85</sup> In this way, the sinners will expel the evil within them, and they will later be purified. *De induratione* may have assimilated the medical imagery in Origen’s writings; at the same time, it

79 Ibid.: *Nemo ergo ita ineruditus diuinae sit disciplinae [...]. Ecce etiam Pharaon durissimus; tamen proficit uerberatus. Ante uerbera Dominum nescit; uerberatus supplicari pro se Dominum rogat.* Translation: *ibid.*

80 The idea of educational punishment, of a Platonic origin, is distributed throughout Origen’s writings: e. g. princ. I 6,3 (I p. 112Behr ); philoc. 27,6–9 (SC 226, 286–300).

81 Indur. 32 (p. 171–173 de Plinval ).

82 Ibid. (p. 171): *de uno emplastro utrosque ab uno artifice medicatos*: “Both are medicated with one single plaster.” My translation.

83 As for the medical imagery in Origen’s writings, see Samuel Fernández, *Cristo médico, según Orígenes: La actividad médica como metáfora de la acción divina* (SEAug 64), Rome 1999.

84 Origen, princ. II 5,3 (II p. 194 Behr ): *curari indigent medicamentis hi qui deliquerunt [...] emendationis prospectu*. Translation: II p. 195 Behr.

85 Ibid. III 1,13 (p. 326–328).

may have dismissed the theological views that Origen's medical imagery conveys. *De induratione* holds that those who, after scourgings, fail to mend their ways will incur eternal punishment, although the punishment may be less severe in the case of a temporary repentance. *De induratione* suggests that "perhaps it will be of some avail" to Pharaoh "in the day of judgement to have endured the scourges of God"<sup>86</sup> since, on some occasions, he has shown faith after the plagues.

A new and final exegetical solution to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart follows the idea in this treatise that God punishes human beings in order that they may be corrected.<sup>87</sup> *De induratione* claims that "Pharaoh worshipped and revered gods made of mud" (i. e. idols).<sup>88</sup> Thus, he "turned into [...] what he believed to be a god and worshipped as such, that is, of earth and mud."<sup>89</sup> *De induratione* shows great exegetical originality here: the idea that Pharaoh turns into mud because he worships idols is not present in the older exegetical tradition. In this context, *De induratione* also stresses that "the righteous person [...] although he or she originates in earthly substance just as the ungodly person does, yet, by believing in God [...] is transformed into gold to be stored in the treasuries of heaven."<sup>90</sup> *De induratione* states that human beings originate from the same substance and that it is up to them whether to turn into mud, due to their voluntary impiety, or into gold when they show faith willingly. It seems convincing that here *De induratione* attacks views that see human beings as either good or evil by nature<sup>91</sup> and unable to change their status through their free choices.

Then, *De induratione* claims that the "fire of tribulation" (*ignem tribulationis*) – an image that it uses to refer to the plagues of Egypt – hardens the 'muddy' heart of the impious Pharaoh.<sup>92</sup> The righteous person, on the contrary, is not hardened when he or she approaches the fire; this "tries" the gold, "as Solomon declares, 'as fire tries the gold, so the righteous person is tried in the furnace of tribulation' (Prov. 17:3)."<sup>93</sup> *De induratione*, moreover, compares the righteous person with bronze (*aes*): the bronze "becomes soft" (*mollescit*) as it approaches the fire, since

86 Indur. 31 (p. 171 de Pliniv al ): *cui forsitan non erit uacuum, Dei perpeusum flagella in die iudicii*. Translation: p. 35 Rees .

87 Ibid. 32 f. (p. 171–173).

88 Ibid. 32 (p. 171): *Pharaonem deos luteos colere et uenerari*. Translation: p. 35 Rees .

89 Ibid. (p. 173): *in hoc conuersus [...] quod sibi deum credebat et pro deo uenerabat, id est, in terram et lutum*. Translation: ibid.

90 Ibid. 33 (p. 173): *iusti [...] persona [...] licet de materia terrae sumat originem sicut impius Deum tamen caeli credendo et in eo spem suam ex toto corde ponendo, aurum efficitur, in caelorum thesauris conseruandus*. Translation: ibid. 36 (modified).

91 See also ibid. 2 (p. 139).

92 Ibid. 32 (p. 173).

93 Ibid. 33 (p. 173): *probante Salomone: Sicut ignis probat aurum, ita iustus in camino tribulationis*. Translation: p. 36 Rees .

“it realizes that it is to his own advantage to be corrected.”<sup>94</sup> This statement sheds further light on *De induratione*’s understanding of the divine hardening in this context. *De induratione* implies that the righteous ‘become soft,’ because they use the plagues from God/fire as means of correction. One can infer from this that the impious ‘harden,’ insofar as they do not correct themselves after the plagues; rather, they persevere in their voluntary impiety.

One should notice that similar imagery is used in the interpretation of divine hardening in Origen’s *On First Principles*.<sup>95</sup> Origen compares God with the sun (ἥλιος/*sol*) and his action upon human beings as the sun’s heat (θερμότης/*calor*). Origen then compares the stubborn Pharaoh with mud (πηλός/*limus*); he hardens, i. e., perseveres in his voluntary wickedness, when visited by God’s plagues/heat. Conversely, other Egyptians are compared with wax (κηρός/*cera*). In the same way as the wax does not harden but melts down when it is touched by God’s action/heat, these individuals do not proceed in their evil after the plagues but show obedience.<sup>96</sup> The author of *De induratione* might have assimilated this imagery in Origen’s writings and re-used it in the development of his third exegetical solution to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. At same time, *De induratione* might have passed over in silence the idea expressed by Origen that hardening, or voluntary perseverance in wickedness, is part of a salvific process.<sup>97</sup> *De induratione*

94 Ibid. 32 (p. 173): *se multum proficere [...] corrigi [...] agnoscit*. Translation: *ibid.*

95 Origen, princ. III 1,11 (II p. 316Behr ).

96 The relevant passage in Origen’s Greek text is: ἀπὸ τῆς μιᾶς θερμότητος τηκομένου μὲν τοῦ κηροῦ, ξηραίνομένου δὲ τοῦ πηλοῦ· οὕτως ἡ μία ἐνέργεια [...] σκληρυμμόν μὲν ἤλεγχε τὸν τοῦ Φαραῶ [...] πειθῶ δὲ τὴν τῶν ἐπιμίκτων Αἰγυπτίων, συνεζορησάντων τοῖς Ἑβραίοις (*ibid.*): “As wax is melted and clay dried out by the same heat, so also the same act,” i. e., God’s plagues, “proved the hardening of Pharaoh,” i. e., his voluntary perseverance in wickedness, “and the persuasibility of the mixed Egyptians who departed together with the Hebrews.” Translation: II p. 317. This passage is translated by Rufinus as: *dum una eademque calor sui uirtute sol ceram quidem soluit, limum uero arefacit et stringit [...] ita ergo una eademque dei operatio [...] Pharaonis quidem duritiam arguebat [...] reliquorum uero Aegyptiorum, qui Israhelitis admiscebantur, oboedientiam declarabat, qui etiam cum Hebraeis pariter excessisse Aegypto referuntur* (*ibid.*): “By the one and the same power of its heat, the sun loosens up wax yet dries out and binds together mud [...] In this way, then, one and the same action of God [...] made known, on the one hand, the hardness of Pharaoh [...] and proclaimed, on the other hand, the obedience of those other Egyptians, who were mingled among the Israelites and are reported to have departed from Egypt along with them.” Translation: *ibid.*

97 E. g., *ibid.* III 1,B (II p. 328). For Origen, God acts upon human beings in order for all to reach salvation. The image of God as source of heat supports this idea in Origen’s writings. Origen, *ibid.* I 1,2(p. 24–26), states that God/fire burns the sins of the souls whom it visits; it then has a purifying effect that is beneficial for the souls in view of their salvation. As for the concept of fire in Origen, see Emanuela Prinzivalli, Art. Fuoco, in: *Monac i Cas t agno*, Dizionario (n. 18) 177–181.

holds that those who, after the plagues, fail to correct themselves but ‘harden,’ i. e., persevere in their wickedness, will incur eternal punishment.

### 3. Conclusion

*De induratione* offers its readers several interpretations about the biblical concept of divine hardening. *De induratione* holds that Paul utters the words, “God has mercy on whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills” (Rom. 9:18) in the person of an interlocutor and implies that this interlocutor holds deterministic views. *De induratione* then develops a number of exegetical solutions to the issue of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3), which all show great exegetical originality. In line with Pelagian ethics, all explanations stress Pharaoh’s freedom of choice. The first explanation suggests that Pharaoh perseveres in his wickedness; he thus hardens his own heart after the plagues of God that seek to correct him. The second explanation suggests that Pharaoh is wilfully evil. Hence, God detaches himself from him. The Devil approaches Pharaoh and hardens his heart in turn, i. e., he strengthens Pharaoh’s wickedness in the same way as the rennet turns milk into a solid substance. Alternatively, Pharaoh shows wilful impiety. Thus, the Devil comes and dwells in Pharaoh’s heart; he turns Pharaoh’s heart into mud as a consequence. Then, God casts the muddy heart of Pharaoh into the fire/ Devil. This eventually hardens the heart of Pharaoh, i. e., strengthens Pharaoh’s impiety. The last explanation states that Pharaoh’s voluntary impiety facilitates the heart’s transformation into mud. Subsequently, the fire of tribulation (i. e., the plagues) hardens the ‘muddy’ heart of ‘Pharaoh.’ Here, *De induratione* implies that Pharaoh wilfully perseveres in his evil after the plagues have ended.

The exegetical solutions in *De induratione* present a number of conceptual connections with Origen’s exegetical materials. Indeed, both *De induratione* and the Latin translation of Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* refer to the idea that the person of an interlocutor puts across in Rom. 9:18. Also, both works stress God’s retributive justice in their comments on Rom. 2:11, “God shows no partiality;” they also use the same verse (2 Cor. 5:10) to support the same argument.

In the same way as in *De induratione*, Origen’s writings explain the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart as Pharaoh’s wilful perseverance in wickedness after the plagues of God which seek to correct him. *De induratione*’s suggestion that the heart of Pharaoh “grows soft again” on some occasions also occurs in *On First Principles*. *De induratione*, along with the Latin translation of Origen’s third homily on Exodus, stresses that the plagues are useful for Pharaoh, since they provide him with knowledge of God. The same biblical verses that feature in Origen’s text also come across (Ex. 8:8; 5:2). Origen’s use of medical imagery to describe God’s divine action upon human beings also recurs in *De induratione*. Finally, both *On*

*First Principles* and *De induratione* compare God's action with a source of heat (the fire, or the sun's heat). When visited by God's action/heat, some human beings, compared with mud, persevere in their evil, i. e., harden; other human beings instead correct themselves, in the same way as bronze or wax melts down when it comes near heat.

The detected connections provide a basis to claim that *De induratione* drew on Origen's exegetical solutions. But while *De induratione* draws on Origen's interpretations, it also ignores Origen's controversial doctrines; specifically, it dismisses the doctrine of the final reunification of all souls with God. On the other hand, *De induratione* re-uses Origen's arguments that stress the concept of freedom of choice in its aim to fight against deterministic readings of the Bible. Origen highlights the concept of freedom of choice against astrological and Gnostic determinism; *De induratione* instead stresses this concept against Augustine's doctrine of grace, which it polemically associates with a deterministic belief. This polemical association finds its explanation in the historical context when *De induratione* was produced. In the first half of the fifth century, Pelagianism was mired in controversy and Augustine was one of its fiercest opponents. *De induratione*, then, fights back against Augustine's accusations by charging his theological views with determinism. *De induratione* is an exegetical work which elaborates original interpretations and at the same time re-uses previous exegetical material in order to support its arguments. More than this, it is a polemical pamphlet that bears witness to the Pelagian narrative during the controversy that focussed on the Pelagian tenets. As such, further studies are needed to shed light on *De induratione's* exegetical solutions and historical relevance.



PERSPECTIVES ON ORIGIN IN MEDIEVAL AND  
EARLY MODERN TIMES



*Perplexa haereditas*  
Origen in the Western Middle Ages\*

PETER W. MARTENS, ST. LOUIS

1. Introduction

The reception of Origen's writings in the western middle ages, however we wish to circumscribe this era, is an entangled topic for which there are few guides.<sup>1</sup> Any periodization of this epoch would include the famously long twelfth century, widely regarded as a transformative epoch in European history. Scholars have often interpreted the wide-ranging renewals of churches, monasteries, and schools across Europe in this century as a profound cultural renaissance. As historians have long ago established, one of this revolutionary age's inspirational figures was Origen. Numerous surviving manuscripts of his writings date to the twelfth century. Prominent libraries from this period held deep collections of Origen's writings. "Almost always when a still intact twelfth-century library can be examined, or when its collection can be reconstructed by the aid of ancient or modern catalogues, we find that Origen is represented by at least one manuscript."<sup>2</sup> And then there is Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most influential figures of this transformative twelfth century who was himself deeply shaped by Origen. It would be an extraordinary achievement to document Origen's textual, institutional, and spiritual force in this pivotal century.

\* This essay was initially delivered in August, 2016, as the keynote address at the University of Kent and was sponsored by the European Commission's Innovative Training Network project, "The History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization." I express my gratitude to Karla Pollmann for the invitation to deliver this lecture, and to the participants for their thoughtful responses.

1 For orientation, still useful are: Albert Siegmund, *Die Überlieferung der griechischen christlichen Literatur in der lateinischen Kirche bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (ABBA 5), Munich 1949; Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources*, trans. by Harry E. Wedeck, Cambridge MA 1969; Max Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus* (BBGW 140), Basel/Stuttgart 1979, 56–84; Anders-Christian Jacobsen (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (BETL 279), Leuven 2016.

2 Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. by Catharine Misrahi, New York 1961, 19.

But of course, the medieval period is a good deal longer than the long twelfth century. Historians will always quibble about when we think eras should begin and end. For some older writers, Latin Christian writing in the third century marked the beginning of the Christian middle ages. For others, the crises that befell Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries mark the onset of this period. Still others would use the birth of Islam in the seventh century to identify the point of transition. For our purposes – the purposes of those who would seek to understand the diffusion of Origen in the Latin west – none of these events is particularly compelling. Perhaps the ninth century inaugurates the medieval Origen. Historians have typically identified two centuries in which the impact of Origen became heightened – the aforementioned twelfth century, and the Carolingian reforms of the ninth. Key figures of this earlier reform included Paul the Deacon, a monk from Monte Cassino, whose famous *Homiliarium* (a collection of homilies) was composed at the bequest of Charlemagne and contained six homilies attributed to Origen. So also Benedict of Aniane, the “second Benedict,” who greatly influenced Carolingian religious practices. He considered Origen a “holy” “monk” and recommended that the monks of his day read Origen’s works, a recommendation that contributed to the wide diffusion of Origen’s writings in a number of other writers from this period, including Radbertus and Rhabanus Maurus.<sup>3</sup> Above all, John Scotus Eriugena plays a signal role in the Origenian renaissance of the ninth century. The title of his masterwork, *Periphyseon*, almost certainly alludes to Origen’s *Peri Archon* and a number of its themes, such as *apokatastasis*, draw upon Origen’s reflections in that work. For Eriugena, Origen was “blessed” and the “most diligent enquirer into the nature of things.”<sup>4</sup>

Another possibility for marking the advent of the medieval Latin Origen is to turn the clock back to the last quarter of the fourth century. For it is during these years, and reaching into the early fifth century, that two monks from the western provinces of the Roman empire began to immerse themselves in Origen’s writings and eventually translated a large swathe of his corpus into the Latin tongue. I am speaking, of course, about Jerome and Rufinus. Between them, two translations of *On First Principles* were made, of which only Rufinus’ survives complete. Jerome and Rufinus further translated Origen’s *Homilies on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges*, one homily on *1 Samuel*, a handful of *Homilies on the Psalms*, two *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, the first three books of originally ten books of his *Commentary* on that same book, his *Homilies on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Homilies on Luke*, and an abridged translation of the *Commentary on*

3 Schär, *Nachleben des Origenes* (n. 1) 61–63.

4 Édouard Jeuneau, *From Origen’s Periarchon to Eriugena’s Periphyseon*, in: Willemien Otten / Michael I. Allen (eds.), *Eriugena and Creation: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Eriugenan Studies (IPM 68), Turnhout 2014*, 139–182.

*Romans*. Also surviving is an anonymous Latin translation of some of Origen's *Commentary on Matthew* made in the fifth or sixth century.<sup>5</sup> In his *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning*, Cassiodorus informs us that translations were also made of works that no longer survive: four of Origen's *Homilies on Deuteronomy*, four on *1 Samuel*, one on *2 Samuel*, a lengthy sermon on *2 Chronicles*, and sermons on *Esdras*.<sup>6</sup> In short, Jerome and Rufinus, with the help of a few other translators, created the necessary condition by which Latin readers could encounter the Greek Origen for over a millennium.

If we accept the fourth century as the beginning of the era of the Latin medieval Origen, then when should this era end? Perhaps with its climax in the emergence of the first print editions of the Latin works of Origen, whereby a new technology of textual transmission flooded the old banks carved out by the trickling streams of a slowly fading scribal culture. The first "complete" Latin editions of Origen were composed by Jacques Merlin (1512–519), Desiderius Erasmus (1536, published posthumously by Beatus Rhenanus) and Gilbert Générard (1574). Or perhaps we should look to the following centuries when the major collected editions of Origen's writings would emerge that bore the imprint of a new wave of Greek scholarship: Pierre Daniel Huet's *Origeniana* and *Commentaria* (1668) and Charles and Charles Vincent Delarue's *Origenis Opera omnia quae Graece vel Latine tantum exstant* (1733–1759) marked new terrain as the editors of the first Greek-Latin editions of Origen's works. These editions conveniently signify the dawn of a new era when western European readers started to circumscribe and qualify the Latin mediation of Origen, and approach him, whenever possible, as a Greek author.

## 2. Mediated Presence

The Origenian legacy in the Latin west is both long and labyrinthine. In this essay I will argue that two of its most prominent features serve as a guide for students and scholars alike: that it was mediated and highly contested. Origen was mediated to new audiences by his Latin translators, Jerome and Rufinus, at the end of the fourth century. But how did they transmit him?

5 For an overview of Origen's surviving writings, see Hermann J. Vogt, Art. Origen, in: Siegmund Döpp/Wilhelm Geerlings (eds.), *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature*, trans. by Matthew O'Connell, New York 1998, 444–451.

6 Cassiodorus, inst. I 1,9 (p. 15 Mynors); I 2,2 (p. 16); I 2,7 (p. 17); I 2,11 (p. 17); I 6,6 (p. 27).

## a) Incomplete Corpus

I begin with perhaps the most obvious point: not everything Origen wrote was rendered by these translators into Latin. For example, no Latin medieval reader had access to *Against Celsus*. The first Latin translation of this work was produced by Cristoforo Persona in 1481, roughly a millennium after the first Latin translations were made of Origen's writings.<sup>7</sup> Other works not available to medieval readers included *On Martyrdom*, *On Prayer*, *On the Resurrection*, *Dialogue with Heraclides*, *On Pascha*, and the commentaries on *Lamentations*, *Luke*, *John*, *Galatians*, and *Ephesians*. Medieval scholars only had access to what late antique Latin translators decided was important and worth introducing to their audiences. While Origen's corpus is still incomplete today – large portions of his writings remain lost – it was a good deal more incomplete for the typical medieval Latin scholar. The scope of Origen's available writings was also different for medieval readers than it is for us, since if Cassiodorus' reports are accurate, the monks at Vivarium had access to a number of Old Testament homilies that we don't possess.

The library at Vivarium in the sixth century and a number of Carolingian and Cistercian libraries in the ninth and twelfth centuries respectively were relatively well-stocked with the Latin translations of Origen's writings.<sup>8</sup> Yet the typical medieval library would not have possessed such a robust collection of his translated works. It would have included only a handful of Origen's individual writings, and indeed, sometimes even less. Undoubtedly many libraries did not have a single, complete writing of Origen in their holdings, but in many of these cases they would have been able to provide readers with shorter sections of his writings that had been excerpted in widely-circulating anthologies.

There were two kinds of *florilegia* in which Origen's writings were transmitted. He surfaced in a number of collections of canon law. The eighth-century *Collectio Hibernensis*, for instance, was a systematic collection of scriptural and patristic citations pertaining to canon law. It is one of the oldest canon law collections in Europe and covers an extraordinarily wide range of topics beyond those typically treated in canon law collections, such as sections on prayer and morality. Charles Munier identifies 43 citations of Origen in this compilation.<sup>9</sup> Arguably the most

7 Andrea Villani, Cristoforo Persona et la première traduction en Latin du *Contre Celse* d'Origène, in: id. (ed.), *Lire les Pères de l'Église entre la Renaissance et la Réforme*, Paris 2013, 21–54.

8 Leclercq, *Love of Learning* (n. 2) 119; Courcelle, *Latin Christian Writers* (n. 1) 356; Schäfer, *Nachleben des Origenes* (n. 1) 65; Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, vol. 1, trans. by Marc Sebanc, Grand Rapids MI 1998, 164 f.

9 Charles Munier, *Les sources patristiques du droit de l'Église du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Strasbourg 1954, 30. See now Roy Flechner (ed.), *The Hibernensis*, 2 vols. (SMEMCL 17), Washington D. C. 2019.

important collection of canon law is the *Decretum Gratiani*, compiled in the twelfth century and used by the Catholic Church until 1918 before a revised *Codex Iuris Canonici* came into legal force. Patristic texts make up about one-third of the *Decretum*, and while it is not surprising that Augustine is the most frequently cited early Christian author, Origen too makes a presence: eighteen texts have been attributed to him.<sup>10</sup>

Origen also surfaced in scriptural *florilegia*. One of the most widely read works in the medieval period was the *Glossa ordinaria*. The *Glossa*, also compiled in the twelfth century and heavily used for centuries thereafter, offered readers short commentaries or glosses on the running scriptural text. Most of these interpretive remarks were derived from patristic texts, though often, not from them directly, but from previous *florilegia*, such as Isidore of Seville's *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum*. This large work has been shown to draw heavily upon Origen's *Homilies on Exodus* and *Joshua*.<sup>11</sup> The *Glossa*, in turn, would prove to be an enormously important work for the history of exegesis, preaching, and theology.<sup>12</sup> Excerpts from the Latin translations of Origen's *Homilies on the Pentateuch* and *Judges* were openly used. But sometimes Origen appeared anonymously (more on this phenomenon shortly). Helmut Riedlinger has identified over twenty anonymous citations of Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* in the 1588 Venetian edition of the *Glossa ordinaria*.<sup>13</sup> And as the *Glossa* drew upon earlier *florilegia*, so was the *Glossa* drawn upon by later works. It was one of the main sources for Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, a treatise that would come to serve as a basis for the formal study of theology well into the fifteenth century. Origen was cited ten times in this work and, thus, became the subject of extensive discussion in the commentary tradition on the *Sentences*.<sup>14</sup> Most medieval theologians encountered Origen not in well-stocked libraries that collected his writings, but through anthologies such as those identified above.

There are a number of conclusions we can draw from this first sketch of Origen's mediated presence in the medieval period. First, and with few exceptions, the western medieval Origen was a good deal smaller than our Origen. Second,

10 Charles Munier, La contribution d'Origène au Décret de Gratien, in: StGra 20 (1976) 241–251.

11 Jean Chatillon, Isidore et Origène: Recherches sur les sources et l'influence des *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum* d'Isidore de Séville, in: Mélanges bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert (TICP 4), Paris 1957, 537–547.

12 E. Ann Mathey, The Church Fathers and the *Glossa ordinaria*, in: Irena Backus (ed.), The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists, vol. 1, Leiden/New York/Cologne 1997, 83–112, here 85.

13 Helmut Riedlinger, Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche in den lateinischen Hoheliedkommentaren des Mittelalters (BGPhMA 38/3), Münster 1958, 128.

14 Jacques-Guy Bougerol, The Fathers and the Sentences of Peter Lombard, in: Backus, Reception of Church Fathers 1 (n. 12), 13–164, here 15.

there was significant diversity among these medieval Origenes since medieval library resources were variable – certainly far more variable than they tend to be today in major research libraries that possess editions of all available texts. Some of these medieval Origenes might have been very small – nothing more than a handful of citations in a readily-available anthology – whereas other Origenes might have included most, if not all, of Rufinus’ and Jerome’s Latin translations. Third, and perhaps most important, the anthologized Origen was a powerfully recontextualized Origen. There is a big difference between reading an excerpt of Origen and situating it within the rest of his homily, and reading this same line in an anthology where it is juxtaposed to a passage from an author Origen never met, organized according to a larger theme he might not have anticipated, or introduced into a later debate that he did not foresee. Anthologists are often dismissed as “unoriginal.” This is true, in the sense that they don’t create new material. But they do present their readers with new ways of reading old material. When medieval figures encountered Origen in anthologies, they encountered him packaged within powerful and different interpretive frameworks.

#### b) Transforming Translations

This leads me to my next observation about the mediation of Origen’s writings through Latin translations. Translations are invariably transformations. Origen’s medieval readers did not access him directly through his Greek texts as we can so often today, but rather encountered the Rufinian or Hieronymean Origen. When we examine the character of the Latin translations, we quickly recognize that the modifications introduced by Jerome and Rufinus were not all of the same variety. Some of them were quite innocuous, such as the dropping of a redundant phrase or a gentle re-writing. But at other times these modifications were more significant, particularly when they concerned markers of orthodoxy at the turn of the fifth century in the Latin west. Several scholars have noticed, for instance, that Rufinus was more liberal with *regula* and related expressions in his translations than Origen himself was.<sup>15</sup> A good example of how deep the transformation of translation could be is the still-debated issue of the status of the Son in Origen’s theology. Medieval readers only had access to Rufinus’ translation of *On First Principles* where the following lines about the Son appear:

“For the Father is, without doubt, the primal goodness, from which the Son is born, who, being in every respect the image of the Father, may doubtless be properly called the ‘image

15 Heinz Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos: Die Bedeutung des altkirchlichen Kanonbegriffs* (AKG 67), Berlin 1998, 185–192.

of his goodness' (Wis. 7:26). For there is no other second goodness existing in the Son, besides that which is in the Father."<sup>16</sup>

The typical reader would likely have found this passage innocuous. Yet today we have access to a lengthier Greek version of this same passage, as reported by Justinian, who presents a rather different Origen. In the lines below Origen explicitly claims that the Son is "not goodness itself," a claim hardly innocuous for a medieval (or contemporary) pro-Nicene reader:

"And so I deem that even the Savior is properly called an 'image of God's goodness' (Wis. 7:26), but not goodness itself. And perhaps also that the Son is properly called good, but he is not purely and simply good. And just as he is 'the image of the invisible God' (cf. Col. 1:᠖) and in this regard is God, but not [the God] of whom Christ himself says, 'that they may know you, the only true God' (Jn. 17:3), in this way he is the 'image of his goodness,' but is not good in exactly the same way as the Father is."<sup>17</sup>

Many of the modern editors of *On First Principles* regard Justinian's version of this passage as more authentic than Rufinus.<sup>18</sup>

There is little doubt – or so I would argue – that the particulars of an orthodox constellation of beliefs for the mainstream churches in Origen's day did not always overlap neatly with the constellations at the turn of the fifth century among Origen's Latin translators. The watersheds of Nicaea and the 'first Origenist controversy,' to name the most prominent examples, stood between Origen and his translators. Their translations often became transformations powered by the engines of later orthodoxies: a rewriting that brought Origen 'up to date' with new teachings; a rewriting that ignored sections where his teaching would have been contentious; or a rewriting that highlighted, even exaggerated, how out-of-step he was with later orthodoxies. At times, the translations that mediated Origen to his later medieval Latin readers were co-authored works.

This observation links closely to the observation already made above. Origen's works were mediated to most medieval readers through two powerful and transformative events: the translations that were made at the turn of the fifth century, and the anthologies in subsequent centuries that re-contextualized him according to later concerns. From the perspective of a particular historiography it is easy to lament these two events as deformations of Origen's writings. And in a real sense

16 Origen, princ. I 2,13 (GSC Orig. 5, 46f.). Translation: I p. 65 Behr .

17 Ibid. (5, 473–9). The translation is mine.

18 Paul Koetsch au, GCS Orig. 5, Leipzig 1913, 46 f.; Herwig Gör gemanns /Heinrich Ka r pp Origenes: Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien (TzF 24), Darmstadt 1992, 154f.; Josep Rius-Camps, Orígenes: Tractat dels Principis, vol. 1, Barcelona 1998, 118; Samuel Fer nán - de z, Sobre Los Principios (Fuentes Patristicas 27), Madrid 2015, 204. 206. 207 n. 97.

they are, if the scholar's goal is to reconstruct as accurately as possible what Origen said and did. I don't wish to disregard this scholarly posture, only to underscore that it is not the only posture we can take. These two major events can also be viewed as reformulations that have their own scholarly payoff: they become opportunities to study medieval creativities.

### c) Latent Presence in Other Works

The translations of Origen that I have mentioned so far were advertised as such. What complicates the picture considerably is that his presence in the medieval period was also clandestine. Above I referred to some examples from the *Glossa ordinaria* where Origen's texts were cited anonymously. But there were other kinds of anonymity even more interesting. The expression 're-written' Bible, first introduced by Geza Vermes in 1961, refers to a style of exegesis in which the interpreter "retells a biblical story or group of stories with the interpretations already inserted in the text."<sup>19</sup> We see very similar modes of engagement with Origen in the medieval period, and in particular, by one of his most receptive readers: Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), key reformer of the Cistercian order and one of the pivotal figures in that long twelfth century to which I referred at the start of this essay. Bernard often 're-writes' Origen, weaving him creatively and anonymously into his own discourse.

The following example is drawn from Bernard's second sermon on the Song of Songs, where he longs for a revelation directly from the Bridegroom, and not from his servants. Origen had earlier expressed this sentiment clearly in his first homily on the Song of Songs when he glossed the passage, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (Song 1:2): "How long is my Bridegroom going to send me kisses by Moses and kisses by the prophets? It is His own mouth that I desire now to touch; let Him come, let Him come down Himself!"<sup>20</sup> Very similar words also occur in Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*: "[...] that He may now no longer speak me only by His servants the angels and the prophets, but may come Himself, directly, and kiss me with the kisses of his mouth – that is to say, may pour the words of His mouth into mine, that I may hear Him speak Himself, and see Him teaching."<sup>21</sup> Bernard, some 900 years later, weaves this Origenian theme into his own discourse:

19 James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was*, Cambridge MA 1997, 28.

20 Origen, in *Cant. hom.* 1,2 (OWD 9/2, 70). Translation: Lawson, ACW 26, 269.

21 In *Cant. comm.* I 7,7 (OWD 9/1, 130). Translation: *ibid.* 60.

“For a perfect person might have said: ‘What do I care for those streams of words uttered by the Prophets? I would much rather be kissed by the handsomest of men. Let him himself kiss me with the kiss of his mouth. I refuse to listen to Moses any longer for he suffers too much of a speech impediment. Isaiah’s lips are unclean. Jeremiah does not know how to speak up because he is a young boy. In fact, all prophets are poor speakers. He himself, he whom they speak about, let himself speak. May he himself kiss me with the kiss of his mouth [...]. I therefore rightly refuse to accept any more visions and dreams, I do not want any more symbols and riddles. I even get tired of the pretty shapes of angels. My Jesus surpasses them in stature and beauty. I do not ask for anyone else, no angel, no man, but only for himself to kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.’”<sup>22</sup>

Bernard does not mention Origen in this passage. But he undeniably uses Origen’s words and breathes new life into them. Of course, only the informed reader would detect the echoes to Origen’s works and grasp that Bernard is here impersonating Origen. But Bernard’s contemporary, Peter Bérenger, was precisely one of these informed readers: he accused Bernard of plagiarizing Origen!<sup>23</sup>

Let me turn to another variety of anonymous presence. We now know that several of Jerome’s commentaries were in fact heavily reliant upon Origen’s earlier commentaries. Jerome’s *Commentary on Ephesians*, for instance, is particularly instructive for reconstructing his relationship with Origen since large sections of his earlier Greek commentary survive. Ronald Heine has demonstrated, based upon a comparison with these Greek fragments, that Jerome consistently paraphrased or translated Origen’s work.<sup>24</sup> The proximity to Origen is, at times, very close. It is striking how Origen’s thoughts, including those delivered in the first person, are often passed off as Jerome’s. For instance, Origen writes: “But I think there is a solecism in this passage.” In Jerome’s *Commentary* on the same verse, Eph. 3:3, we read: “But I [Jerome] think the manner of speaking is defective,” and a few lines later refers to solecisms in Paul’s style.<sup>25</sup>

These anonymous uses of Origen present significant implications for mapping his reception in the medieval west and beyond. To capture Origen’s full presence requires that we look beyond the reception of writings labeled as Origen’s and consider others, like Jerome’s and Bernard’s, that gave Origen a hidden presence in their own work.

22 Burcht Pranger, *Sic et Non: Patristic Authority between Refusal and Acceptance: Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux*, in: Backus, Reception of Church Fathers 1 (n. 12), 16–193, here 190.

23 Leclercq, Love of Learning (n. 2) 120. For more on this allusive use of Origen, see de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis* 1 (n. 8) 16f.

24 Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, Oxford 2003, 18–22.

25 *Ibid.* 142f.

### 3. Contested Presence

Alongside his mediation through translators, another factor strongly colored the reception of Origen in this period: he lived under the shadow of conflicting and authoritative judgments. The emperor Justinian did unquestionable damage to Origen. The eleventh canon, approved during the final session of the council he convened in Constantinople in 553, anathematized Origen, along with his “impious writings.”<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, the intent behind Justinian’s condemnation of Origen’s “impious writings” was not simply to condemn his teachings, but also to suppress the circulation of his works. A number of subsequent western councils re-iterated this condemnation of Origen: for example, the Lateran Council of 649 and the eleventh session of the Council of Florence in 1442. In light of these cascading condemnations, some scholars have expressed astonishment that we should find *any* Origen in the medieval period at all. There are “surprises,” Ann Matter remarks, in the ubiquitous presence of Origen in the medieval period, for “in spite of the condemnation of Origen by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, the Latin versions of his works were well-diffused and much-read in the Middle Ages.”<sup>27</sup>

How, then, can we account for this diffusion? It is important to recall that the council’s unqualified judgment was not the only stance on Origen with which Latin scholars had to contend. Jerome, one of the four theologians regarded by early medievals as a *doctor ecclesiae*, had also issued a pronouncement on Origen. But it was decidedly qualified, simultaneously rejecting and endorsing different parts of Origen’s oeuvre. In his letter to Pammachius and Oceanus, Jerome defended his occasional praise of Origen, drawing a distinction between the salutary and problematic features of Origen’s thinking: “I have praised the commentator but not the theologian, the man of intellect but not the believer, the philosopher but not the apostle.”<sup>28</sup> Jerome’s judgment on Origen would prove especially influential in the Latin west. The sixth-century *Decretum Gelasianum*, for instance, listed the authors who could be read by Christians for “edification,” and took its cue from Jerome: “[...] likewise some works of Origen, which the most blessed man Jerome does not reject, we receive to be read, but we say that the rest with their author must be refused” (4,5).<sup>29</sup> Thus on the authority of Jerome, further strengthened by the *Decretum*, Latin medieval readers were encouraged to exercise discrimination

26 ACO IV/1, 242.32–37

27 Matter, *Church Fathers and the Glossa ordinaria* (n. 12) 87

28 Jerome, epist. 84,2 (CSEL 55, 122). Translation: NPNF 6, 176. See also epist. 61 and 62 (CSEL 54, 575–582, 583f.) where Jerome again takes a qualified stance on Origen.

29 Das Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis in kritischem Text herausgegeben und untersucht von Ernst von Dobschütz (TU 38/4), Leipzig 1912, 45 (text) and 280 (discussion).

with Origen, rejecting some of his works – *On First Principles* especially – while accepting others as edifying, notably the scriptural commentaries and homilies.

Yet another position on Origen that a Latin medieval scholar would have encountered was taken by Pamphilus in his *Apology for Origen*. Pamphilus reinvigorated Origen's school in Caesarea after his death, enlarged its library and helped train Eusebius. He was arrested in 307 and while in prison wrote five books of the *Apology*. In this work he presented Origen as a “stranger [...] to everything that is preached contrary to the Catholic faith” (19) and as someone who presented “the fundamental elements of the faith” to his students, congregants, and readers (21).<sup>30</sup> This work was originally penned in Greek, but Rufinus made a translation of the first book in 397, and the manuscript tradition indicates that this translation was widely circulated. Roughly twenty manuscripts survive that date prior to the fifteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Notable is that a copy of the *Apology* was housed in the library of Clairvaux, the heart of the Origenian renaissance of the twelfth century.<sup>32</sup>

If we are to put ourselves in the shoes of Christian Latin scholars from the end of the sixth century on, many would have encountered some combination of up to three conflicting judgments on Origen, by three powerful Christian authorities: an ecclesiastical council that issued an unqualified condemnation, a *doctor ecclesiae* who issued a mixed report, and a martyr who unambiguously praised Origen.<sup>33</sup> Given these discordant judgments, then, it should not really surprise that Latin medieval authors did not follow Justinian's condemnation as closely as the Byzantines did, since other compelling western authorities, most notably Jerome, ushered different, and more positive, judgments.

The attempt to suppress Origen's writings at Constantinople II was deliberately thwarted at a most basic level by generations of medieval scribes. At least 160 manuscripts of the Latin translations of Origen have been counted, most of them dating from the ninth and twelfth centuries. As Jean Leclercq noted, “in every period or place where there was a monastic renewal, there was a revival of Origen.

30 St. Pamphilus: *Apology for Origen*, trans. by Thomas P. Scheck (FaCh 120), Washington D. C. 2010, 47–48.

31 Koetschau, GCS Orig. 5 (n. 18) lxxix–lxxxiii

32 André Wilmar, *L'ancienne bibliothèque de Clairvaux*, in: *Mémoires de la Société académique de l'Aube* 54 (1917) 127–10, here 175–18.

33 Of interest is Cassiodorus, who openly wrestled with the conflicting positions of Constantinople II and Jerome, and ultimately sided with the latter, inst. I 1,8 (p. 14 Mynors): “Some have properly said that Origen ought to be treated like anise; for though he seasons the food of sacred literature, he himself is to be cooked and when the flavour is extracted, thrown away. Finally it is said of him ‘where he writes well, no one writes better; where he writes badly, no one writes worse’ (Sulpicius Severus, dial. 1,6f. [CSEL 1, 157–159]). So we must read him cautiously and judiciously to draw the healthful juices from him while avoiding the poisons of his perverted faith that are dangerous for our way of life.” Translation: p. 14 Halporn.

It is true of the Carolingian reform; it is even more definite, or in any case more readily apparent, in the monastic revival of the twelfth century.<sup>34</sup> Many more manuscripts exist that date after the twelfth century.<sup>35</sup> Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* were especially widely copied, with over forty manuscripts that still survive across every century and region of medieval Europe.<sup>36</sup> Noteworthy are the many *scriptoria* that produced copies of Origen's speculative work *par excellence*, *On First Principles*. Koetschau identified thirty manuscripts of this work that dated to the fifteenth century or earlier.<sup>37</sup> This activity directly challenged Jerome's worries about Origen the dogmatic theologian, already noted above, including his protests about the orthodoxy of this treatise which were expressed at length in his *Letter to Avitus (Letter 124)*.<sup>38</sup> To rub salt into the wound, it was Rufinus' Latin translation of this work – not Jerome's – that later scribes transmitted. There was a fascinating culture of scribal protest against not only the anathemas of Constantinople II, but also Jerome, when it came to Origen's writings.

But it was not just scribes who endorsed Pamphilus' position. Jean Leclercq has identified several twelfth century poems praising Origen's orthodoxy.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, a number of the libraries of the *devotio moderna* stocked Origen's writings and prized him highly. The chronicler Johannes Busch, for instance, provides a list of the books held by the Windesheim monastery in the Netherlands in the early fifteenth century: in addition to codices that contained the "treatises of the four Doctors of the Church," the monastery collected the writings of "*other orthodox Fathers*," and Origen is on this list.<sup>40</sup>

What did these medieval authors find so attractive about Origen? Scholars have repeatedly identified two features of his thinking. The first was his approach to Scripture, in particular, his willingness to recognize it as a polyvalent text, with numerous meanings often generated through a variety of symbolic reading strat-

34 Leclercq, *Love of Learning* (n. 2) 118.

35 Wilhelm A. Baehrens, *Überlieferung und Textgeschichte der lateinisch erhaltenen Origeneshomilien zum Alten Testament (TU 42/1)*, Leipzig 1916, 186–199, theorized that from Cassiodorus' Vivarium, along with Castellum Lucullanum, and Monte Cassino, these Latin translations would have travelled north into France, Austria, and Spain.

36 E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, Philadelphia PA 1992, 25–31.

37 Koetschau, *GCS Orig.* 5 (n. 18) xxiii–xvi.

38 CSEL 56, 96–117.

39 Jean Leclercq, *Origène au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in: *Irénikon* 24 (1951) 425–439, here 433–436. Also see id., *Nouveau témoins sur Origène au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in: *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1993) 104–106.

40 Nikolaus Staubach, *Memores Pristinæ Perfectionis: The Importance of the Church Fathers for Devotio Moderna*, in: *Backus, Reception of Church Fathers 1* (n. 12), 405–469, here 417–419. So too Elizabeth of Schönau (d. 1166) who referred to Origen as "the great doctor of the church" in her request to the Virgin Mary to learn whether Origen was saved: Leclercq, *Love of Learning* (n. 2) 121.

egies. His discussion of the three-fold sense of Scripture at *On First Principles* IV 2,4<sup>41</sup> has been seen as the ancestor of the four medieval senses (*historia, tropologia, allegoria* and *anagogia*).<sup>42</sup> Henri de Lubac, more than anyone else, has attempted to trace the influence of Origenian exegesis throughout the medieval period. His multi-volume *Medieval Exegesis* reads as an extended reception history of Origenian exegesis in the west – an exegesis that “was destined ‘to traverse the centuries and contribute to the formation of the medieval soul.’”<sup>43</sup> The second area where Origen proved attractive was his ‘mysticism,’ particularly as expressed in his *Commentary* and *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. He read these biblical poems as allegories of the love between Christ and the church, or between God and the Christian soul. One of the leading authorities on this theme, Bernard McGinn, refers to Origen as “the first theorist of Christian mysticism” whose *Commentary on the Song of Songs* became “the source of much later mystical writing” with its stress upon “many of the central motifs of the tradition, such as contemplation, divinization, and union.”<sup>44</sup>

Yet we should not overlook the influence of those speculative Origenian ideas that worried his critics in late antiquity. More work is needed in this area, but there were medieval authors who seemingly endorsed, or were at least sympathetic to, some of Origen’s protological views that had become so contentious by the middle of the sixth century. Despite Justinian’s condemnation of the belief in the soul’s pre-existence, there was a good deal of uncertainty about the origin of the soul in the Latin middle ages. This was a recurring issue of debate at the school of Laon, for instance. A number of medieval authors entertained belief in the soul’s pre-existence in part because treatises that held a prominent role in medieval schooling – Macrobius’ *Dream of Scipio*, Martianus Capella’s *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, Calcidius’ translation of Plato’s *Timaeus*, and Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* – all discussed the theme of the soul’s pre-existence and subsequent descent into a physical body. As such, early medieval commentators frequently took up this theme: many critically, to be sure, but others more pos-

41 GCS Orig. 5, 312–34.

42 Martin Dulac, *Sens de l’Écriture chez les Pères latins*, in: *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* 12/67 (1992) 442–453.

43 De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis* 1 (n. 8) 172. Cf. *ibid.* 169: “Everywhere in the Latin Middle Ages, we recognize Origen’s teaching on Scripture, on the reading of Scripture in the Church, on Scripture’s relationship with the profane disciplines [...] on the pairing of *lectio* with *oratio*, etc. Everywhere we see his hermeneutical principles. Everywhere we see his exegetical influence.”

44 Bernard McGinn, *Unio Mystica/Mystical Union*, in: Amy Hollywood/Patricia Z. Beckman (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge 2012, 200–210, here 202. E. Ann Matter, *Lectio Divina*, in: *ibid.* 147–156, here 151, extends McGinn’s observation, contending that “all medieval Christian commentaries on the Song of Songs start by assuming Origen’s approach to the text.”

itively, such as Bernard Sylvester, Alain de Lille, William of Conches, Nicholas Trevet, and Hildegard of Bingen.<sup>45</sup> It is not always clear if Origen's ideas shaped their comments, but the possibility of such influence should not be dismissed out of hand "because Origen was condemned."<sup>46</sup> The notion that debate about, or belief in, the soul's pre-existence disappeared after the 'second Origenist controversy' is certainly wrong. And even if the links between Origen and the medieval poets, mystics, and theologians who occasionally advocated for the pre-existence of souls are murky, they are not so when we turn to the Cambridge Platonists of the seventeenth century, such as Henry More and George Rust.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4. Rethinking Criticisms

I do not want to suggest that Jerome's and Justinian's critiques were not repeated by medieval theologians. They certainly were. There are numerous references to Origen the "heretic" who erred on one matter or another.<sup>48</sup> But we should not avert our eyes from these criticisms, as if this is where the reception of Origen stopped. On the contrary, these rejections of Origenian positions might constitute some of the most interesting instances of his reception in the west. Here is an oft-neglected facet of reception history. We tend to think of reception as a form of *mimesis*, where an earlier author is followed in some approving way by a later author. But another form of reception is *rejection*, where an earlier author is encountered and repudiated. Origen, for instance, famously speculated in *On First Principles* whether there might be additional opportunities for spiritual growth in worlds that would succeed ours. "Perhaps," he writes, "for the correction and improvement of those who need it, there will be yet again another world, either similar to this which now is, or better than it, or greatly inferior."<sup>49</sup> In the conclusion to her book on the formation of purgatory in the medieval west, Isabel Moreira writes: "*In reaction to such lively speculations, pragmatic theologians in the Latin West emphatically shut the doors of hell (italics mine).*"<sup>50</sup> Yet surely we

45 Terry L. Givens, *When Souls had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought*, Oxford 2012, B2–138.

46 Lodi Nauta, 'The Preexistence of the Soul in Medieval Thought', in: *RTPM* 63 (1996) 93–135.

47 Givens, 'When Souls Had Wings' (n. 45) 147–187.

48 E.g. Thomas Aquinas, s.th. I q. 32 art. 1; I q. 34 art. 1; I q. 51 art. 1. There is a curious work that survives in 12<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts, that circulated under the title *In quibus causis erravit Origenes*, and that provided the reader with a list of alleged errors in Origen's writings. See Artur Michael Landgraf, 'Zum Werden der Theologie des 12. Jahrhunderts', in: *ZKT* 79 (1957) 417–433, here 420.

49 Origen, *princ.* II 3,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 1#). Translation: I p. 157 Behr.

50 Isabel Moreira, *Heaven's Purgate: Purgatory in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2010, 209.

are permitted to wonder: would the doors of hell have been shut so “emphatically” and reactively had Origen not first suggested that they might stand ajar? It was often within the imaginative frameworks Origen created that both his *and* his later opponents’ views existed.

I have argued that the reception of Origen’s writings in the western middle ages was a complex affair. It was mediated in a highly fragmentary manner, was profoundly transformed by both translators and anthologists, and was frequently cloaked in anonymity. This was no singular presence. And its multiplicity was exaggerated by the differing postures that authors adopted toward him. The conflicting pronouncements of different church authorities endorsed support, critique, or some combination of the two. The Origenian legacy in the western middle ages was an entangled inheritance – a *perplexa haereditas*.



*Beatus Origenes, diligentissimus rerum inquisitor*  
“The Spiritual Body” and Other Origenian Themes in John Eriugena

LENKA KARFÍKOVÁ, PRAGUE – OLOMOUC

The original Carolingian thinker John Eriugena (died c. 877) is sometimes called “the Origen of the West”<sup>1</sup> and, as the author of the homily *Vox spiritualis* on the prologue of the Gospel of John, even falsely identified with Origen in the manuscript tradition.<sup>2</sup> Eriugena refers to Origen by name<sup>3</sup> in more than ten places and explicitly quotes him twice.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we can find a clear theological influence of Origen in Eriugena’s work, mostly in questions of protology and eschatology,<sup>5</sup> traditionally supposed to be the most problematic in Origen’s thinking. Eriugena was not frightened away by the accusation of “Origenian madness”

- 1 Johannes Huber, Johannes Scotus Eriugena: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie im Mittelalter, Munich 1861 (reprint Hildesheim 1960), 431.
- 2 Maïeul Cappuyens, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son œuvre, sa pensée, Louvain/Paris 1933 (reprint Bruxelles 1969), 231f.; Édouard Jeaneau, Introduction, in: SC 151, Paris 1969, 9–170, here 54–56; id., Introductio, in: CChr.CM 166, Turnhout 2008, lv–lviii. Unlike Cappuyens, Jeaneau does not believe that this confusion would be due to the similarity of both names, because (among other things) the name Eriugena, preferred by John himself, only became usual in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3 Édouard Jeaneau, From Origen’s *Periarchon* to Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*, in: Willemien Otten /Michael I. Allen (eds.), Eriugena and Creation: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Eriugenian Studies (IPM 68), Turnhout 2014, 139–182, here 142.
- 4 Eriugena, *periph. V 929a–930d* (CChr.CM 165, 98.3100–100.3180) = Origen, *princ. III 6,2–5* (SC 268, 240.64–244.148); Eriugena, *periph. V 922c–d* (CChr.CM 165, 88.2806–2818) = Origen, in *Rom. comm. III 1,9.1–15* (SC 539, 46–48).
- 5 Dermot Moran, Origen and Eriugena: Aspects of Christian Gnosis, in: Thomas Finan / Vincent Twomey (eds.), *The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity: Proceedings of the First Patristic Conference at Maynooth 1990*, Dublin 1992, 27–53; Jeaneau, Eriugena’s *Periphyseon* (n. 3) 144–146, 165–180. The quotations from Origen and allusions to him are also listed by Goulven Madec, *Jean Scot et ses auteurs: Annotations érigéniennes*, Paris 1988, 48, and in registers which accompany the editions of Eriugena by Jeaneau, CChr.CM 165, 945f.; CChr.CM 166, 177; and Ernesto S. N. Maino, *Eriugena: De praedestinatione liber*, Florence 2003, 244; see also id., *Su alcune fonti ispiratrici della teologia e dell’eschatologia del De divina praedestinatione liber di Giovanni Scoto Eriugena*, in: James McEvoy /Michael Dunne (eds.), *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and His Time* (AMP 1/30), Leuven 2002, 3B–329. As Jeaneau observes, by his corrections to the manuscript of *Periphyseon*, Eriugena’s secretary (“Nisifortinus”) tried to weaken Origen’s influence in questions of eschatology; see Édouard Jeaneau, *Le Periphyseon: Son titre, son plan, ses remaniements*, in: Eph 104 (2013) B–28, here 27f.

(*amentia Origenis*), by which term Bishop Prudentius of Troyes dismissed Eriugena because of his early treatise against double predestination.<sup>6</sup> He did not hesitate to quote Origen later as an undisputed authority, in his most important work, *Periphyseon*; in its Greek title, some interpreters even recognize an allusion to Origen's treatise *Peri archon*.<sup>7</sup>

## 1. Protology

In the fourth book of *Periphyseon*, Eriugena emphasizes that the interpretation of paradise given by Ambrose of Milan and the use of the allegory of man, woman, and the serpent in Gen. 2f. as intellect (*mens, νοῦς*), perception (*sensus, αἴσθησις*), and delectation (*delectatio*), respectively, comes from Origen, although the bishop of Milan does not explicitly say so.<sup>8</sup> In his treatise *On Paradise*, Ambrose does not hide the fact that he is not the author of this exegesis; nevertheless, he does not mention the name of his predecessor (*ante nos fuit qui*).<sup>9</sup> It was very probably Philo of Alexandria,<sup>10</sup> who also influenced Origen in many respects. Moreover, it is not quite certain whether Eriugena was actually familiar with Origen's exegesis from his lost *Commentary on Genesis* when he formulated his reproach. He could also have drawn from Ambrose himself, whose words he quotes eleven times in the fourth book of his *Periphyseon*.<sup>11</sup> At any rate, the allegoreses we find in Origen's

- 6 Prudentius Trecensis, praed. praef. (PL 1 B, 1011a); cf. also ibid. 19 (PL 1 B, 1323b–d); see below n. 54. See Henri de Luba c, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, vol. 1/1 (Theol[P] 41), Paris 1959, 245–248. As Maino Id i, *Alcune fonti* (n. 5), assumes, Eriugena had already read Origen's *De principiis* when he wrote his early treatise *De praedestinatione*, although he did not refer to Origen by name. A different opinion is presented by Valery V. Petr off, *Theoriae of the Return in John Scottus' Eschatology*, in: Mc Evo y / Dunne, *History and Eschatology* (n. 5), 527–579, here 555.
- 7 Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Erigène* (n. 2) 197; de Luba c, *Exégèse médiévale* 1/1(n. 6) 241; Moran, *Origen and Eriugena* (n. 5) 27; Jea unea u, *Eriugena's Periphyseon* (n. 3) 139 f. Eriugena's *Periphyseon* sometimes happened to be ascribed to Origen, probably as a result of the confusion with *Peri archon*: Cappuyns, ibid. 185 n. 1. On the title *Periphyseon*, i. e. *De naturis*, not *De divisione naturae*, as often presupposed, see Jea unea u, *Le Periphyseon* (n. 5) 16–Ø.
- 8 Eriugena, *periph.* IV 816c (CChr.CM 164, 105.3B3–106.3A4). Cf. Ambrose, *parad.* 2, 11 (CSEL 32/1, 27.8–16).
- 9 Ambrose, ibid. (32/1, 27.8f.).
- 10 On Ambrose's presupposed dependence on Philo, see Hervé Sav on, *Saint Ambrose devant l'exégèse de Philon le Juif*, 2 vols., Paris 1977, vol. 1, 26; 2, 21 n. 4; Édouard Jea unea u, *La division des sexes chez Grégoire de Nysse et chez Jean Scot Erigène*, in: Werner Beier wal tes (ed.), *Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen* (AHAW.PH 1980/3), Heidelberg 1980, 33–54, here 49 n. 84. Cf. Philo, *opif. mund.* 165 (I p. 57.12–18Cohn/Wendland).
- 11 Édouard Jea unea u, *Le De paradiso d'Ambroise dans le livre IV du Periphyseon*, in: Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (ed.), *ΣΟΦΙΗΣ ΜΑΙΗΤΟΡΕΣ: Chercheurs de sagesse. Hommage à Jean Pépin*, Paris 1992, 561–571, here 564.

*Homilies on Genesis*, preserved in Rufinus' Latin translation, are rather different. In these homilies, Origen interprets man and woman as *spiritus* and *anima*<sup>12</sup> or *rationabilis sensus* and *caro*, respectively<sup>13</sup> (or, in more detail, man as *rationabilis sensus et intellectualis spiritus*, woman as *caro et affectus carnis*).<sup>14</sup>

With an explicit reference to Origen as “the best interpreter of Holy Scripture” (*summus sanctae scripturae expositor*),<sup>15</sup> Eriugena mentions that the biblical paradise should be understood as the “third heaven” in which the apostle Paul was caught up (2 Cor. 12:2–4), i.e., a spiritual realm rather than an earthly one. This last opinion had been defended by Origen's critic Epiphanius of Salamis.<sup>16</sup> In Eriugena's eyes, the interpretation of paradise given by Ambrose supports Origen, not Epiphanius.<sup>17</sup> Again in this case, Eriugena could have known of Origen's interpretation through Ambrose and, especially, Epiphanius, who attributes this interpretation to Origen.<sup>18</sup>

Referring to Origen by name, Eriugena also uses his interpretation of the “tunics of skin” given to the first human beings by God after their transgression (Gen. 3:21) as “mortal bodies” (*mortalia corpora*), not garments of animal leather, as Epiphanius puts it.<sup>19</sup> The identification of the “tunics of skin” with the body was probably suggested for the first time by Philo of Alexandria in his allegoresis of man as intellect and woman as perception, as mentioned above.<sup>20</sup> According to

12 Origen, in Gen. hom. 1, 5 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 66.3f.).

13 Ibid. 4,4 (7<sup>2</sup>, 152.14f.); in Ex. hom. 13,5 (SC 321, 394.27–29).

14 In Ex. hom. 2,1 (SC 321, 70.33–35).

15 Eriugena, periph. IV 818b (CChr.CM 164, 109.3266f.).

16 Ibid. (164, 109.3266–110.3279). Cf. Epiphanius, ancor. 54,2–7 (GCS Epiph. 1, 63f.). On Eriugena's knowledge of Epiphanius, see Madec, Jean Scot et ses auteurs (n. 5) 38f.

17 Eriugena, ibid. IV 832d–833a (164, 129.3934–130.3943). Ambrose really seems to speak in the same breath about the paradise from Gen. 2:8 and the third heaven or paradise the apostle was caught into, according to 2 Cor. 12:2–4. However, what he emphasizes is rather the impossibility of deciding about the nature of paradise, as even the apostle hesitated with regard to this question: “Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know” (2 Cor. 12:2). Cf. Ambrose, parad. 1, 1f. (CSEL 34/1, 265.3–266.18). Subsequently, Ambrose gives an assurance that paradise is the human soul: ibid. 3, 12 (3/1, 272.3f.).

18 Epiphanius, ancor. 54,2f. (GCS Epiph. 1, 63.10–16): οὕτως καὶ περὶ παραδείσου πολλοὶ ἀλληγοροῦσιν, ὡς ὁ θεήλατος Ὁριγένης ἠθέλησε φαντασίαν μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ ἀλήθειαν τῷ βίῳ συνεισενέγκασθαι. καὶ φησιν· οὐκ ἔστι παράδεισος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· διῆθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ῥητοῦ τοῦ παρὰ τοῦ ἀγίου ἀποστόλου εἰρημένου ὅτι “οἶδα ἄνθρωπον πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων, εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ.”

19 Eriugena, periph. IV 818c–818d (CChr.CM 164, 110.3279–3287). Cf. Epiphanius, ancor. 62,1–9 (GCS Epiph. 1, 74f.).

20 Philo, quaest. in Gen. I 53 (according to the Armenian version, Latin-French translation: p. 120 Aucher/Mercier): *tunica pellicea symbolicè est pellis naturalis, id est corpus nostrum*. Cf. also the Odes of Solomon 25,8 (p. 98f. Latke).

the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus of Lyon, and Tertullian, it was the doctrine of the Gnostics, too.<sup>21</sup>

Origen's *Commentary on Genesis* being lost, it is not quite clear how Origen really understood the "tunics of skins," whether (i) as the body itself, or (ii) as a change of the original body of light into a mortal one. A formulation in his *Homilies on Leviticus*, preserved in Rufinus' translation, seems to confirm the second interpretation; here, the "tunics of skin" are presented as a "sign of the mortality affecting human beings after their sin and the fragility coming from the corruption of the body."<sup>22</sup> The first option, on the other hand, is supported by a Greek passage circulating under Origen's name as his exegesis of Gen. 3:21. In this text, the idea of adding mortality to the human body which already existed (as Gen. 2:21–23, narrating the creation of women, seems to imply and as Epiphanius emphasized),<sup>23</sup> is strictly rejected, because in this case the origin of mortality would be in God, not in human sin.<sup>24</sup> Origen was also understood in this sense (option [i] above) by his other critic, Methodius of Olympus.<sup>25</sup> As some interpreters have it, Origen could have left both possibilities open (likewise Epiphanius in his critique: τὸ σαρκῶδες τοῦ σώματος ἢ ἀπὸ τὸ σῶμα).<sup>26</sup> Some others endorse the second option,<sup>27</sup> since Origen (in Rufinus' translation) conceived of all created beings as "corporeal" and reserved incorporeity to God alone.<sup>28</sup> Human beings thus must have been corporeal from the very beginning. Whatever the case may be,

21 Clement of Alexandria, *strom.* III 95,2 (GCS Clem. Al. 2<sup>3</sup>, 239 f.); *exc.* Theod. 55,1 (SC 23, 170); Irenaeus of Lyon, *adv. haer.* I 5,5 (SC 264, 86.97–88.99); Tertullian, *adv. Val.* 24,3 (CChr.SL 2, 771. B–F). See Jean Pépin, *La tradition de l'allégorie: De Philon d'Alexandrie à Dante*, vol. 2: *Études historiques*, Paris 1987, 146–165.

22 Origen, in *Lev. hom.* 6,2 (SC 286, 276.1 B–278.1 F): "*pellicias,*" *inquit, "tunicis," quae essent mortalitatis, quam pro peccato acceperat, et fragilitatis eius, quae ex carnis corruptione veniebat, indicium.*

23 Epiphanius, *ancor.* 62,9 (GCS Epiph. 1, 75. B–18).

24 Origen, in *Gen. frg.* D 22 Metzler (OWD 1/1, 190.28–192.6): τὸν "δερματίνους χιτῶνας" οὐκ ἄλλους εἶναι τοῦ σώματος [...]. Ταύτας οὖν τὰς ἀπορίας περιεστώμενοί τινες, "δερματίνους χιτῶνας," τὴν νέκρωσιν ἦν ἀμφιέννυνται ὁ Ἀδάμ καὶ ἡ Εὕα, διὰ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν θανατωθέντες, ἀπεφήναντο τυγχάνειν, οὐ πάνυ τι οὐδὲ αὐτοὶ εὐχερῶς δυνάμενοι παραστήσαι πῶς ὁ θεός, καὶ οὐχὶ ἀμαρτία, νέκρωσιν ἐμποιεῖ τῷ παραβεβηκότι.

25 Methodius of Olympus, *res.* I 4,2 f. (GCS Method. 223 f. according to the Old Slavonic version, German translation Bonwe t sch ); I 29,6 (260); I 39,4 f. (283).

26 Epiphanius, *ancor.* 62,2 (GCS Epiph. 1, 74.9 f.). Among the modern interpreters, this opinion is defended by Manlio Simonetti, *Alcune osservazioni sull'interpretazione origeniana di Genesi 2,7 e 3,21*, in: *Aevum* 36 (1962) 370–381.

27 Henri Cr ouzel , *L'anthropologie d'Origène: De l'arché au telos*, in: Ugo Bianchi /Henri Cr ouzel (eds.), *Arché e telos: L'antropologia di Origene e di Gregorio di Nissa: Analisi storico-religiosa* (SPMed 12), Milan 1981, 36–49, here 42–45; Pier Franco Beatrice , *Le tuniche di pelle: Antiche letture di Gen. 3,21*, in: Ugo Bianchi (ed.), *La tradizione dell'enkrateia: Motivazioni ontologiche e protologiche*, Rome 1985, 433–482.

28 Origen, *princ.* II 2,1 f. (SC 252, 246–248).

Eriugena was probably familiar with Origen's interpretation through Epiphanius, to whom he refers in this context: Epiphanius "reproves Origen, who, by a very fine and truthful allegory, interprets those skins as signifying mortal bodies which were added to the first human beings because of their sin. Almost all authors, Greek and Latin, follow Origen in his theory of the tunics of skin."<sup>29</sup>

How Eriugena himself conceived of these "mortal bodies" is best shown in the second book of his *Periphyseon*, where he distinguished the "celestial and spiritual body" (*caeleste corpus ac spirituale*) given to man by God, on the one hand, and, on the other, the "fragile and mortal dwelling from the mud of the earth" made by human beings themselves after they were expelled from paradise because of their pride. In the Bible, the passing "shelter," namely the "mortal body," is symbolized by the "fig leaves" with which the first human beings "girded" themselves (*περιζώματα*, cf. Gen. 3:7) and by the "tunics of skin" given them by God (Gen. 3:21). Both the "fig leaves" and the "tunics of skin" mean the same, according to Eriugena, as the human couple acted in a manner "encouraged" by God or at least "allowed by the righteous judgement of the Creator," although they made their mortal bodies themselves:

"What wonder, then, if the first man, [who was] made in the image of God and [who] transgressed the divine commandment and for that reason [was] driven from the bliss of paradise, should create for himself from the clay of the earth a fragile and mortal habitation on the advice of the Divine Providence, so that, since he had in his pride refused to occupy and preserve the heavenly and spiritual body created by God Himself, he should in his degradation make for himself a mortal mansion taken from earthly matter, congruous to him because of his disobedience, and by this punishment be brought to repentance and seek in chastened mood, by getting to know himself again and by humiliating himself, to return to the first dignity of his nature? Nor is Scripture silent about this. For concerning the fact that, immediately after the transgression, human nature, which had been simple before its sin, was divided into two sexes after its fall, it says: 'And they sewed fig-leaves together and made for themselves *περιζώματα*' (Gen. 3:7), clearly intending, by the symbol of the leaves, to refer to the fragile and corruptible state of this mortal body, which man wove for himself after his fall [...]. And in order that you may learn that the creation of our mortal body is most explicitly referred to Him by Whose design is done whatever is read concerning our

29 Eriugena, *periph.* IV 818d–89a (CChr.CM 164, 110.382–3287): *et Origenem reprehendit, qui sub illarum pellium figura mortalia corpora, quae primis hominibus merito peccati superaddita sunt, pulcherrime atque uerissime significata fuisse exponit. Quem, Origenem dico, in theoria tunicarum pelliciarum omnes fere auctores graecorum latinorumque sequuntur.* Translation: p. 473 Sheld on-Williams/O'Meara (modified). It is not quite evident whether all patristic authors would follow Origen's interpretation of the paradise story; see Donald F. Duclow, *The Sleep of Adam, the Making of Eve: Sin and Creation in Eriugena*, in: Otten/Allen, *Eriugena and Creation* (n. 3), 235–261, here 242 n. 14; Bernard McGinn, *Exegesis as Metaphysics: Eriugena and Eckhart on Reading Genesis 1–3*, in: Otten/Allen, *ibid.* 463–499, here 467–475.

training and renewal and salvation, hear the words of the same Scripture: ‘The Lord God also made for Adam and his wife tunics of skins and clothed them with them’ (Gen. 3:21), where it is not unreasonable that we should understand that by the tunics of skins nothing else is signified but what the *περιζώματα* [signify], namely our mortal bodies, which, in accordance with the righteous judgement of the Creator, the first human beings made for themselves after their transgression.”<sup>30</sup>

Eriugena does not seem to understand the “tunics of skin” in either of the options discussed by the interpreters of Origen. They are neither the body as such nor its change into a mortal one, but rather an addition of a further, mortal body to the original spiritual one which human beings still keep. The “tunics of skin” or the “fig leaves” are literally something “dressed over” or “added” (*superaddita*<sup>31</sup> or *adiuncta sunt*<sup>32</sup>) to the original body, which does not change its spiritual nature:

“For whatsoever in human bodies is seen to be immutable is proper to the first creation; but whatever in them is perceived to be mutable and variable was added later (*superadditum*), and subsists outside nature. Now in all human bodies there is generally one and the same common form, and that abides ever unchangeable in all. For the innumerable differences which are accidental to the one form do not arise from the structure (*ratio*) of the first creation but from the qualities of the corruptible seeds. Therefore the spiritual form is itself the spiritual body which was made in the first creation of man. But that which is derived from matter, that is, from the qualities and quantities of the four elements of the sensible world together with that qualitative form [...], since it undergoes increase and

30 Eriugena, *ibid.* II 583b–584a (162, 79.1846–1860.1867–187A): *Cur ergo mirum si primus homo ad imaginem dei conditus diuinumque praeceptum transgressus ac per hoc de beatitudine paradisi expulsus fragile atque mortale de luto terrae sibimet habitaculum crearet diuina prouidentia admonitus ut, quia caeleste corpus ac spirituale ab ipso deo conditum possidere et custodire superbus neglexerat, congruum sibi inoboedientiae merito mortale hospitium ex terrena materia sumptum humiliatus faceret, in quo punitus poeniteret et exercitatus ad pristinam dignitatem naturae suae redire se ipsum recognoscendo et humiliando peteret? Nec de hoc scriptura tacet. Nam post praeuaricationem continuo de simplici humana natura ante peccatum in duplicem sexum diuisa post casum ait: “Et cosuerunt folia ficus et fecerunt sibi περιζώματα,” aperte insinuans foliorum symbolo fragilem atque caducam mortalis huius corporis condicionem, quam sibi homo post sui ruinam texerat [...]. Et ut cognoscas mortalis nostri corporis creationem ad eum cuius consilio acta sunt quaecunque erga nostram exercitationem et renouationem et salutem leguntur apertissime referri, audi eandem scripturam dicentem: “Fecit quoque dominus deus Adae et uxori suae tunicas pellicias et induit eos.” Vbi non incongrue intelligimus non aliud per tunicas pellicias significari praeter mortalia corpora, quae sibi iusto conditoris iudicio permittente primi homines post transgressionem fecere. Translation: *ibid.* p. 188f. (modified).*

31 *Ibid.* II 571b (162, 62.1427–1429): *ea quae post peccatum humanae naturae superaddita sunt [...], corpus hoc corruptibile dico atque mortale.* Cf. also *ibid.* IV 801c (164, 85.232); 803a (164, 86.2562); 817a (164, 107.3208).

32 *Ibid.* II 571c (162, 62.1438).

diminution, undoubtedly pertains to the composition of the superadded and, one might say, superfluous body.”<sup>33</sup>

Eriugena thus presupposed the “first creation” of a human being as God’s image (Gen. 1:26f.), which does not imply only the soul but also a “spiritual body,” i. e., a “spiritual form” (*forma spiritualis*) of the body which all human beings have in common. The material body, on the other hand, composed of the four elements with their qualities, is responsible for the accidental individual differences added to this common basis.<sup>34</sup> This temporary “shelter” of the mortal body will, according to Eriugena’s eschatology, be left behind as something “superfluous” at the end of time, so that human beings may return into their original nature, namely the spiritual body given them by God.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. Eschatology

The return of human beings to their original nature, as mentioned above, is not the last word of Eriugena’s eschatology; it is the deification (*deificatio*) of human beings.<sup>36</sup> In the fifth book of *Periphyseon*, the “disciple” presents, besides the (Augustinian) eschatological division of human beings into the elect and the reprobate,<sup>37</sup> as a second option, the hope for the salvation and deification of all, i. e., of the whole of human nature, assumed as a whole, not only in part, by the Word of God in its incarnation.<sup>38</sup> For this second option, the “disciple” refers, among the “holy Fathers” (*sanctorum patrum*), not only to Gregory of Nyssa but also to Origen, whom he does not hesitate to call “blessed” (*beatus Origenes*).<sup>39</sup> He quotes

33 Ibid. IV 801c–802a (164, 85.2502–2517): *Quodcumque enim in humanis corporibus immutabile intelligitur, primae conditionis proprium est. Quicquid uero in eis commutabile ac uarium percipitur, illud est superadiectum, extraque naturam substitutum. Vniuersaliter autem in omnibus corporibus humanis una eademque forma communis omnium intelligitur, et semper in omnibus incommutabiliter stat. Nam innumerabiles differentiae, quae eidem formae accidunt, non ex ratione primae conditionis, sed ex qualitatibus corruptibilium seminum contingunt. Ipsa igitur forma spiritualis spirituale corpus est, in prima conditione hominis factum. Quod autem ex materia (hoc est ex qualitatibus et quantitatibus quattuor elementorum mundi sensibilis) cum ipsa forma qualitatiua, [...] quoniam et augeri et minui patiuntur, ad compositionem superadiecti ac ueluti superflui corporis pertinere non dubium est.* Translation: p. 452f. Sheld on-Williams/O’Meara (modified).

34 Cf. also ibid. II 533a–b (162, B.19–126).

35 Ibid. IV 803a–b (164, 87.2570 f.). See Petroff, *Theoriae of the Return* (n. 6) 560–562; Carlos Steel, *The Return of the Body into Soul: Philosophical Musing on the Resurrection*, in: McEvoy/Dunne, *History and Eschatology* (n. 5), 581–609.

36 Eriugena, ibid. V 961c (165, 142.4590–4596).

37 Cf. Augustine, civ. XX 5 (CChr.SL 48, 705f.); XXI 23 (48, 788f.).

38 Eriugena, *periph.* V 922a–c (CChr.CM 165, 872780–2802).

39 Ibid. V 922c (165, 88.2804f.).

Origen's interpretation of two biblical verses, Ps. 81(82):6 f., from his *Commentary on Romans*, available in Rufinus' abbreviated Latin paraphrase. As Eriugena specifies, it is "the third book" of this work,<sup>40</sup> from which he takes over a passage of thirteen lines almost verbatim from Rufinus' translation.<sup>41</sup> The passage argues for the eschatological deification of human beings with reference to Ps. 81(82):6: "You are gods and sons of the Most High, all of you." The subsequent words of God: "But you will die like human beings" (Ps. 81[82]:7) indicate, according to Origen and the "disciple" in Eriugena's *Periphyseon* after him, the eschatological destruction not only of human failures (as Eriugena, following Origen, says several times),<sup>42</sup> but even of human beings as such, in order for them to be able to become deified and for God to be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).<sup>43</sup>

The puzzle of the eschatological division of rational beings vs. the salvation of all of them<sup>44</sup> finds, in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, an answer given by the "master" of the dialog and referring, among other authorities, again to Origen. Following him, Eriugena explains that the Devil and the demons who fell away from God

40 Ibid. (165, 88.2805f.).

41 Ibid. V 922c–d (165, 88.2806–2818) = Origen, in Rom. comm. III 1,9 (SC 539, 46.1–48.15): *Et si quis humanitatis simplicitatem et impartibilitatem me dixisse nulla praerogativa sanctorum patrum auctoritate adiutus existimet, audiat beatum Origenem in libro tertio in epistolam ad Romanos: "Ego dixi: Dii estis et filii excelsi," et addidit 'omnes' (Ps. 81[82]:6). Quae adiectio omne simul sub hoc titulo humanum connexuit genus. Denique in consequentibus dicit: 'Vos autem ut homines moriemini' (Ps. 81[82]:7). Vnde et illud quod [Origen adds: in Genesi] (Gen. 6:6 f.) non solum pro excidio diluuii dictum puto, sed aliquid ex hoc etiam sub mysterio de futuris praedictum, ut eo modo sentiat quod dictum est: 'Deleam hominem quo et per prophetam [Origen adds: dicit] deus: 'Ecce enim deleo iniquitates tuas ut nubem' (Is. 44:22; Origen has a different word order in the quotation), ut uideatur delens eum secundum hoc quod homo est, post haec facere eum deum tunc, cum erit 'deus omnia in omnibus' (1 Cor. 15:28)."*

42 Like Origen, Eriugena states that God, who creates from nothing, does not turn back into nothing what he has created: periph. II 581c–d (CChr.CM 162, 76.1780–1783); V 956c (165, 134.4348–135.4350). Here, Eriugena is probably alluding to Origen, princ. III 6,5 (SC 268, 244.138.143f.147f.). See John Gavin, "Nothing Is Liable to Destruction." John Scottus Eriugena's Justification of an Origenian Principle, in: Anders-Christian Jacobsen (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (BETL 279), Leuven 2016, 587–595. Along the same lines, Eriugena gives an assurance that not the sinners themselves but only their sins will be burnt in the eschatological fire: ibid. V 940a (165, 112.381–383).

43 According to Origen/Rufinus, the first quoted verse (Ps. 81[82]:6) describes the vocation of all human beings to become "gods" and "sons of the Most High," which they were at the beginning. The second verse (Ps. 81[82]:7) observes what human beings became by their own deeds, namely "by nature the sons of wrath" (Eph. 2:3); therefore they must "die like human beings" to become deified: in Rom. comm. III 1,8 (SC 539, 46.7–9): *Omnes enim homines natura filii irae effecti sunt ex eo quod erant dii et filii excelsi et per hoc homines appellati sunt.*

44 Cf. Eriugena, periph. V 923d–924b (CChr.CM 165, 90.2866–91.2893).

because of their “negligence” (*negligentia*)<sup>45</sup> will be destroyed in their malignance, i. e., their will, not in their nature, which was created by God.<sup>46</sup> In this context, Eriugena quotes, again almost verbatim from Rufinus’ translation, some three paragraphs from “Origen’s third book *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*,” as he explicitly mentions,<sup>47</sup> calling Origen “the most diligent investigator of things” (*diligentissimus rerum inquisitor*).<sup>48</sup> In this quotation we read, among other things: “Therefore the end shall be brought back to the beginning, and the outcome of all things shall be related to their origin, in order to restore that condition which the rational nature then possessed.”<sup>49</sup> Origen/Rufinus hastens to provide assurance that, according to some interpreters, the final beatitude where God “may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28) for rational beings is supposed to be clear of any “admixture of the material substance” (*materialis substantiae admixtio*) and any “society of a corporeal nature” (*societas naturae corporalis*).<sup>50</sup> This very opinion was ascribed to Origen in Jerome’s statements, the polemic of Methodius of Olympus, and the condemnation by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.<sup>51</sup> Occasionally, it was combined with the

45 Ibid. V 934c (165, 104.33 ff.). Eriugena incorporated this term of Origen/Rufinus into his paraphrase of the ideas of Dionysius the Areopagite. Cf. Origen, princ. II 9,6 (SC 252, 364.194 f.). On Origen, see Marguerite Har I, *Recherches sur l’origénisme d’Origène: La satiété (κόρος) de la contemplation comme motif de la chute des âmes*, in: F. L. Cr oss (ed.), *Studia Patristica VIII* (TU 93), Berlin 1966, 373–405.

46 Eriugena, *ibid.* V 931a (165, 100.31 ff.–101.3189).

47 Ibid. V 929a–930d (165, 98.3100–100.3180) = princ. III 6,2–5 (SC 268, 240.64–244.148). The only important distinction from Origen’s text is to be found in the fact that Eriugena understands the “last enemy,” mentioned by the apostle (1 Cor. 15:26), not only as death but also as the Devil; he adds the word *diabolus* to Origen’s text in periph. V 930c (165, 100.316–317) = princ. III 6,5 (265, 244.134 f.): *etiam nouissimus inimicus diabolus, qui mors appellatur, destrui dicitur*.

48 Ibid. V 929a (165, 98.3095 f.).

49 Ibid. V 929b (165, 98.31 B–99.315) = princ. III 6,3 (SC 268, 240.78–80): *Sic [Origen: Si] ergo finis ad principium reparatus et rerum exitus collatus initiis restituet illum statum, quem tunc habuit natura rationabilis*. Translation: p. 605 Sheldon-Williams/O’Meara (modified).

50 Ibid. V 929c (165, 99.3125–3127) = princ. III 6,3 (268, 240.90–242.93). In his preceding exposition, Origen listed three possible answers to the question of the eschatological preservation of the body: (i) the body will be overcome and the future happy life is supposed to be incorporeal (*incorporea vita*); (ii) the corporeal substance will be connected with the completely purified rational beings and, thanks to their quality and merits, it will become ethereal (cf. princ. II 3,7); (iii) there will be a gradual process of transformation: those who have purified themselves from their sins will obtain “the land of the living” (Ps. 26[27]:3) as their heritage (Mt. 5:5), i. e., a heavenly dwelling above the spheres of the planets and the fixed stars. Those obedient to the divine Wisdom in this life will enter heaven or “the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:3), accessible to the inhabitants of the heavenly land too, but only later on: princ. II 3,7 (SC 252, 272–274). These three options are, in a slightly modified version, also mentioned by Jerome in his letter to Avitus: *epist.* 124,5 (VII p. 100 f. Lab our t).

51 Jerome, *ibid.* 124,5 (VII p. 100 f.); 124,9 f. (VII p. 107–109); 124,14 (VII p. 112 f.); Methodius of Olympus, *res.* I 4,2 f. (GCS Method. 223 f., according to the Old Slavonic version, German translation Bonwet sch); Justinian, *anath. syn. Const.* 15 (ACO IV/1, 249.23–25).

concept of the ethereal body,<sup>52</sup> actually mentioned by Origen<sup>53</sup> and repeated by Eriugena in his early writing *On Predestination*, to be rebuked by Prudentius, as recalled above.<sup>54</sup> In his translation of the treatise *On First Principles*, Rufinus prefers the idea of the eschatological preservation of the body, although a “spiritual” one (1 Cor. 15:44.46),<sup>55</sup> which should not be called “ethereal,” insofar as this would mean a new body, not a transformation of the one we have now.<sup>56</sup>

Some scholars conceive this interpretation to be a logical implication of Origen’s ideas, while the opposite passages are to be understood as Rufinus’ modifications: Eugène de Faye, *Origène: Sa vie, son œuvre, sa pensée*, vol. 3 (BEHE.R 44), Paris 1928, 73–78; Gerald Bostock, *Quality and Corporeity in Origen*, in: Henri Cr ouzel /Antonio Quacquarelli (eds.), *Origeniana Secunda*, Rome 1980, 323–337. Others suppose the eschatological preservation and overcoming of the body to be Origen’s exoteric and esoteric doctrine, respectively: Franz Heinrich Kettler, *Neue Beobachtungen zur Apokatastasislehre des Origenes*, in: Cr ouzel /Quacquarelli, *ibid.* 339–348, here 342. It is equally to be imagined that Origen listed several irreconcilable options but was less ready to choose between them than his interpreters, who only emphasized one of them according to their own goal: Monique Alexandre, *Le statut des questions concernant la matière dans le Peri archôn*, in: Henri Cr ouzel /Gennaro Lomiento/ Josep Rius-Camps (eds.), *Origeniana*, Bari 1975, 63–81, here 81. Rius-Camps presents the question of the eschatological body as Origen’s insoluble dilemma between Platonism and the biblical message: Josep Rius-Camps, *La suerte final de la naturaleza corpórea según el Peri Archon de Origenes*, in: *VetChr* 10 (1973) 291–394, here 303f. Along the same lines: Gilles Dorival, *Origène et la résurrection de la chair*, in: Lothar Lies (ed.), *Origeniana Quarta* (IThS 19), Innsbruck/Wien 1987, 291–321, here 313f.

52 Cf. Jerome, *ibid.* 124,4 (VII p. 98f.); Justinian, *anath. syn. Const.* 15 (ACO IV/1, 249.19f.).

53 Origen, in *Matth. comm.* XVII 30 (GCS Orig. 10, 671). See Rius-Camps, *La suerte final* (n. 51) 302.

54 In his early treatise *On Predestination*, Eriugena explains that the bodies of holy people will be transformed into ethereal ones and the bodies of the wicked into bodies of air, to be able to suffer under the eternal fire, *praed.* 19,2 (CChr.CM 50, 19.18–22): *Vbi non incongrue credendum quod corpora sanctorum in aetheream mutabuntur qualitatem, quae ab alia qualitate consumi non potest, cum inferiorum corporum qualitates in se mutare possit, impiorum uero corpora in aeream qualitatem transitura, ut a superiore igne patiantur*. Prudentius of Troyes argued against this opinion as “Origenian:” *praed.* 19 (PL 1 B, 1323b–d). See also Mainoldi, *Eriugena: De praedestinatione liber* (n. 5) 204.

55 Origen is often understood along these lines in contemporary scholarship: Henri Cr ouzel, *Les critiques adressées par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité*, in: *Greg.* 53 (1972) 679–716; *id.*, *La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité*, in: *BLE* 81 (1980) 175–200. 241–266; Ilaria Ramelli, ‘Preexistence of Souls?’ The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians, in: Markus Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica LVI*, Leuven 2013, 167–266, here 167–181; Alfons Fürst, *Matter and Body in Origen’s Christian Platonism*, in: Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony et al. (eds.), *Origeniana Duodecima: Origen’s Legacy in the Holy Land – A Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem* (BETL 302), Leuven/Paris/Bristol CT 2019, 573–588, here 576–582. According to some interpreters, Origen presupposed a kind of gradual eschatological achievement of rational beings, whose final liberation from the body was not necessarily meant to be physical (rational beings will be liberated from their inappropriate

In the passage quoted by Eriugena, Origen/Rufinus also rejects the idea of the eschatological liberation from the body and recalls the words of the apostle Paul about the “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44) instead. He describes it as “an eternal dwelling in heaven, not built by (human) hands” (2 Cor. 5:1):<sup>57</sup> According to Origen/Rufinus, the body will acquire a spiritual quality thanks to the will of the Creator, who will bring it to such perfection. The “spiritual body,” to be sure, is the same as the earthly one; the degree of its transformation will correspond to the acquired merit of the particular rational being:

“But it cannot be doubted that the nature of the body which we now possess can be changed into the quality of the most subtle and most pure and most glorious body by the will of its Creator, who made it like that, insofar as the state of things shall summon it, and the dues of its rational nature shall demand.”<sup>58</sup>

Origen/Rufinus insists very strongly on the transformation of the *identical* body, as we can also judge from other places in the treatise *On First Principles*.<sup>59</sup> The body we have now must undergo a transformation, similar to that of a seed which is sown in the earth in order to become a new plant. There is a structure (*ratio* = *λόγος*) implied in the original seed which is also preserved in the new plant, although it is not similar to the seed in its form. This structure also holds together our corporeal substance (*substantiam continet corporalem*), which, under the influence of the divine Logos, will reappear in a new, spiritual state.<sup>60</sup> In Rufinus’ interpretation, Origen thus expects the resurrection of the same body as the

adherence to the body): Hubert Cor n elis , Les fondements cosmologiques de l’eschatologie d’Orig ene, Paris 1959, 77. 96.

56 Origen, princ. III 6,6 (SC 268, 248). Ibid. I 6,4 (252, 206.182–185), Origen/Rufinus presents the idea of the ethereal body as someone else’s opinion.

57 Eriugena, periph. V 929d (CChr.CM 165, 99.3B2–3B8) = princ. III 6,4 (SC 268, 242.99–105): *Quantum ergo sensus noster capere potest, qualitatem spiritalis corporis talem quam esse sentimus, in quo inhabitare deceat non solum sanctas quasque perfectasque animas, uerum etiam omnem illam creaturam, quae liberabitur a seruitute corruptionis. De quo corpore etiam illud Apostolus dixit [Origen adds: quia]: “Domum habemus non manufactam, aeternam in caelis,” id est [Origen adds: in] mansionibus beatorum.*

58 Ibid. V 930b (165, 100.3B3–3B8) = princ. III 6,4 (SC 268, 242.121–244.126): *Non autem dubitandum est naturam corporis huius nostri uoluntate dei, qui talem fecit eam, usque ad illam qualitatem subtilissimam et purissimam ac splendidissimam corporis posse a creatore perducere, prout rerum status uocauerit et meritum rationabilis naturae poposcerit.* Translation: p. 606 Sheld on-Willi ams/O’Meara (modified).

59 Cf. princ. III 6,6 (SC 268, 250).

60 Ibid. II 10,3 (SC 252, 380); Cels. V 23 (SC 147, 68–70). Cf. also the quotations in Methodius of Olympus, res. II 10,1–5 (GCS Method. 404–406). In a fragment of his exegesis of 1 Cor., Origen states that the present body relates to the resurrected one as does a seed to the human body; in both cases, there is no resemblance between the two: in 1 Cor. frg. 84 (p. 46.33–43Jenkins ).

soul animated throughout earthly life, only transformed in its quality to become a “spiritual” one. To be able to obtain such a degree of purity for its body, the rational soul must purify itself of its failures, so that God may be “all in all” for it (in his quotation, Eriugena leaves out “for it,” added by Origen/Rufinus to the biblical verse, and he appends that God will be the “measure and mode” of all movement of the rational soul instead).<sup>61</sup>

Unlike Origen/Rufinus, Eriugena understands the “spiritual body” to be the original one, given to the human being before its fall but hidden by the body we have now, and still to be kept after the soul leaves the temporary “shelter” of its mortal earthly body. As we can see, Eriugena does not presuppose a transformation of the identical body, as he did with Origen/Rufinus in his treatise *On Predes-tination*.<sup>62</sup> In his *Periphyseon*, the “spiritual body” is not supposed to be changed, but only hidden under the mortal one, which will be removed again. In addition, as a spiritual form, the “spiritual body” is common to all human beings, whereas for Origen/Rufinus the “spiritual body” seems to be strictly individualized, adapted to the state of individual rational beings.

According to Eriugena, even the non-individualized “spiritual body” will be transformed into the soul, and the soul into God, so that all things may return “into their causes” (*in suas causas*).<sup>63</sup> In this sense, perhaps, Eriugena understood Origen’s idea that all things will return into the same unity as the one which links the Father and the Son: “But since things hasten to that end, that all may be one even as the Father with the Son is One (Jn. 10:30), it follows that where all things are one there will be no more diversity.”<sup>64</sup> The return to the beginning thus seems to be graduated in Eriugena’s theology. Thanks to Christ’s incarnation, all human beings will return to human nature as it existed before the fall (i. e., into “paradise”); in addition, the elect will be deified.<sup>65</sup> In this vein, the

61 Periph. V 929a–b (CChr.CM 165, 98.3104–3109; see also the different versions in CChr. CM 165, 506n) = princ. III 3,3 (SC 268, 240.68–74): *Per singulos autem omnia erit hoc modo, ut quicquid rationabilis mens expurgata omni uitiorum faece atque omni penitus abster-sa nube malitiae uel sentire uel intellegere uel cogitare potest, omnia deus sit, nec ultra iam aliquid aliud nisi* [Origen adds: *deum sentiat, deum cogitet,*] *deum uideat, deum teneat, om-nis* [Origen: *omnes*] *motus sui deus modus et mensura* [Origen omits: *modus et mensura*] *sit. Et ita erit* [Origen adds: *ei*] *omnia deus*. Subsequently, Eriugena quotes Origen more exactly: periph. V 929b (165, 98.3110f31B); 929c (165, 99.312f) = princ. III 6,3 (SC 268, 240.75.78.90).

62 Praed. 19,2 (CChr.CM 50, 1Ø.18–22), quoted above n. 54. On Eriugena’s change of mind concerning this issue, see Petr off, *Theoriae of the Return* (n. 6) 566 f.

63 Periph. V 960a (165, 140.4527f.); 951a–b (165, 1274096–4104); 952c–d (165, 129.4164–4172).

64 Ibid. V 930b (165, 100.31Ø–31Ø) = princ. III 6,3 (SC 268, 244.130–133): *Cum uero res ad illud coeperint festinare, ut sint omnes unum sicut est pater cum filio unum, consequen-ter intellegi datur quod ubi omnes unum sunt iam diuersitas non erit*. Translation: p. 606 Sheld on-Williams/O’Meara (modified).

65 Ibid. V 980d (165, 168.547–5490); 1001a–b (165, 197.6387–6395).

“master” in Eriugena’s *Periphyseon* tries to combine the salvation of all human beings (as expected by Origen) with the election of only some of them (presupposed by Augustine):

“The return of the whole of human nature into its first condition shall be in Him Who took that whole nature upon Himself, namely, in the Incarnate Word of God. We must consider this return in two ways: first, the restoration of the whole of human nature in Christ; and then, having dealt with its general aspect, we must consider the individual bliss and deification of those who shall ascend into God Himself.”<sup>66</sup>

In returning to their origins, individual human beings are supposed to strip off their mortal bodies and leave their failures behind them. Nevertheless, it does not mean that they should disappear as individual beings in their spiritual substance; they will be included in God and become his self-revelation:

“So, just as the air [when illuminated by light, L. K.] appears wholly as light, and iron when melted appears to take on wholly the quality of fire [...] and in fact to be fire, although their substances persist: so the sound intellect must hold that after the end of this world every nature, whether corporeal or incorporeal, will seem to be only God, while preserving the integrity of its nature, so that even God, Who in Himself is incomprehensible, is after a certain mode comprehended in the creature, while the creature itself is changed by an ineffable miracle into God (*ineffabili miraculo in deum uertatur*).”<sup>67</sup>

The penetration of the air by light or iron by fire as a metaphor for deification was known to Eriugena from Maximus the Confessor;<sup>68</sup> in his theological conception, however, it took on a new meaning. For Eriugena, the deification of human beings, i. e., the transparency of God in them, is the supreme summit of the theophanic process as described in his *Periphyseon*.<sup>69</sup> God, characterized as the incomprehen-

66 Ibid. V 978d–979a (165, 165.533–540): *Tota itaque humanitas in ipso, qui eam totam assumpsit, in pristinum reuersura est statum, in uerbo dei uidelicet incarnato. Qui reditus duobus modis consideratur. Quorum unus est qui totius humanae naturae docet in Christo restaurationem, alter uero qui non solum ipsam restaurationem generaliter perspicit, uerum etiam eorum qui in ipsum deum ascensuri sunt beatitudinem et deificationem.* Translation: p. 663 Sheldon-Williams/O’Meara .

67 Ibid. I 451b (161, 16.382–389): *Sicut ergo totus aer lux, totumque ferrum liquefactum [...] igneum, immo etiam ignis apparet, manentibus tamen eorum substantiis, ita sano intellectu accipiendum quia post finem huius mundi omnis natura siue corporea siue incorporea solus deus esse uidebitur, naturae integritate permanente, ut et deus, qui per se ipsum incomprehensibilis est, in creatura quodam modo comprehendatur, ipsa uero creatura ineffabili miraculo in deum uertatur.* Translation: ibid. p. 36 (modified).

68 Cf. Maximus the Confessor, amb. (PG 91, 1076a. 1088d 1 B7c. 1 H0c); Eriugena’s translation in: CChr.SG 18, 25. 33 f. 64. 66.

69 Eriugena, periph. V 1019a–1020a (CChr.CM 165, 222.722–224.7269).

sible “nothing” at the beginning,<sup>70</sup> became, in the first step of his revelation, the primordial causes<sup>71</sup> and, in the second one, the spatio-temporal effects of these causes.<sup>72</sup> The last step of God’s revelation is the deification of man, who returns to him freely and implies, as the *officina mundi*, the whole world brought “back” to God in him.<sup>73</sup> Only in this deifying theophany, which preserves the difference and integrity of created beings, does God attain his full manifestation. He is not the undetermined “nothing” of the beginning any more, but becomes “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28), God as revealed and open to being known, the aim of the whole cosmogonic and theophanic process. To be sure, this last modus of “nature,” the “nature which is not created and does not create” in Eriugena’s terminology, is the same as the “nature” at the beginning (“nature which is not created and creates”),<sup>74</sup> only the point of view is different (*duplex theoria*).<sup>75</sup> It is God, not as the beginning and cause, but as the goal which includes all created beings.

The preservation of the individual beings, seemingly endangered by their return to the common nature, is probably to be understood in the same vein as the theophanic process as a whole. As the divine “nothing” of the beginning differs, in its viewpoint, from the eschatological God who may be “all in all,” so the common human nature into which all human beings will return differs at its beginning and at its end. At its end, it will include all individual human beings, promoted to their spiritual principle and thus preserved in God himself, as his self-manifestation. With this daring vision of all created beings embraced in God and God revealed in them, Eriugena certainly differs from Origen. Nevertheless, as we have seen, he derived a good deal of inspiration from him.

70 Ibid. III 686d–687a (163, 96.2797–2801).

71 Ibid. III 683a (163, 91.2689–2643).

72 Ibid. III 678c (163, 85.2443–2455); 683a–b (163, 91.2643–2651); 689c (163, 100.2913–2918). According to Eriugena, every created being is a theophany of God, who, in himself, remains hidden and even “nothing.” *ibid.* III 680d–681a (163, 88.2540–89.2555). See Werner Beierwaltes, *Eriugena: Grundzüge seines Denkens*, Frankfurt a. M. 1994, 15–158.

73 Eriugena, *ibid.* V 893b–c (165, 49.1519–1526); see also IV 760a (164, 27.723–28.726). Similarly, Maximus Confessor, *amb.* (PG 91, 1305a–B12b); Eriugena’s translation in: CChr.SG 18, 180–185.

74 Eriugena differentiates nature into: (i) *natura quae creat et non creatur* (i. e. God as “nothing” at the beginning), (ii) *quae et creatur et creat* (i. e. the primordial causes), (iii) *quae creatur et non creat* (the spatiotemporal effects of these causes) and (iv) *quae nec creat nec creatur* (God as “all in all” at the end); *periph.* I 441b (CChr.CM 161, 3.9–4.22).

75 *Ibid.* V 1018d (165, 223.723f.). See equally *ibid.* III 688c–689a (163, 99.2877–2895). See Beierwaltes, *Eriugena* (n. 72) 82–114.

## 3. The Fourfold Division of Wisdom

Another topic borrowed from Origen that Édouard Jeuneau, the editor of Eriugena's work, identified was the division of wisdom into the "practical" or ethics (πρακτική, *actiua*), the "natural" or physics (φυσική, *naturalis*), "theology" (θεολόγια, *quae de deo disputat*), and "logic" (λογική, *rationalis*) in the third book of *Periphyseon*.<sup>76</sup> In the prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, preserved in Rufinus' translation, Origen speaks about formation in philosophy, starting with the "moral" of the biblical book of Proverbs, deepened by the "physics" of the Ecclesiastes, and completed in the "epoptic" of the Song of Songs. As Origen observes, these three degrees find their parallel in Greek philosophical disciplines of the same names (*ethicam, physicam, epopticen*, i. e., *morelem, naturalem, inspectivam*).<sup>77</sup> They are either supplemented by logic (*rationalis*) or, according to some interpreters, logic can also be understood as a part of all of them<sup>78</sup> (it was probably also understood in this last sense by Solomon, as the supposed author of the three biblical books).<sup>79</sup> Origen's notion of "epoptic" for the doctrine of the Song of Songs, taken from Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium* and also known to other Platonic authors for the supreme degree of initiation into the mysteries,<sup>80</sup> was later replaced by terms such as *theologica* (thus Jerome or Alcuin of York)<sup>81</sup> or *theorica*, meaning contemplation (thus Gregory the Great).<sup>82</sup>

In the same context, Ambrose of Milan speaks about the *sapientia triplex* (namely *naturalis, moralis, rationalis*),<sup>83</sup> which embraces the wisdom of nature and those things that are above nature, including God and his Word (the book of Ecclesiastes and the Gospel of John in the New Testament),<sup>84</sup> the questions of ethics combined with logic (the Book of Proverbs and the Gospel of Matthew),<sup>85</sup> and, finally, logic as the relationship to the divine Logos (*Verbum*), also connected with morals (the Song of Songs and the Gospel of Mark).<sup>86</sup> Like the epoptic for Origen,

76 Eriugena, *ibid.* III 705b (163, 124.3582–3584). Cf. also in Ioh. hom. 14 (CChr.CM 166, 275–17). See Jeuneau, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* (n. 3) 146.

77 Origen, in Cant. comm. prol. 3,1 (SC 375, 128).

78 *Ibid.* prol. 3,1f. (375, 128–130).

79 *Ibid.* prol. 3,8–11 (37, 132–136).

80 Cf. Plato, *symp.* 210 a 1; further, e. g., Plutarch, *Is.* 77, 382d; Clement of Alexandria, *strom.* II 47,4 (GCS Clem. Al. 2<sup>3</sup>, 138); cf. also *ibid.* I 176,2 (2<sup>3</sup>, 108): ἡ ἐποπτεία. See Luc Br ésar d, SC 376, Paris 1992, 755.

81 Jerome, comm. in Eccl. 1,1 (CChr.SL 72, 251.28–30); Alcuin, comm. in Eccl. 1,1 (PL 100, 669a).

82 Gregory the Great, in Cant. expos. 9 (CChr.SL 144, 12).

83 Ambrose of Milan, in Luc. expos. praef. 2 (CSEL 32/4, 3.8f.).

84 *Ibid.* praef. 2 (32/4, 4.7f.14f.); 3 (32/4, 5.2–7).

85 *Ibid.* praef. 2 (32/4, 4.13f.); 3 (32/4, 5.7–9).

86 *Ibid.* praef. 2 (32/4, 4.17–20); 3 (32/4, 5.9–15).

the third discipline of Ambrose includes the relationship to God or to the divine Word, but at the same time, it penetrates the other disciplines in a similar way to Origen's logic. Ambrose, thus, only needs three disciplines which play the role of the four in Origen (as embracing all three, Ambrose presents the Gospel of Luke, which he is going to comment on,<sup>87</sup> among the books of the New Testament, but it seems to have no equivalent in the Old Testament or among the philosophical disciplines).

Eriugena understands logic as the doctrine of the rules for discussing the other three disciplines; ethics, as an exposition on virtues; physics, as dealing with the reasons for natural things and their causes and effects; and finally, theology, as the consideration of the only cause of all things, which is God.<sup>88</sup> In his *Homily on the Prologue of the Gospel of John*, Eriugena applies the same division of sciences to biblical hermeneutics. According to this passage, Scripture is "an intelligible world" or "a world of understanding" (*mundus quidam intelligibilis*), composed of four elements, like the physical world. At the very center is the earth, as the basis, i. e., the "historical meaning" of the text (*historia*), surrounded, like the earth by water, by the "depth of the moral understanding" (*abyssus moralis intelligentiae* or *ἠθικῆ*). A further and subtler layer is the air or the exposition concerning the science of nature (*naturalis scientia* or *φυσικῆ*), and over it, beyond everything else, the heaven of ether or fire extends, i. e., the contemplation of God or *θεολόγια*.<sup>89</sup> In both of Eriugena's presentations, we find three disciplines which concern morals (the name of this discipline varies between *πρακτικῆ* – *actiua* and *ἠθικῆ* – *moralis*), the nature of things (*φυσικῆ* – *naturalis*) and God (*θεολόγια*, conceived of as a disputation on God or contemplation). The fourth science, namely logic, which formulates the rules of discussion, is, in Eriugena's hermeneutical exposition, replaced by the historical meaning as the basis of all other interpretations.

As Édouard Jeuneau observes, in his division of sciences, Eriugena combined two traditional trinities:<sup>90</sup> ethics – physics – logic (being derived from Plato, known to the Stoics and attested to, among others, by Origen and Augustine for

87 Ibid. praef. 4 (32/4, 5.16–9).

88 Eriugena, periph. III 705b (CChr.CM 163, 124.3585–3589). On Eriugena's division of sciences on the background of his conception of knowledge, see Adrian Guiu, "Reading the Two Books:" Exegesis and Natural Contemplation in the *Periphyseon*, in: Ot ten/Allen , Eriugena and Creation (n. 3), 263–290, here 282–289.

89 In Ioh. hom. 14 (CChr.CM 166, 275–7). See Jeuneau, *Eriugena's Periphyseon* (n. 3) 146 f.

90 Jeuneau, *Eriugena's Periphyseon* (n. 3) 146 f. On the division of philosophy in antiquity, see Pierre Hadot, *Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'Antiquité*, in: *MH* 36 (1979) 201–223. The place of this question in the genre of the introduction to philosophical commentaries is analysed by Ilsetraut Hadot, *Les introductions aux commentaires exégétiques chez les auteurs néoplatoniciens et les auteurs chrétiens*, in: Michel Tardieu (ed.), *Les règles de l'interprétation*, Paris 1987, 100–122.

profane sciences)<sup>91</sup> and ethics – physics – epoptic, which, before Origen applied it to the biblical books, was mentioned by Clement of Alexandria;<sup>92</sup> later on, this triad was used by Evagrius Ponticus<sup>93</sup> and especially Maximus the Confessor, whose *Ambigua in Iohannem* Eriugena translated into Latin.<sup>94</sup> This last author also uses (in Eriugena's translation), besides *ethica*<sup>95</sup> or *moralis*,<sup>96</sup> the (originally Aristotelian) name *practica (philosophia)* for the first of these sciences.<sup>97</sup> Unlike Eriugena, Maximus does not mention logic, listed with the other three by Origen and Clement of Alexandria before him,<sup>98</sup> who very probably knew the discussion on this topic from the philosophical schools of Late Antiquity.<sup>99</sup>

With his division of wisdom into the practical, physical, theological, and rational, Eriugena seems to continue the tradition attested, among the Christian

- 91 Cicero, Acad. post. I 5,9 (p. 1 Bf. Reid): *Fuit ergo iam accepta a Platone philosophandi ratio triplex: una de uita et moribus, altera de natura et rebus occultis, tertia de disserendo et quid uerum sit, quid falsum, quid rectum in oratione prauumue, quid consentiens, quid repugnans iudicando*. See also Seneca, epist. 89,9 (p. 327,8–12 Reyno lds). Similarly Augustine in his exposition on the doctrine of the Platonists: civ. VIII 10 (CChr.SL 47, 227,38–43). On Plato as the supposed initiator of this division, cf. ibid. XI 25 (48, 344,1–11) Isidore of Seville, etym. II 24,3f.; VIII 6,3–6 (physics, ethics, logic). Origen applies this division on the profane sciences represented, according to his interpretation, by Abimelec, Ochozath and Phicol in Gen. 26:26: in Gen. hom. 14,3 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 342,35–50).
- 92 Clement divides the “philosophy of Moses” into ethics (historical narrations and laws), physics (symbolized by the holy liturgical gesticulations), and theology (as the highest degree of initiation, *ἐποπτεία*): strom. I 176,1f. (GCS Clem. Al. 2<sup>3</sup>, 108). On this topic, see Bogdan G. Bucur, Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses (SVigChr 95), Leiden/Boston 2009, 18–24.
- 93 Evagrius Ponticus, pract. 1 (SC 171, 498), where *πρακτική*, *φυσική* and *θεολογική* are even supposed to be a part of Christian doctrine.
- 94 As Hadot, Divisions (n. 90) 219, observes, Porphyry arranged Plotinus' *Enneads* according to this structure (ethics: enn. I; physics: enn. II–III; epoptic: enn. IV–VI); cf. also Porphyry, vit. Plot. 24,16f.37–39.59f.; 25,10.31–3. On the Origenian tradition, see Sandro Leanza, La classificazione dei libri salomonici e i suoi riflessi sulla questione dei rapporti tra Bibbia e scienze profane, da Origene agli scrittori medioevali, in: Aug. 14 (1974) 651–666; Marguerite Harl, Les trois livres de Salomon et les trois parties de la philosophie dans les Prologues des *Commentaires sur le Cantique des Cantiques* (d'Origène aux Chânes exégétiques grecques), in: Jürgen Dummer (ed.), Texte und Textkritik: Eine Aufsatzsammlung (TU 133), Berlin 1987, 249–269; Alfons Fürst, Origenes – der Schöpfer christlicher Wissenschaft und Kultur: Exegese und Philosophie im frühen Alexandria, in: id., Von Origenes und Hieronymus zu Augustinus: Studien zur antiken Theologiegeschichte (AKG 115), Berlin/Boston 2011, 81–144, here 95–100.
- 95 Maximus the Confessor, amb. (Eriugena's translation) 6 (CChr.SG 18, 59.444).
- 96 Ibid. 63 (18, 27.48).
- 97 Ibid. 33 (18, 172.39f.); 33 (18, 173.112) 33 (18, 174.130). Aristotle distinguished practical (ethics) and productive sciences; he divided the theoretical sciences into physics, mathematics, and theology: met. VI 1025 b 18–1026 a 19. See Hadot, Divisions (n. 90) 202f.
- 98 To ethics, physics, and epoptic, Clement of Alexandria adds the (Platonic) dialectic as the art of speech and action: strom. I 176,3 (GCS Clem. Al. 2<sup>3</sup>, 108f.).
- 99 Cf. Hadot, Introductions (n. 90) 108.

authors, by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and in the West by Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine. His idea of a fourfold division comes particularly close to Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. This work is not included in Origen's writings present in the library of the abbot Wulfad, later bishop of Bourges (died 876), Eriugena's friend and the addressee of his *Periphyseon*.<sup>100</sup> What we find there are Origen's (*Homilies*) on *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua*, the *Gospel of Luke* and (the *Commentary*) on *Romans*.<sup>101</sup> However, this circumstance does not seem to be decisive, as Origen's treatise *On First Principles* is not included there either.<sup>102</sup>

#### 4. Jacob's Well

In his edition of Eriugena's fragmentary preserved *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Édouard Jeuneau indicates further Origenian topics. The most striking of them are, besides the program of the literal and allegorical interpretation<sup>103</sup> or the exegesis of "being born again or from above (*ἄνωθεν*)" in Jn. 3:3,<sup>104</sup> two motifs especially, namely the exposition of Jacob's well in Jn. 4:6<sup>105</sup> and the allegoresis of the

100 See the dedicatory letter added to Eriugena, periph. V 1021b–1022c (CChr.CM 166, 226. 7337–28.7394).

101 Maïeul Cappuyens, Les "Bibli Vulfadi" et Jean Scot Érigène, in: RTPM 33 (1966) 137–139, here 138 (nr. 9 and 10).

102 On the presence of Origen's writings in the contemporary libraries, see de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* 1/1 (n. 6) 22f.

103 On the different possible relations between the "letter" and the "spirit" of the biblical text, see Eriugena, in *Ioh. comm.* VI 5 (CChr.CM 166, 132.29–133.69); on the same topic, cf. Origen, princ. IV 3,1 (SC 268, 244–246); IV 3,4f. (268, 356–364). On the "letter" of Scripture, whence the interpretation should ascend to the "spirit," see Eriugena, in *Ioh. comm.* VI 3 (CChr.CM 166, 12713–15); similarly, Origen, in *Ex. hom.* 3,2 (SC 321, 96.95–98.97); in *Ios. hom.* 2,3 (SC 71, 120); 3,1 (71, 124–126). On the "higher" level of the interpretation (*altior theoria*), see Eriugena, in *Ioh. comm.* I 27 (CChr.CM 166, 60.77); similarly, Origen, in *Gen. hom.* 4,4 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 152.13f.): *altior intelligentiae gradus*. On the many "mysteries" (*mysteria*) hidden in the biblical text, see Eriugena, in *Ioh. comm.* I 30 (CChr.CM 166, 66.10); similarly, Origen, in *Gen. hom.* 9,1 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 236.10): *mysteria*; 10,1 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 256.37): *sacramenta*. On those biblical narrations which never did happen in the literal sense (*symbola*), see Eriugena, in *Ioh. comm.* VI 5 (CChr.CM 166, 132.49 f.); cf. Origen, princ. IV 2,9 (SC 268, 336.277–338.282; 336.350–338.354). In questions of allegoresis, Jeuneau observes the very important influence of Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite on Eriugena, too: Édouard Jeuneau, Appendice III: Allegoria, Mysterium, Sacramentum, Symbolum, in: SC 180, 397–402.

104 Eriugena, in *Ioh. comm.* III 1 (CChr.CM 166, 78.48–54). Besides Augustine, in *Ioh. tract.* 11,6 (CChr.SL 36, 1Bf.), to whom Eriugena refers explicitly, Jeuneau (*ad loc.*) also mentions Origen's comments on this term: in *Rom. comm.* V 8,3 f. (SC 539, 466.3–8).

105 Eriugena, in *Ioh. comm.* IV 2 (CChr.CM 166, 108.11–109.8 = SC 180, 286–288): Jeuneau, SC 180, 287f. n. 3.

multiplication of the five loaves in Jn. 6:9–13.<sup>106</sup> Eriugena does not refer to Origen by name in his commentary. Nevertheless, the Origenian exegesis was widespread in his time (Henri de Lubac even spoke about “un renouveau origénien” in the 9<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>107</sup> and it is easy to imagine that Eriugena applied it too.

In his exegesis of Christ meeting the Samaritan woman in Jn. 4, Eriugena offers two different interpretations of Jacob’s well (*fons Jacob*) where this meeting took place, namely as “the symbol of the perceptible nature” or “of the intelligible reason” (*aut sensibilis naturae aut intelligibilis rationis symbolum*).<sup>108</sup> These two interpretations, seemingly hard to combine, allude to the twofold human nature composed of the “visible body” and “invisible soul,” in Eriugena’s eyes.<sup>109</sup> Reason, also specified as “natural reason” (*naturalis ratio*), derives “from the cause of all good things, namely God”<sup>110</sup> or “from the infinite depths of the Father.”<sup>111</sup> The perceptible world, on the other hand, is presented as the “lowest part of the universe” or “all visible things closed within the boundaries of this perceptible world.”<sup>112</sup> When Jesus, according to the Gospel, “sat down beside the well” (*sedit super fontem*, Jn. 4:6), Eriugena recognizes in this fact that Christ in his “unchangeable divinity assumed human nature,”<sup>113</sup> composed of both the abovementioned parts.

For the interpretation of Jacob’s well as the visible world (or even as “the pleasure of perceptible things”), Eriugena, elsewhere in his commentary, refers to Augustine.<sup>114</sup> Édouard Jauneau<sup>115</sup> found a passage in Augustine’s collection of *Eighty-Three Different Questions* which comes very close to Eriugena’s ideas: “I see in the well a gloomy depth. I am therefore led to understand [by this] the lowest parts of the universe, i. e., the earth.”<sup>116</sup> In the subsequent text of his question, Augustine even interprets the lowest part of the world as the “outward man” (*exterior*

106 Ibid. VI 2–4 (CChr.CM 166, 124–129 = SC 180, 332–344): Jea unea u, ibid. 327 n. 1; 334 n. 7; 337 n. 11; id CChr.CM 166, 125.

107 De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* 1/1 (n. 6) 225.

108 Eriugena, in Ioh. comm. IV 2 (CChr.CM 166, 109.17f.).

109 Ibid. (166, 109.29–33).

110 Ibid. (166, 109.12f.): *ipsa naturalis ratio non aliunde surgit nisi a causa omnium bonorum, a deo uidelicet.*

111 Ibid. (166, 109.4): *infinita patris altitudine procedens.*

112 Ibid. (166, 109.5f.): *uniuersitatis infimam partem, hoc est omnia uisibilia intra huius mundi sensibilis terminos coartata.*

113 Ibid. (166, 109.28f.): *Sessio Christi incommutabilis diuinitatis suae in nostra natura possessio.*

114 Ibid. IV 4 (166, 1B.12–5): *Sanctus Augustinus puteum profundum delectationem corporaliū rerum [...] significare astruit. Cf. Augustine, in Ioh. tract. 15,16 (CChr.SL 36, 156.4 f.): Etenim aqua in puteo, uoluptas saeculi est in profunditate tenebrosa.*

115 Jea unea u, SC 180, 287 n. 3.

116 Augustine, div. quaest. LXXXIII 64,2 (CChr.SL 44A, 137.14f.): *Video in puteo tenebrosam profunditatem. Admoneor ergo intellegere mundi huius infimas partes, id est, terrenas [...].* Translation: Mosher, FaCh 70, 128.

*homo*, cf. 2 Cor. 4:16).<sup>117</sup> A very similar exegesis of Jacob's well was also known to Eriugena's Carolingian predecessor Alcuin.<sup>118</sup>

As far as the interpretation of Jacob's well as rationality and its divine origin is concerned, we can, together with Édouard Jeuneau,<sup>119</sup> refer to the Jewish idea of Jacob's well as a symbol of the Law and divine Wisdom<sup>120</sup> or recall the allegoresis of the three wells of Isaac (Gen. 26:15–22) as the threefold wisdom (natural, moral, and rational) by Ambrose of Milan.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, the most probable source of inspiration seems to be Origen's homilies on this topic.

The motif of wells and their digging and purifying reappears often in Origen's writings. In his twelfth homily on Numbers (preserved in Rufinus' translation), Origen tries to "collect the mysteries of wells" from different places in Scripture in order to interpret the finding of the well in the desert by Moses and the "song of the well" in Num. 21:16–18.<sup>122</sup> Besides Christ's meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well in Jn. 4,<sup>123</sup> Origen pays special attention to the verses Prov. 5:15–17 and the "well which each of us has in his or her interior."<sup>124</sup> In the same homily, Origen distinguishes the well which is the "knowledge of the unborn Father" from other wells symbolising the cognition of the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively,<sup>125</sup> and even further wells of knowledge concerning particular things, such as plants and animals, according to their species or meteorological and astronomical phenomena.<sup>126</sup> We remember that, Eriugena, too, spoke about "natural reason" and the "depth of the Father" in his commentary.

In his twelfth homily on Genesis, Origen (again in Rufinus' translation) quotes the verses Prov. 5:15.18 in the following version: "Drink the waters of your own springs and wells, and let your spring be your own."<sup>127</sup> On the basis of these words,

117 Ibid. 64,2 (44A, 138.28).

118 Alcuin, in Ioh. comm. II 7 (PL 100, 792c–d). See Jeaneau, SC 180, 287 n. 3.

119 Jeaneau, ibid.

120 See Annie Jaubert, La symbolique du puits de Jacob (Jean 4,12), in: L'homme devant Dieu: Mélanges offerts au Père Henri de Lubac, vol. 1, Paris 1963, 63–73.

121 Ambrose, in Luc. expos. praef. 2 (CSEL 32/4, 3.8–4.10).

122 Origen, in Num. hom. 12,1,2(SC 442, 72.15): *puteorum congregare mysteria*. See also Louis Doutreleau, SC 7<sup>2</sup>, Paris 1996, 310 n. 1.

123 Ibid. 12,1,2 (442, 74.32–76.41).

124 Ibid. 12,1,2(442, 74.22f.): *Habet ergo, ut in iis designatur, unusquisque nostrum in semetipso puteum*.

125 Ibid. 12,1,4(442, 76.57f.): *scientia ingeniti Patris unus possit intelligi puteus*. On the wells of the Son and the Holy Spirit, see ibid. (442, 76.58–67).

126 Ibid. 12,1,5 (SC 442, 78.81–88). Origen/Rufinus refers to Wis. 7:17–20.

127 In Gen. hom. 12,5(SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 306.61–63): *Bibe aquas de tuis fontibus et de tuis puteis, et sit tibi fons tuus proprius* (LXX: πίνε ὕδατα ἀπὸ σῶν ἀγγείων καὶ ἀπὸ σῶν φρεάτων πηγῆς. [...] ἡ πηγὴ σου τοῦ ὕδατος ἔστω σοι ἰδίᾳ). Origen/Rufinus also quotes different versions of these verses: in Num. hom. 12,1,2(SC 442, 74.16–22); see Louis Doutreleau, SC 442, Paris 1999, 375–378. A slightly different wording is to be found in Gen. hom. 7,5 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 206.10f.),

Origen invites his listeners to have “their own well and their own spring” (*proprium puteum et propriam fontem*), so that they, too, may understand what they read in Scripture (*ex proprio sensu proferre aliquem intellectum*), and “drink from the fountain of their own abilities” (*bibere de fonte ingenii tui*), in accordance with those things which they have learned in the Church.<sup>128</sup> This spring of “living water” is within us as “rich streams flowing with rational understanding” (*irrigua fluenta rationabilis sensus*); we just have to care for it, to “dig out our earth” and clean out the spring so that it is not filled with earth and rubbish.<sup>129</sup>

The same idea is developed in Origen’s thirteenth homily on Gen. 26:15–22 concerning the wells dug by Isaac. Here again, Origen tries to “explain either the mysteries of such great wells or of those things the wells refer to.”<sup>130</sup> What is especially interesting for us, from his very rich allegoresis of Isaac as Christ, is the theme of the wells which Isaac’s father Abraham dug and which the Philistines, “who hate water and love earth,” filled with earth and dirt (Gen. 26:15).<sup>131</sup> Origen/Rufinus interprets these wells as (among other things) “the well of living water in the soul of each of us” (*in uniuscuiusque nostrum anima est puteus aquae uiuae*), namely “a kind of heavenly perception and latent image of God” (*quidam caelestis sensus et imago Dei latens*).<sup>132</sup> This image (Gen. 1:26f.) within (*intra*) us is a “spring of knowledge” (*fons scientiae*), but it cannot flow if it is filled with care for corporeal things, with the “image of the earthly” (1 Cor. 15:49).<sup>133</sup> Isaac-Christ, as the Word of God, restored the original image, so that “rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:38), namely the understanding of Scripture, may flow from within the soul of Origen’s listeners.<sup>134</sup> The original image was painted by the Word of God, i. e., the Son, and obscured by our negligence (*obscurari per incuriam*) but still not destroyed (*deleteri*), only covered up by an unfortunate new painting by our own hand.<sup>135</sup> At the end of this homily, Origen again invites his listeners to dig, with Isaac, the “wells of living water,” so that they may drink “water out of their own vessels and out of their own wells” (Prov. 5:15).<sup>136</sup>

where Origen/Rufinus interprets drinking from a well as the Christian allegorical exegesis, in contrast to drinking from a pail, as the Jewish literal understanding: *ibid.* 7,5 (7<sup>2</sup>, 206.13–208.22). As a symbol of Scripture, the well and drinking from it are also interpreted *ibid.* 10,2 (7<sup>2</sup>, 260.9–32); 11,3 (7<sup>2</sup>, 288.39–50).

128 *Ibid.* 12,5 (7<sup>2</sup>, 306.62–68). Translation: Heine, FaCh 71, 18.

129 *Ibid.* (7<sup>2</sup>, 306.68–71).

130 *Ibid.* 13,1 (7<sup>2</sup>, 312.3–37): *explicare uel puteorum sacramenta tantorum uel eorum, quae gesta pro puteis referuntur*.

131 *Ibid.* 13,2 (7<sup>2</sup>, 312.1–4).

132 *Ibid.* 13,3 (7<sup>2</sup>, 324.88–90). Translation: Heine, FaCh 71, 19.

133 *Ibid.* 13,4 (7<sup>2</sup>, 326.20–328.25). Cf. also *ibid.* 13,3 (7<sup>2</sup>, 324.90–95).

134 *Ibid.* 13,4 (7<sup>2</sup>, 326.1–10).

135 *Ibid.* (7<sup>2</sup>, 328.31–3).

136 *Ibid.* (7<sup>2</sup>, 330.78–332.82). Translation: Heine, FaCh 71, 19.

It is possible that one of Eriugena's interpretations could have been developed from these homilies by Origen, namely the well as an indestructible spring of understanding in the human soul. The combination of this exegesis with Augustine's interpretation of the well as the depth of the perceptible world opened up for Eriugena the possibility of seeing, in the well beside which Jesus sat down in Jn. 4, human nature in its two components.

## 5. The Multiplication of the Loaves

In his exegesis of the multiplication of the loaves in Jn. 6, too, the main source for Eriugena seems to have been Augustine,<sup>137</sup> but even here, Édouard Jeuneau<sup>138</sup> proposes as further possible inspiration, besides Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua in Iohannem*, Origen's homilies. The words of the Gospel about "a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish" (Jn. 6:9) admit, according to Eriugena, "a manifold spiritual interpretation" (*multiplex theoria*).<sup>139</sup> The five loaves represent the five books of Moses' Law; they are called "barley" (*ordeacei*), as nourishment for people still "corporeal," "fleshly" or "carnal" (*carnales homines*).<sup>140</sup>

A very similar allegoresis of the five barley loaves was also known to Augustine<sup>141</sup> and to Alcuin after him,<sup>142</sup> but it was very probably initiated by Origen. In his twelfth homily on Genesis, already mentioned in the analysis of the exegesis of Jacob's well, Origen/Rufinus suggests that, in Jesus' feeding the multitude, the barley loaves (*hordeacii panes*) indicate the food of the beginners (*incipientes*), whereas the wheat loaves (*triticeii*) serve as a repast for the perfect<sup>143</sup> (in Mk. 6:41.44; 8:4 f. par., we simply find "loaves," which probably means wheat loaves).<sup>144</sup> Origen/Rufinus touches on this topic when he interprets the sowing of barley by Isaac (Gen. 26:12 LXX). Here, he characterizes barley as harsh and rough food for beasts or peasants; in a similar vein, Maximus the Confessor states that barley is used as food not only for people but also for animals.<sup>145</sup> In Origen's eyes, the sowing of barley thus indicates the word of God in the Mosaic Law, appropriate to people "less prepared and still animal/psychic" (*imperitioribus et*

137 Augustine, div. quaest. LXXXIII 61 (CChr.SL 44A, 120–B1); in Ioh. tract. 24,5f. (CChr. SL 36, 244–247); serm. 130,1 (PL 38, 725).

138 Jeuneau, SC 180, 326 n. 1; 331 n. 7; 337 n. 11; 338 n. 3; 342 n. 6.

139 Eriugena, in Ioh. comm. VI 2 (CChr.CM 166, 124.29).

140 Ibid. (166, 125.9–41).

141 Augustine, div. quaest. LXXXIII 61,1 (CChr.SL 44A, 120); in Ioh. tract. 24,5 (CChr.SL 36, 246); serm. 130,1 (PL 38, 725). See Jeuneau, SC 180, 334 n. 7.

142 Alcuin, in Ioh. comm. III 12 (PL 100, 821c).

143 Origen, in Gen. hom. 12,5 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 304.25–28).

144 Doutr. elea u, SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 304 n. 2.

145 Maximus the Confessor, amb. (Eriugena's translation) 53 (CChr.SG 18, 246.15–17).

*animalibus*), whereas wheat symbolizes the word of God in the Gospels, destined for those who are “perfect and spiritual” (*perfectioribus et spiritualibus*).<sup>146</sup>

Eriugena speaks about barley as a food that is appropriate, in the real sense (*proprie*), for beasts, which can also symbolize food for “carnal people” (*carnalis populus*), nourished with the “letter” mixed with the chaff as in the case of barley, not with the spiritual grain alone.<sup>147</sup> Equally, the number of the loaves, five, hints at the people captured by the five bodily senses who are not yet fed with the spiritual repast, as “rational animals” (*rationabilia animalia*), but resemble beasts.<sup>148</sup> This arithmetical allegory was also known to both Philo and Origen;<sup>149</sup> Augustine derived the characterization of the people eating these loaves as “carnal” from it.<sup>150</sup>

Eriugena sees proof of the Lord’s benevolent pedagogy in the fact that he first gave harsh food to the multitude, because no one is capable of ascending to contemplation without first being fed with both the “meaning of perceptible things” (*sensibilium rerum significationibus*)<sup>151</sup> and the literal sense of Scripture.<sup>152</sup> The indispensable role of the literal interpretation, which, nevertheless, stays at a lower level than the spiritual one, was very well known to Origen and Augustine;<sup>153</sup> but Eriugena adds, to the literal interpretation of Scripture as a basis for contemplation, the “meaning of perceptible things.” He could have been influenced by Augustine’s comment on our pericope saying that the Creator produces a similar miracle of multiplication every year, when whole ears come up from the seeds of grains.<sup>154</sup>

The two small fish represent the Old and the New Testament for Eriugena,<sup>155</sup> but he also mentions their interpretations as two personalities of the Mosaic Law, namely the king and the priest (who, according to Augustine and Alcuin, symbolize Christ), or as the books of the Prophets and Psalms (Alcuin’s exegesis).<sup>156</sup> The pieces of barley loaves that were left over and gathered into twelve baskets by the apostles so that “nothing was wasted” (Jn. 6:12) indicate both the liter-

146 Origen, in Gen. hom. 12,5 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 302.10–5).

147 Eriugena, in Ioh. comm. VI 2 (CChr.CM 166, 125.42–53).

148 Ibid. (166, 125.53–126.6).

149 On the number five as a symbol of the five senses of the body, cf. Philo, migr. 203 (II p. 308.14f. Cohn/Wendl and ); plant. 133 (II p. 159.23f.); Origen, in Gen. hom. 16,6 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 390.8–11.30–33).

150 Augustine, div. quaest. LXXXIII 61,1 (CChr.SL 44A, 120); 61,4 (44A, 127).

151 Eriugena, in Ioh. comm. VI 2 (CChr.CM 166, 126.62–64).

152 Ibid. VI 3 (166, 127.8–11).

153 Augustine, en. in Ps. 8,8 (CChr.SL 38, 52.20–53.26). On Origen, see above n. 103.

154 In Ioh. tract. 24,1 (CChr.SL 36, 244); serm. 130,1 (PL 38, 725).

155 Eriugena, in Ioh. comm. VI 3 (CChr.CM 166, 128.37).

156 Ibid. (166, 128.44–46). Cf. Augustine, div. quaest. LXXXIII 61,2 (CChr.SL 44A, 121); in Ioh. tract. 24,5 (CChr.SL 36, 246.12–5); serm. 130,1 (PL 38, 725); Alcuin, in Ioh. comm. III 12 (PL 100, 821c–d).

al meaning of Scripture and the mystery of perceptible things, which cannot be digested by people who are still “carnal” but are to be preserved for those who have progressed further.<sup>157</sup> Along the same lines, Origen mentions the “sacrifice of pieces” (*sacrificium ex fragmentis*) in his homily on Lev. 6:21, and he also explains, again in his twelfth homily on Genesis, that the words of the Mosaic Law have to be “broken” and “crumbled” into pieces or carefully discussed by the apostles to become spiritual nourishment.<sup>158</sup> Augustine, too, recognized in the twelve baskets of pieces the twelve apostles capable of explaining the sense of the Law, which the Jews (or multitude) are not ready to digest.<sup>159</sup>

Unlike the exegesis of the Jacob’s well, where Eriugena combined the interpretation suggested by Origen with that of Augustine into a new synthesis, it seems that his allegoresis of the multiplied barley loaves follows Augustine, who himself applied motifs taken over from Origen. Eriugena’s interpretation comes very close to the collection of *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, in which Augustine gathered material from his early readings and discussions with his friends.<sup>160</sup> However, it is very probable that Eriugena was also familiar with the allegoresis of the five barley loaves given by Origen/Rufinus in the twelfth homily on Genesis. We can infer this from Eriugena’s emphasizing barley as nourishment for animals or the harsh food mixed with the chaff, missing from Augustine<sup>161</sup> and only partly known to Maximus.

## 6. Conclusion

From all these observations we can conclude that Eriugena was familiar with some of Origen’s works (or parts of them) in Rufinus’ translation; besides the treatise *On First Principles* and the *Commentary on Romans* quoted in *Periphyseon*, we can assume this with certainty about the *Homilies on Genesis* and perhaps *Numbers*, because their influence can be supposed in Eriugena’s *Commentary on John*. It is also probable that Eriugena was familiar with Origen’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.

157 Eriugena, *ibid.* VI 4 (166, 128.2–129.15).

158 Origen, in Lev. hom. 4,10 (SC 286, 198.44–200.54). Cf. also in Gen. hom. 12,5 (SC 7<sup>2</sup>, 304.39–306.51).

159 Augustine, *div. quaest.* LXXXIII 61,3 (CChr.SL 44A, 126); in Ioh. tract. 24,6 (CChr.SL 36, 247.9–15), respectively.

160 Retr. I 26 (CChr.SL 57, 74).

161 Augustine mentions as a possible interpretation that barley can symbolize “people not yet free from carnal desire” (*populum nondum expoliatum carnali desiderio*): *div. quaest.* LXXXIII 61,1 (CChr.SL 44A, 120). Cf. also *ibid.* 61,4 (CChr.SL 44A, 127): *carnales legem accipientes*.

The quotations from Origen and allusions to him are presented side by side with testimonies from other ecclesiastical authorities and embedded in Eriugena's own ideas. Sometimes, and very interestingly, Origen's thoughts are combined with Augustine's into a new synthesis, as we were able to see in the exegesis of Jacob's well and especially in Eriugena's notion of the return of all things to their original nature and the deification of the elect. As far as the spiritual body, which human beings are supposed to have at the end of time, is concerned, Eriugena seems to have undergone a development from the idea of an ethereal body into which our present body would be converted, as attested by Origen's critics, to the taking on and off of the body we have now with the continual preservation of the spiritual one. Unlike Rufinus' version of Origenian eschatology, Eriugena does not understand the spiritual body as individual but as the return of the individual body to its common cause in which the particular will be preserved as elevated at a higher, spiritual level.



# Between History and Hagiography

## Origen in French Jansenism

ELENA RAPETTI, MILAN

### 1. Introduction

In his *Theology in History*, Henri de Lubac writes that “The hostility of Jansenius toward Origen is well known. He denounced the latter as an initiator not only of Pelagianism but of all the heresies that devastated the Church for more than three centuries.”<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding Jansenius’ strict view, Origen was given special attention by the so-called Jansenists, as appears particularly in the *Histoire de Tertullien et d’Origenes*, published in 1675 by Pierre-Thomas du Fossé (1634–1698), under the pseudonym of La Motte.<sup>2</sup> This considerable work is the only monograph about the Alexandrian theologian in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, although Origen is discussed along with Tertullian. In this work, du Fossé does not debate Origen’s doctrines but rather his life, his ‘spirit,’ and his personality. From this point of view, Origen is presented to the reader as a model of Christian life. So, at first glance, this renewed interest in Origen might appear to be a paradox. Being faithful to Jansenius, on the one hand, the *Messieurs de Port-Royal* follow Augustine – the “Doctor of Grace” – and consequently they reject the Origenian doctrines of the fall, freedom, and grace along with his implied anthropology. Yet, on the other hand, they introduce Origen not as a heretic but as an authentic exponent of the spirit of Christianity.

The aim of this essay is to resolve this seeming paradox. Firstly, the significance of Origen’s reappraisal by du Fossé will be shown by placing the *Histoire d’Origenes* within the wider context of the biographies of saints and Church Fathers written in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by authors belonging to the Port-Royal *milieu*. Secondly, Origen’s specificity will be shown within this con-

- 1 Henri de Lubac, *Théologie dans l’Histoire*, 2 vols., Paris 1990, vol. 1, 86, engl. trans.: *Theology in History*, San Francisco CA 1996. Cf. *Cornelii Iansenii Augustinus*, Parisiis, Sumptibus Michaelis Soly et Matthaei Guillemot, 1641, Tomus primus, Liber Sextus, Caput XIII: *Haeresis Pelagiana fons Origenes*, 155. 199: *Et manifestissime Pelagianorum Patriarcha Origenes*.
- 2 Pierre-Thomas La Motte (= Pierre-Thomas du Fossé), *Histoire de Tertullien et d’Origenes*, qui contient d’excellentes Apologies de la Foy contre les Payens et les Heretiques, avec les principales circonstances de l’histoire Ecclesiastique et profane de leur temps, Paris 1675.

text. Finally, the features characterizing the Jansenist portrait of Origen, which emerge from the *Histoire d'Origenes*, will be outlined. From this picture, it will emerge that Origen, too, played a role in defending Port-Royal during the several persecutions to which Jansenism was subjected.

As is well known, the posthumous publication of Jansenius' *Augustinus* in 1640 aroused a harsh controversy. The main stages of the Jansenist quarrel – in order to set the time frame for the drafting and publication of the *Histoire d'Origenes* – can be only very briefly recalled here. In 1653, Pope Innocent X condemned five propositions supposedly reflecting Jansenius' views. In 1654, the head of the Jansenist party, Antoine Arnauld, replied to this attack by making the famous distinction between *de jure* and *de facto*: *de jure*, the incriminated propositions could be condemned, and he accepted this sentence; but *de facto*, they could not be found in Jansenius' *Augustinus*. In 1656, Alexander VII, in his papal bull *Ad sacram*, confirmed the condemnation of the five propositions. The Assembly of the French Clergy ordered all the members of the Church to sign an anti-Jansenist formulary which stated the Pope's condemnation. In 1664, this controversy declined, when the new Archbishop of Paris, Hardouin de Péréfixe, dispersed a dozen Port-Royal nuns to other convents because they had refused to sign the formulary. In 1666, the same Archbishop exiled all the other nuns who were still reluctant, placing them under interdict for disobeying the Pope and excluding them from the sacraments. In 1669, the election of Clement X to the papacy brought a temporary halt to the conflict with the so called "Clementine Peace" (1669–1679).<sup>3</sup>

These events constitute the essential background from which the Jansenist portrait of Origen emerged. They touched Pierre-Thomas du Fossé deeply, and he gave a vivid account of them in his *Mémoires* written between 1697 and 1698, the year he died.<sup>4</sup> Du Fossé was educated at Port-Royal Petites Écoles, he had been

3 The literature on Jansenism and on Port-Royal's persecutions is vast. Besides the classic volume by Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Port Royal*, 3 vols., Paris 1961–1964, see Augustin Gazier, *Histoire générale du mouvement janséniste depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 vols., Paris 1924; Alexander Sedwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France: Voices from the Wilderness*, Charlottesville VA 1977; William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, New York 2000; Jean Lesaulnier / Antony McKenna (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Port-Royal*, Paris 2004; Monique Cottret, *Histoire du Jansénisme*, Paris 2016. See also Daniela Kostroun, *Feminism, Absolutism, and Jansenism: Louis XIV and the Port-Royal Nuns*, New York 2011.

4 The *Mémoires* were first published in Utrecht in 1739. They were part of the collection *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, begun with the *Mémoires de Fontaine* (1736), mostly concerning Le Maître de Sacy, and those of Lancelot (1738), concerning the life of the abbot of Saint-Cyran. In 1739, following a solid editorial strategy, the editors changed the original title of the manuscript (from *Mémoires de Monsieur du Fossé* to *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*) and removed two-thirds of the work, in order to preserve only the section concerning Port-Royal. The second edition was published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1876–1879) under the direction of François-Valentin Bouquet

a friend and a schoolmate of Racine and Louis Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont, and he had trained with Antoine Le Maistre. When the latter died (1658), Louis-Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy, Antoine Le Maistre's brother, became his spiritual director. "Solitaire dans le monde" – as it was termed by François-Valentin Bouquet, the *Mémoires*' editor – he shared Port-Royal's many misfortunes. The *Mémoires* report in detail the persecutions suffered by the nuns in 1664, including du Fossé's sister, Sœur Madeleine de Sainte-Melthide Thomas. Indeed, du Fossé was imprisoned in the Bastille along with de Sacy. The latter remained in jail for two and a half years. Du Fossé, after being imprisoned for one month, was condemned to exile for three years in his own castle in Normandy, from which he was only able to return to Paris in 1669, the year of the "Peace of the Church."

## 2. The *Histoire d'Origenes* and the Jansenist Historiography of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century

Origen's reappraisal by du Fossé should be included in a group of other biographies of saints and Greek Fathers of the Church, published between 1648 and 1674 by members of the Jansenist *milieu* which du Fossé belong to. Even though the *Histoire de Tertullien et d'Origenes* was published in 1675 – actually during the "Clementine Peace" – it was conceived ten years earlier (1665). In his *Mémoires*, indeed, du Fossé tells that, while he undertook the study of ecclesiastical history, "he was obliged to write a History of Tertullian and Origen," so he was obliged to read the works of these two authors.<sup>5</sup> Du Fossé's insistence on obligation, on duty – "lorsque je fus obligé; il me fallut; je fus obligé aussi" – shows that writing

who gave the full text on the basis of the original copy of the *Mémoires*, annotated by du Fossé himself. In this essay, I will refer to this edition: Pierre-Thomas du Fossé, *Mémoires concernant l'histoire de sa vie et pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, introduction et notes de François-Valentin Bouquet, Rouen 1876–1879 (reprint Genève 1976, 4 vols.). On these memoirs, see Sophie-Aurore Roussel, *La poésie de l'Histoire dans les Mémoires de Pierre Thomas du Fossé*, in: *Dalhousie French Studies* 65 (2003) 132–139.

5 Du Fossé, *Mémoires* (n. 4), vol. 2, 224–226: "L'étude à laquelle je m'appliquois étoit celle de l'Histoire Ecclesiastique. M. de Tillemont, qui, depuis plusieurs années, s'appliquoit assiduellement à y travailler avec une grande exactitude, et un merueilleux discernement, comme il paroist par les volumes qu'il a donnés au public, et qui font l'admiration de tous les sçauans, auoit la bonté de me prester ses Memoires, qui me seruoient à composer un corps suiuï d'Histoire Ecclesiastique. Et je lisois, outre cela, les originaux, pour travailler plus surement, et entrer mieux dans les sentimens et dans l'esprit des grands hommes de qui je parlois. Ainsy, lorsque je fus obligé de faire l'histoire de Tertullien et d'Origenes, il me fallut lire particulièrement les ouurages de Tertullien [...]. Je fus obligé aussy de m'assurer des veritables sentimens d'Origenes par la lecture des ouurages ou des endroits principaux, dans lesquels il s'est peint luy même, par la viue expression des mouuemens tres sinceres de son cœur."

the history of Origen (and of Tertullian – but this topic falls outside this essay) was not fortuitous. Quite the opposite, it has to be understood within the context of events concerning Jansenism during the 1660s. It is part of a greater scheme which was also a strategy. But what kind of strategy?

In a letter to Antoine Arnauld, dated June 15<sup>th</sup> 1659, Godefroy Hermant – canon of Beauvais, closely linked to Port-Royal – reveals the purpose of working on the lives of the saints. While Arnauld meant to continue writing about grace in order to respond to the Jesuits' accusations, Hermant suggested, instead, taking a different path: publishing works of edification and piety, as well as the lives of the saints, so that the cause of Port-Royal, that is “the cause of truth,” could be defended in a very favorable and innocent way.<sup>6</sup> Thus, over the decade 1664–1674, Hermant published four biographies: *La Vie de saint Jean Chrysostome* (1664), *La Vie de S. Athanase* (1671) and the *Lives* of S. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzus (1674).<sup>7</sup> He decided to offer the public figures such as St. Athanasius, the role model of a holy bishop being persecuted by both ecclesiastical and civil authorities, but still fearless in exile, still an example of unshakable faith, and an absolute victor in the end.

As for du Fossé, he worked together with Antoine Le Maistre, author of St. Bernard of Clairvaux's life and inspirer of a more wide-ranging “Life of Saints,” which remained unfinished because of his death.<sup>8</sup> In 1660, du Fossé began to work

- 6 Augustin Gazier (ed.), *Mémoires de Godefroi Hermant, docteur de Sorbonne, Chanoine de Beauvais, ancien recteur de l'université sur l'histoire ecclésiastique du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1630–1663)*, 6 vols., Paris 1907, vol. 4, 249: “Les ouvrages d'édification et de piété sont une défense fort avantageuse et fort innocente [...] et la vie des saints sera de très grande utilité en toutes manières, si l'on y peut travailler de la bonne sorte.”
- 7 Godefroy Hermant, *La vie de saint Jean Chrysostome patriarche de Constantinople, et docteur de l'Eglise*, Paris 1664; *La vie de saint Athanase*, 2 vols., Paris 1671; *La vie de S. Basile le Grand, archevesque de Cesarée en Cappadoce, et celle de S. Gregoire de Nazianze, archevesque de Constantinople*, 2 vols., Paris 1674. Hermant wrote also *La vie de S. Ambroise, archevesque de Milan*, Paris 1679.
- 8 Antoine Le Maistre, *La Vie de S. Bernard, Premier abbé de Clairvaux et Père de l'Eglise*, Paris 1648. In his memoirs, du Fossé, *Mémoires* (n. 4), vol. 2, 1f., recalls that “M. Le Maistre desiroit depuis longtemps pouvoir trauailler à la Vie des Saintes, et qu'il auoit recherché [...] tout ce qu'il auoit pu decouurir d'originaux d'actes de Martyrs et d'autres vies édifiantes, il songeoit à composer une Legende, qui fust purgée de toutes les fables [...]. Et sa principale intention étant d'edifier les ames, et de les instruire solidement, tant par les exemples, que par les paroles des Saints, il étoit bien aise que ce qu'il exposeroit dans le public fust fondé, autant qu'il seroit possible, sur quelques autoritez, qu'on eust peine à réuoquer [...]. Il nous donna un excellent échantillon de ce qu'il auroit pu faire, dans la Vie qu'il composa de saint Ignace, évesque d'Antioche et martyr, dans celle de saint Jean Climaque, et dans son Histoire si touchante des martyrs de Lion.” It was indeed Le Maistre who urged du Fossé to work, in particular, at a saint's life, and he chose St. Alexander, Patriarch of Alexandria (ibid. 3).

at *La Vie de Dom Barthelemy des Martyrs*, published by de Sacy in 1663.<sup>9</sup> In those same years, he revised Robert Arnauld d'Andilly's translation of the *Vies de plusieurs Saints illustres de divers siècles* (1664).<sup>10</sup> In 1662, at the request of de Sacy, du Fossé composed the *Vie de Saint Thomas, archeuesque de Canterbury*, published in 1674.<sup>11</sup> This very interesting book clearly shows du Fossé's *modus operandi* and his full accordance with the historiographical style so typical of the Port-Royal milieu. A similar *modus operandi* is at work in the *Histoire d'Origenes* too.

Du Fossé chooses to hide under the pseudonym of de Beaulieu and writes about Thomas Becket, following the approach already used by Le Maistre in his life of Saint Bernard. He does not speak in the first person but reports the statements of other *auctoritates* about saints. He thinks that only a saint could legitimately speak about other saints. According to the spirit of Port-Royal, the hagiographer always tends to step aside; for the *Messieurs de Port-Royal* the ideal hagiographer is the translator.<sup>12</sup> Also the use of the impersonal "on" – reflecting Pascal's view of the "hateful ego" ("moi haïssable") – is typical of Port-Royal. Du Fossé aims to publish the "true story" (to him, story and life are synonymous) of Thomas Becket, that is the life of a saint, archbishop, and martyr. His intention is to dispel the charges against the saint – who had been accused of being too

9 Louis-Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy, *La Vie de Dom Bathelemy des Martyrs*, Paris 1663.

10 Arnauld d'Andilly (ed.), *Vies de plusieurs Saints illustres de divers siècles, choisies et traduites des écrivains originaux*, Paris 1664.

11 Pierre-Thomas de Beaulieu (= Pierre-Thomas du Fossé), *La vie de St. Thomas, archevesque de Cantorbery et martyr, tirée des quatre auteurs contemporains qui l'ont écrite, et des historiens d'Angleterre qui en ont parlé, des lettres du Saint, du Pape Alexandre III et de plusieurs grands personnages du mesme temps; et des annales du Cardinal Baronius*, Paris 1674. In his memoirs, du Fossé, *Mémoires* (n. 4), vol. 2, 120f., told of the genesis of this work: "Un de mes amis me parla, dans ce même temps, de la Vie de saint Thomas, archevesque de Cantorbery, en Angleterre, comme une Vie qui étoit pleine de tres beaux éuènements, et qu'on pouuoit embellir encore beaucoup, en se seruant d'un grand nombre d'excellentes lettres, tant du saint même que d'autres grands hommes du même temps. Comme j'étois en état de m'occuper et qu'alors je n'auois point de trauail particulier, il m'exhorta fort de m'appliquer à cette histoire, me promettant même de m'aider de quelques liures, dont j'auois besoin pour cela. Je fus donc bien aise de trouuer cette forme, de composer et d'acheuer entierement cette Vie, qui fut depuis imprimée et dédiée au Roy. Comme il y auoit des matieres assez délicattes dans cet ourage, et que l'on y voit un archeuesque toujours aux prises, [...] avec son prince, et luy disant de tres fortes veritez pour son salut, on crut qu'il étoit tres important de faire voir que l'un des predecesseurs du Roy n'ayant pas craint de prendre alors les interets de ce saint prelat contre le Roy d'Angleterre, il étoit veritablement de sa gloire de soutenir en quelque sorte ce qu'auoit fait un de ses ancestres; et qu'il falloit pour cela faire paroistre son nom à la teste de la vie d'un saint, qu'un Roy de France s'étoit fait un vray merite de proteger si hautement."

12 Hervé Savon, Godefroy Hermant, biographe des Pères de l'Eglise, in: *Port-Royal et l'histoire* (*Chroniques de Port-Royal* 46), Paris 1997, 19: "L'hagiographe selon le cœur de Port-Royal tend toujours à s'effacer; à ce titre, son idéal, c'est le traducteur."

firm, inflexible, and lacking in judgement – by showing that St. Thomas of Canterbury’s behaviour towards the Church and the King Henry II, was not guided by stubbornness but, on the contrary, by the desire to fulfil his own duty faithfully, in order not to displease God and to pursue the true aims of the Church. Du Fossé paints a vivid picture of the saint’s persecutions: opposed by his own king to whom, in any case, he remained loyal, and abandoned by the bishops of England, Thomas Becket – alone – stood against “les grands du siècle.” The great courage shown in his various tribulations is a clear proof of the righteousness of the cause defended. The Archbishop of York is the main actor in his martyrdom. The conflict between the latter and the saint is described by du Fossé as a struggle between darkness and moral unrest on one side and light and virtue on the other. How can one not understand – reading between the lines – that behind Thomas Becket’s tribulations are those connected to persecuted Jansenism? To a reader aware of the events happening at Port-Royal during the 1660s, there were transparent allusions. It sufficed to substitute the name of Thomas Becket for the Antoine Arnauld, the name of the Archbishop of York for that of the Archbishop of Paris, Hardouin de Péréfixe, and finally the King of England, Henry II, for the King of France, Louis XIV.<sup>13</sup>

Du Fossé’s aim is crystal clear: to edify and nourish the piety of the different kinds of readers whom he discerned particularly. So, ordinary believers will learn to condemn worldly grandeur. The “grands du monde,” reading the life of a Chancellor (actually their peer), will learn how to bring together piety and honors, penance and wealth, service to God and to a mortal prince. The “personnes consacrées à Dieu” will be strengthened in the holy vocation to which they are engaged, finding an example in Thomas Becket of “quelle violence on est continuellement obligé de se faire dans le monde pour resister à une autre violence qui est celle du siècle.” The “pasteurs” will be able to find the strength to fulfil their duty, being aware of what they owe to God and to the Church. The “princes” will learn, from the King of France Louis VII, how glorious it is to respect Jesus Christ in the persons of the holy bishops. They will learn a useful lesson also from Henry II’s conduct. His penance and his subsequent atonement are a very powerful condemnation of his misdeeds against the Church and, conversely, bring out the fairness of the King of France, Louis VII, who protected Thomas Becket while he

13 *La vie de St. Thomas, archevesque de Cantorbery* was published during the “Peace of the Church” and dedicated to Louis XIV. In the dedicatory letter, du Fossé describes Louis VII, his personality, and his attitude in such a way as to invite Louis XIV to emulate his ancestor. Reading between the lines, this letter suggests that, as Louis VII protected Thomas Becket, despite the accusations made against him, so might Louis XIV look kindly upon and protect Port-Royal. Du Fossé’s attitude towards Louis XIV is significant and part of an experienced strategy, highlighted in its different aspects in the volume entitled: *Louis XIV et Port-Royal (Chroniques de Port-Royal 66)*, Paris 2016.

was persecuted and abandoned by everyone else.<sup>14</sup> From this list, it appears clearly that this biography aims to establish the line of conduct to be followed by the supporters of Port-Royal, through an example taken from the past.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Why Origen? “To defend the person and to condemn the doctrinal errors”

Origen’s reappraisal, made by du Fossé, cannot be wholly traced back to the context which was summarized above, although it can be included in it. Unlike other saints and Fathers of the Church, whose *Lives* were written by the *Messieurs de Port-Royal*, Origen is not a saint, not a bishop, he is not even a Father of the Church *tout court*. He was ordained a priest, but his ordination seemed to be irregular; there was even concern about his salvation. Moreover, the very structure of the *Histoire d’Origenes* does not follow the one adopted for the lives of saints of the Counter-Reformation. In this work, Origen’s life, personality, writings, and virtues are certainly discussed, but the structure is not strictly followed. So, we need to understand the *specific* role that the so-called “disciples of St. Augustine” made Origen play in Port-Royal’s strategy of defense. Even though he belongs to a wider *corpus*, Origen appears “eccentric” if compared to the other saints painted by Jansenist hagiographers. So, why Origen?

The answer to this question must be sought in the so-called “Formulary controversy” which reached its peak during the early 1660s, when the *Histoire d’Origenes* project took shape. Origenist controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries were often mentioned in both Jesuits’ and Jansenists’ writings published after the condemnation of the aforementioned five propositions. These events of ecclesiastical history, as well as those of Church history in general, are considered to be “precedents” and used to justify one position or another within the contemporary *querelles*. According to the Jesuits, the case of Origen and of those Origenists who had stubbornly supported his doctrines could have been considered similar to Jansenius’ and the Jansenists’ case. Origen’s doctrines had been condemned as heretical, and those who defended him had been considered to be heretics. The same applied to the Jansenists. An extract from the *Remede contre les scrupules qui empeschent la signature du formulaire* (1664) by the Jesuit François Annat

14 Du Fossé, *La vie de St. Thomas*, Preface (n. 11) 2f. (my pagination).

15 That is what Jean-Louis Quantin, *Le catholicisme classique et les Pères de l’Eglise: Un retour aux sources (1669–1713)*, Paris 1999, 220, clearly underlines: “Les vies des Pères deviennent autant de rébus où les luttes du présent doivent se deviner sous les conflits du passé, et où les tenants de la bonne cause doivent puiser des règles de conduite pour les temps de crise.”

shows clearly this equivalence between Origen and Jansenius and between the Origenists and the Jansenists:

“La doctrine d’Origene n’a esté condamnée qu’après sa mort, et pour cela on ne laisse pas de dire qu’elle est condamnée. Cela fait bien que nous pouuons exempter la personne d’Origene du blasme de cette condamnation; mais non pas sa doctrine ni celle des Origenistes, qui la soustiennent opiniastrement. Pour la mesme raison nous exemptons la personne de Iansenius, quoique nous disions que sa doctrine a esté condamnée dans les cinq Propositions, sans toutefois pouuoir exempter ceux qui la soustiennent, estans informez de cette condamnation.”<sup>16</sup>

The aim of the king’s confessor, Father Annat, was to show that the distinction between right and fact (“droit” and “fait”), which had been claimed by the Jansenists to oppose signing the formulary without reservations, did not exist at the time of the Origenist controversies. As a consequence, Jansenism had to be considered as much a heresy as Origenism.

In order to defend Jansenism against this accusation, Arnauld, in the *Lettre à un duc et pair* (1665), had already introduced a relevant distinction between “Sectateurs” and “Défenseurs d’Origène.” The former were people who had actively supported those errors attributed to Origen. On the contrary, the latter were true Catholics, people who had not embraced any of his errors and who did not even believe that he had taught them.<sup>17</sup> In 1664, in the *Apologie pour les religieuses de Port-Royal*, Arnauld had discussed, in particular, Didymus’ position within the Origenist controversy. According to Arnauld, Didymus was wrong “in fact” but not “in right.” He had attributed a Catholic meaning to some heterodox sentences of Origen, but his faith in the mystery of the Trinity was steadfast. He had defended Origen, but not his errors. While doubting Origen’s orthodoxy was still possible, doubting that of Didymus’ was impossible. St. Jerome had considered him “very Catholic” on the Trinity, despite his defence of Origen. The condemnation that Theophilus had inflicted on the Origenists was thus based on the supposition that they defended not only the man Origen but also his errors. The correct position was that of defending the person and condemning the doctrinal errors. On this basis, Arnauld had rejected Father Annat’s accusations.<sup>18</sup>

In 1664, Godefroy Hermant had also used the distinction made by Arnauld between “Sectateurs” and “Défenseurs d’Origène,” even placing it under the patronage of Augustine in the abovementioned *Vie de saint Jean Chrysos-*

16 François Annat, Remede contre les scrupules qui empeschent la signature du formulaire, avec la Response aux deux Parties de l’Escrit, qui a pour titre, La Foy Humaine, Paris 1664, 37.

17 Antoine Arnauld, Lettre à un duc et pair, in: *Œuvres*, 42 vols., Paris/Lausanne 1775–1781, vol. 19, 456.

18 Apologie pour les religieuses de Port-Royal, in: *ibid.*, vol. 23, 646–650.

tome.<sup>19</sup> What Hermant wrote in order to clarify the role played by Saint John Chrysostom in the Origenist controversy, along with the report concerning the monks of Nitria who had been excommunicated because they defended Origen's doctrines, can be read as an allusion to current affairs. Significantly, Hermant translated the Greek *monazontes* as the "Solitaires" in French – the sobriquet used by the *Messieurs de Port-Royal* to designate themselves – and showed how these "Solitaires," unfairly persecuted, were not Origenists, i. e., heretics, but true Catholics. They condemned the errors attributed to Origen, but they thought those errors were not to be found in Origen's writings. These writings, despite being counterfeited, could be interpreted in an orthodox sense.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Origen's Portrait according to du Fossé

It is not surprising, then, that in 1665 du Fossé aimed to legitimize the distinction between "right" and "fact," advanced by Arnauld, through a benevolent presentation of Origen that endorsed the unfairly persecuted "Solitaires" of which Hermant had spoken.<sup>21</sup> His *Histoire de Tertullien et d'Origènes* – in which du Fossé

19 Godefroy Hermant, *La vie de saint Jean Chrysostome* (n.7) 332f.: "[...] encore que S. Augustin ait parlé d'Origène dans ses livres de la cité de Dieu comme d'un auteur reprobé par l'Eglise, il ne laisse pas de revoquer en doute dans le dernier de ses ouvrages s'il estoit véritablement auteur d'une des principales erreurs qui luy estoient particulièrement attribuées, sçavoir de la pénitence et de la reconciliation future des démons, se contentant de dire, Que cette erreur estoit attribuée à Origène, mais qu'il y en avoit qui prouvoient qu'il ne l'avoit point soutenuë, ou au moins qui le vouloient faire croire. Et dans son livre des hérésies il distingue les *Séctateurs* d'Origène d'avec les *Défenseurs* d'Origène. Il regarde les premiers, sçavoir les *Séctateurs* comme ceux qui suivoient les erreurs imputées à Origène; et les derniers, sçavoir ses *Défenseurs* comme des catholiques qui anathématisant toutes ces erreurs [...] prétendoient qu'Origène mesme ne les avoit pas enseignées, mais comme dit S. Sévère Sulpice, que les hérétiques avoient corrompu ses livres et les y avoient inserées."

20 Ibid. 333: "Il paroist par ces témoignages si fidèles des Saints et des Peres qui vivoient alors, que ces Solitaires n'estoient nullement Origénistes, mais catholiques; qu'ils condamnoient toutes les erreurs et les hérésies qu'on imputoit à Origène, et qu'ils approuvoient qu'on les condannât; mais qu'estant accoutumés à lire les explications de l'Escriture sainte dans les commentaires d'Origène [...] ils ne pouvoient souffrir qu'on ne se contentât pas de condamner les propositions erronnées ou hérétiques qui se trouveroient dans ses ouvrages, ce qu'ils approuvoient comme salutaire, mais qu'on passât mesme jusqu'à défendre en général toute la lecture de ses livres pour imputer calomnieusement à quiconque les liroit, ce que tous les catholiques faisoient librement, comme on fait encore, d'estre Origéniste et hérétique. Ce n'est donc pas un crime à S. Chrysostome d'avoir reçu avec tant de modération des Solitaires qui n'étoient pas *Séctateurs* d'Origène, mais qui en estoient *Défenseurs*, et qui condamnant ses erreurs resistoient à la condamnation de ses livres qu'ils prétendoient avoir esté corrompus."

21 See Quantin, *Catholicisme classique* (n. 15) 224: "Ce jugement favorable porté sur la personne d'un auteur injustement déposé et excommunié ne pouvait que légitimer toutes les

not only gives an account of Tertullian and Origen but extends the horizon to the sacred and profane history of their time – allows different levels of interpretation, which are interwoven with each other and will need to be unraveled.

Concerning the method used in pursuing his “profession of historian” and in keeping with the practice of other historians and biographers belonging to the Jansenist *milieu* (e.g., Hermant, Tillemont), du Fossé chooses the impersonality of the “on” and stresses the sincerity, accuracy, and fairness with which he had worked. In his *Histoire d’Origenes*, du Fossé prefers to rely on long translations of Origen’s extracts, as is usually the case for other Port-Royalist *Lives of the Saints*. He includes many passages: from the *Contra Celsum* (taken from William Spencer’s 1658 edition);<sup>22</sup> from the *Philocalia* (taken from Jean Tarin’s 1618 edition);<sup>23</sup> from several sermons – on Genesis, on Luke, on Ezekiel, on Jeremiah, etc.; from the *Peri Archôn* (using Générard’s edition of the *Opera Omnia*);<sup>24</sup> from the *Commentaries on Matthew* and *on John* (taken from Huet’s 1668 edition);<sup>25</sup> and, finally and especially, in many passages taken from the *Exhortatio ad martyrium*, recently edited by Johann-Rudolph Wetstein (1674),<sup>26</sup> which set out a “Livre fort petit mais tout rempli d’onction et de grace.” As in *Les vies des saints et des saintes*, published by du Fossé in 1685 and in 1687 in the *Histoire d’Origenes* he aims to avoid the excessive use of miracles and of “narrations fabuleuses,” in order to focus, as far as possible, on the testimonies which would establish the incontestability

distinctions du droit et du fait et donner raison à ces origénistes que, l’on a vu, Hermant avait présentés comme des figures des port-royalistes.”

- 22 Origenis *Contra Celsum libri octo*. Ejusdem *Philocalia*, Gulielmus Spencerus ... utriusque operis versionem recognovit, et annotationes adjecit, Cantabrigiae, Excudebat Joan. Field, Impensis Gulielmi Morden, 1658.
- 23 Origenis *Philocalia*, de obscuris S. Scripturae locis, a SS. PP. Basilio Magno et Gregorio Theologo ex variis Origenis commentariis excerpta. Omnia nunc primum graece edita, ex Bibliotheca Regia, opera et studio Jo. Tarini Andegavi, qui et latina fecit et notis illustravit, Parisiis, Pierre de Forge, 1618. The text prepared by Tarin had been re-published by Spencer in 1658. On Tarin and this edition, see Thomas Cerbu, *Autour de la Philocalie de Tarin*, in: Gilles Dorival /Alain Le Boull uec (eds.), *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible/Origen and the Bible* (BETL 118), Leuven 1995, 773–783.
- 24 Origenis *Adamantii Opera*, quae quidem proferri potuerunt omnia, Parisiis, Apud Guliellmum Chaudiere, 1624.
- 25 Origenis in sacras Scripturas *Commentaria*, Petrus Daniel Huetius Graeca ex antiquis codicibus manu scriptis primus maxima ex parte in lucem edidit; quae jam extabant, varias eorum editiones inter se contulit; Latinas interpretationes partim à se, partim ab aliis elaboratas Graecis adjunxit; universa Notis et Observationibus illustravit ... Cui idem praefixit Origeniana, 2 vols., Rothomagi, Sumptibus Iohannis Berthelini, 1668.
- 26 Origenis *Dialogus contra Marcionitas, sive De recta in Deum fide*. *Exhortatio ad martyrium*. *Responsum ad Africani Epistolam de historia Susannae*, Graece nunc primum è MSS. Codicibus prodeunt ..., opera et studio M. Joh. Rodolphi Wetstenii, Basileae, Exprimebat Jacobus Bertschius, 1674.

of certain events.<sup>27</sup> For example, du Fossé stresses that some anecdotes related to Origen's persecution might appear "unbelievable" if not supported by various authorities and testimonies.

In general, du Fossé follows Eusebius,<sup>28</sup> "the most ancient historian of the Church" ("le plus ancien historien de l'Eglise"), whom he probably appreciates for his sympathy for Origen. In contrast to Epiphanius and relying on Eusebius' statement, du Fossé argues that Adamantius was not a mere sobriquet but Origen's second name. As far as the "legend of the fall" is concerned, he prefers to dismiss the issue in a few lines; the event reported by Epiphanius is regarded as an invention ("recit fabuleux") by all scholars, it is improbable, and it refutes itself.<sup>29</sup> Eusebius' authority is also recognized by du Fossé where more recent authors, such as Baronius and Halloix, thought otherwise. These latter, for example, claimed that Bishop Demetrius had lamented Origen's irregular ordination; du Fossé, on the contrary, together with Eusebius, reports that Demetrius' only criticism concerned the castration.<sup>30</sup>

Du Fossé's view of history, emerging from his text, is the Augustinian providentialism so characteristic of Port-Royal. History is fundamentally the story of God's providential action in the world, in which there is contraposition between

27 In *Les vies des saints et des saintes*, du Fossé moves away from the *Vies des Saints fabuleuses* aiming instead to set the veracity of that telling: Pierre-Thomas du Fossé, *Les vies des saints et des saintes tirées des Pères de l'Eglise, et des Auteurs Ecclesiastiques*, 2 vols., Paris 1685, vol. 1, *Avertissement*, p. 4 (my pagination): "Le dessein qu'on a eu a esté de s'assurer de la verité des choses par l'examen des pieces originales et par la communication des Memoires tres-exacts de quelques personnes reconnuës pour tres habiles dans ces sortes de recherches historiques. On ne s'est pas attaché à rapporter cette multitude de miracles, qui font quelquefois [...] une partie considerable des Vies des Saints." In the *Histoire d'Origenes*, du Fossé's refusal of the "histoire fabuleuse" appears, for example, in his account of Basilides' conversion, due to the night vision of St. Potamiana. This episode led du Fossé into a digression about the legitimacy and value of apparitions and dreams in Christian apologetics: du Fossé, *Histoire de Tertullien et d'Origenes* (n. 2) 198: "Ainsi la foy qui n'est point fondée sur de simples visions, a souvent esté néanmoins affermie par ces mêmes visions, qui n'ont jamais esté condamnées par l'Eglise, que lors qu'elles ont esté opposées à sa foy, et que semblables aux illusions fantastiques des Montanistes, elles ont voulu s'élever au dessus de la verité en détruisant les traditions Apostoliques par de vaines imaginations."

28 Du Fossé uses the latest edition of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, annotated by Henri Le Valois: Eusebii Pamphili *Historia Ecclesiastica*, curante Henrico Valesio, Parisiis, Excudebat Antonius Vitre, Regis et Cleri Gallicani Typographus, 1659.

29 Du Fossé does not hesitate to make use of Epiphanius when he reports something favorable to Origen, like his courageous act at the temple of Serapis.

30 Du Fossé, *Histoire de Tertullien et d'Origenes* (n. 2) 488. As for du Fossé's position about Origen's self-castration, his ordination, and the "legend of the fall" within the 17<sup>th</sup> century discussions in France, see Elena Rapetti, *The 17<sup>th</sup> Century French Debates on Origen's Biography*, in: Anders-Christian Jacobsen (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (BETL 279), Leuven 2016, 47–65.

the “esprit de Dieu” and the “esprit des hommes,” between the designs of God and the designs of men, with which God, in his omnipotence, plays.<sup>31</sup> In this context, human beings, and so too Origen, are tools useful to God’s providential plan. Du Fossé uses the following expression: “God makes use of Origen,” so much so that Origen’s whole life could be portrayed as a service to God. At the same time, du Fossé underlines the extraordinariness of the protection with which God had provided Origen in many dangerous circumstances; his life is under the protection of God’s wing. If God protects his servants, on the contrary, he punishes the Church’s persecutors (for example, in the case of the Emperor Severus). Although on opposing sides, in a sense, sacred history and profane history, Church and State are also connected in a “necessary bond” (“liaison nécessaire”). Profane history, from this point of view, is considered useful by du Fossé because, thanks to it, it is possible to understand better that which concerns the Church. However, profane history makes sense only if it is read “according to the eyes of faith,” in the light of faith (“aux yeux de la foy”).<sup>32</sup> Told in this way, history becomes a fundamental means of moral education and edification for believers, according to the teaching du Fossé had received while he was a student at the Port-Royal Petites Écoles. In the *Avis au lecteur*, he writes that the truth of Origen’s story “pourroit servir d’une maniere toute particuliere à l’instruction des fideles et à l’édification de toute l’Eglise.”<sup>33</sup>

Even though du Fossé does not make a distinction among different kinds of readers, it clearly appears that everyone should find a way to nourish their piety by reading of the *Histoire d’Origenes*. The period spent at the court of Antioch by Origen, with Princess Mammea, is an example of the kind of relationship the Christian should maintain with the world’s powerful men. Origen was not tempted by the greatness of this world but kept the needle steady on the compass of his vocation, which was also his first duty.<sup>34</sup> The debate with Julius Africanus

31 Concerning what happened to Caracalla, du Fossé commented on, *ibid.* 413: “Dieu se jouant ainsi quand il luy plaist de la politique et de tous les vastes desseins des Princes du monde.”

32 For example, cf. *ibid.* 352: “Ces évenemens extraordinaires quoyque prophanes étoient exposez aux yeux de la foy, comme des peintures vivantes de l’effroyable renversement de l’esprit des hommes. L’Eglise regardoit ces exemples monstrueux de l’ambition et de l’animosité de deux freres à qui l’univers paroissoit trop petit; et elle se regardoit continuellement elle-même comme tirée de cette masse generale de perdition.”

33 *Ibid.*, *Avis au lecteur*, p. i–ii (my pagination).

34 Du Fossé underlines that, except for the journey to Palestine where Origen went to preach, in every other case he soon came back to his home; neither Rome with its charm, nor the powerful men and the princesses diverted him from the task which God himself and his bishop had assigned him, *ibid.* 416f.: “Car il est juste et necessaire d’admirer en luy dans tous ces differens voyages qu’il a fait jusqu’à present hors d’Alexandrie [...] Mais dans toutes les autres occasions, où les raisons n’estoient pas les mêmes du costé de Dieu ny de l’Eglise, ny la ville de Rome avec tous ses charmes, ny les personnes puissantes et les Princesses qui faisoient plus d’estime de luy, n’eurent aucun pouvoir sur son esprit pour

over the authenticity of the history of Susanna could be seen as a “perfect model of Christian charity [with which] churchmen are called to conduct themselves,” since, in this dispute, Origen combines humility and determination in defending Christian tradition. Following Origen’s example, churchmen should avoid excessive self-love in order to look only at the truth, showing great respect for the Scriptures.<sup>35</sup> As well as in other lives of the saints, in the *Histoire d’Origenes* it is necessary to understand “the true disposition of spirit and heart” by judging the man on the basis of “the constant uniformity of his behavior.”<sup>36</sup>

Who is Origen, then? Skimming through the pages of the *Histoire d’Origenes*, du Fossé calls him “grand homme” (recalling, perhaps, Jerome’s *magnus vir*), “the great light of his century,” “the main ornament of his time.”<sup>37</sup> Origen appears to be a great educator, father, and consoler of many martyrs, a Christian apologist against pagan philosophers, heretics and Jews, an excellent exegete of the Scriptures,<sup>38</sup> and an excellent preacher.

It is worth noting that du Fossé defends Origen against two accusations he had been charged with over the centuries. As for the first one, his excessive Platonism, Origen is even taken by du Fossé as a model to explain the correct use of human sciences in relation to “Jesus Christ’s divine philosophy” (“divine philosophie de Jesus-Christ”). While the simple Christian “must lay at the foot of Christ’s cross this vain knowledge similar to the darkness of the night that the day and the light of the Gospel dispelled,”<sup>39</sup> people who commit themselves daily – as did Origen – to support the truth of religion against the vain sophisms of philosophers must necessarily know what they are fighting against, the better to destroy it. As for the second, his excessive allegorism, Origen’s humility and modesty, constant-

l’ébranler et le faire départir du premier point auquel Dieu et son Evesque l’avoient fixé: ce qui peut estre regardé sans doute comme une des plus grandes preuves de la solidité de sa vertu.”

35 Ibid. 495f.: “On ne vit pas moins de moderation dans la réponse d’Origenes qui peut servir d’un parfait modele de la charité chrestienne avec laquelle les grands hommes de l’Eglise se doivent conduire dans les differens qui naissent souvent sur divers points de science et de discipline [...]. Il s’oublie en quelque sorte, et ne témoigne dans toute cette lettre estre sensible qu’aux interests de la verité, de la tradition sainte, et de l’Eglise; ce qu’il est tres-important de remarquer, à cause de cette conjoncture où il se trouvoit du commencement de sa persecution, dans laquelle on pourra voir par toute la suite a toujours conservé au fonds de son cœur cette paix et cette soumission parfaite, et cette ardente charité.”

36 Ibid. 511: “Mais il est dans l’ordre de la raison et de la justice de juger d’un homme par l’uniformité constante de sa conduite.”

37 Cf. *ibid.* 378. 474. 482: “grand homme;” *ibid.* 321: “la grande lumiere de son siècle;” *ibid.* 402: “le principal ornement de son temps.”

38 *Ibid.* 454: “Aussi ç’a esté proprement dans l’explication de l’Ecriture, et sur tout de l’ancien Testament où l’on peut dire qu’Origenes a excellé, ayant expliqué si divinement tous les sens allegoriques renfermez dans les paroles mysterieuses du sacré texte.”

39 *Ibid.* 389.

ly shown in explaining the Scriptures, protects him from accusations, especially since his aim was praiseworthy: preventing believers from falling into the Jews' "slavery of the flesh" ("servitude de la chair"), so that they could elevate themselves to the "freedom of the spirit" ("liberté de l'esprit").<sup>40</sup>

Du Fossé, certainly, cannot make a saint of Origen, but his virtues are the same as those attributed to the saints described in *Les vies des saints et des saintes*: humility, patience, penance, ardent charity, etc. From Origen's youth up, he provided us with the example of "a holy life and elevated above the common order of nature" through the perfect consistency between his words and deeds.<sup>41</sup> So, Origen is not a saint, but his life is without doubt an example of holiness. If that is Origen's "heart," then Origen's "core," his life, according to du Fossé, is relevant in Church history "à cause des grandes persecutions qu'on luy a faites, qui ont même partagé les saints Evesques, sans neanmoins rompre entr'eux la charité et l'union catholique."<sup>42</sup>

At this point, where du Fossé discusses "the great Origen unfairly persecuted by his own bishop" ("le grand Origenes injustement persecuté par son Evesque"),<sup>43</sup> the allusions to the present situation of Jansenism increase significantly. Du Fossé, indeed, advocates the distinction between the "extravagant and heretical opinions" which can be found in Origen's writings and "the innocence of his person." He points out to the reader that it is quite a strange turn of events that Origen, at first considered a very Catholic man, has suddenly become the worst kind of heretic.<sup>44</sup> Du Fossé uses adjectives which suggest astonishment: he calls it "a miraculous change" ("un changement prodigieux"), "a strange reversal" ("un étrange renversement").<sup>45</sup> He remarks how "surprising" ("surprenant") it was to prosecute Origen as a man, and how "astonishing" ("étonnant") it was to change one's

40 Ibid. 455f.: "Ses ennemis et ses envieux l'ont blâmé de s'estre trop attaché aux allegories, et d'avoir comme renversé la verité des Escritures en abandonnant le sens litteral. Mais si l'on considere d'une parte l'humilité et l'onction qui paroist dans ses écrits, la reconnoissance continuelle où il est de son incapacité, la modestie avec laquelle il donne tres-souvent ses explications en les proposant plutôt qu'en les assurant, et invoquant à toute heure l'assistance du Saint Esprit, on sera persuadé qu'il y auroit de l'injustice à le condanner et que le dessein qu'il a eu en allegorisant ainsi l'Ecriture merite au contraire d'estre loué."

41 Ibid. 186.

42 Ibid. 503.

43 Ibid. 266.

44 Ibid. 475: "Ainsi il demeure dans cette affaire je ne sçay quel secret impenetrable, qui fait que bien qu'on ait une extrême horreur des opinions extravagantes et heretiques qui se rencontrent dans plusieurs écrits d'Origenes, on ne sçaurait qu'on n'envisage en même temps l'innocence de sa personne, et qu'on ne soit justement touché de cette étrange revolution, par laquelle un homme sans y penser, sans estre cité, sans estre entendu, devient tout d'un coup de tres Catholique qu'il estoit auparavant, et de Docteur de toute l'Eglise, un heretique déclaré, un excommunié, un impie que toute la terre devoit regarder avec execration."

45 Ibid. 526. 766.

mind; even some saints – du Fossé alludes to St. Jerome, without mentioning him – moved from the highest esteem to the utmost aversion.<sup>46</sup> This subject is functional to du Fossé's rhetorical strategy, suggesting that there had not been solid reasons to excommunicate Origen. Adopting a providentialist perspective, du Fossé claims that the origin of the persecution initiated by a catholic bishop against a virtuous priest is even the "Devil's malice" ("malice du demon"), permitted by God.<sup>47</sup> The reasons given by Demetrius for rejecting Origen are only "very misleading pretexts" ("pretextes si specieux")<sup>48</sup> that du Fossé rejects.

The most burning issue and the one nearest to du Fossé's own situation is certainly neither the castration nor the irregular ordination but the errors claimed to be found in Origen's works. Du Fossé brings forward three arguments to exonerate Origen from this accusation. Firstly, there was the traditional one – recently advocated by Arnauld and Hermant – concerning the forgery of some of his writings, with the interpolation of hypotheses such as the salvation of the Devil. Secondly, he underlines that, in Origen's time, some truths of faith had not yet been clarified, and therefore it was easy to fall into error.<sup>49</sup> The third one is the strongest argument: Du Fossé quotes the *regula fidei* in the *De principiis* and emphasizes that Origen had presented his own theses as "personal opinions, without claiming to impose rules on faith," remaining faithful to the accepted teaching of the Church.<sup>50</sup> The conclusion, therefore, is the following: "Ainsi Origenes a pû errer comme homme." Even the most Catholic man is always subject to illusion. "C'est donc une faute humaine et tres-ordinaire de se tromper?"<sup>51</sup> – the question is clearly a rhetorical one. Thus, according to du Fossé, Origen's condemnation is groundless. It is rather the result of the "bad will" ("mauvaise volonté") of his

46 Ibid. 526f.

47 Ibid. 473f.: "Dieu permit que l'Eglise n'estant point persecutée par ses ennemis qui estoient les Payens, elle se trouva agitée par un autre effet de la malice du demon, qui se servit d'un Evesque Catholique pour persecuter un Prestre tres-vertueux." According to du Fossé, even in times of peace of the Church the risk of ecclesiastical internal divisions remains, *ibid.* 397: "La paix a presque toûjours produit des troubles dans l'Eglise, aussi bien que la persecution. Et si dans l'une le sang des fideles estoit répandu; dans l'autre l'esprit de la charité couroit risque d'estre divisé." The history of the first centuries, moreover, shows that, besides the persecutions of Christians by the Romans, there were also some members of the clergy who sowed discord in the Church.

48 Ibid. 416.

49 To defend Origen, du Fossé even brings up Augustine. It is worth noticing the Jansenist flavored premise with which he begins, *ibid.* 525: "Et l'on sçait même que S. Augustin à qui Dieu donna une lumiere suréminente, pour découvrir à l'Eglise les grands mysteres de la predestination et de la grace, traittant en divers endroits de ses écrits de l'origine des ames, a davantage favorisé l'opinion contraire à celle qui a esté depuis déterminée par l'Eglise."

50 Ibid. 524: "Il a avancé ses sentimens comme ses opinions particulieres, sans pretendre prescrire des regles à nôtre foy."

51 Ibid. 525f.

persecutor. As in Origen's heart dwelt piety, ardent charity, perfect peace, submission to and communion with the Church, Demetrius' heart harboured such sad passions as jealousy, envy, and anger. Origen's cruel persecution is underpinned by these merely irrational reasons. To Demetrius' hostility, the support of "a considerable authority" is added.<sup>52</sup>

Du Fossé's reference to his contemporary situation can be clearly read between these lines. Just like Origen, the "Solitaires" are persecuted for no reason other than the Jesuits' hostility, with the support of the leaders of the clergy and even of the state. The same kind of rhetoric can also be found significantly in the *Mémoires*, where du Fossé told the story of Port-Royal. He frequently shows his own astonishment at the unbelievable tribulations Port-Royal is subjected to. He refers to the "bad will" and the "mischief" of their enemies, who are also called "envious" ("envieux"), to their plots, and to the "extreme harshness" ("les derniers rigueurs") with which those who are innocent are treated. On the contrary – similarly to Origen – the latter profess a "pure faith" and an "ardent piety," a constant will towards union with the Church.<sup>53</sup>

Once this reading key is clear, du Fossé's request, made to his readers at the end of the *Histoire d'Origenes*, takes on a specific meaning. Even if they have no intention of defending Origen's innocence – as Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and Gregory Thaumaturgus did – at least they should suspend their judgment, imitating Theotimus, Bishop of Tomi, who, because of Origen's piety, refused to sign the decree of the Council of Cyprus condemning his teaching.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the contemporary readers are invited by du Fossé to adopt towards Jansenism and Jansenism the same attitude assumed by these saints towards Origen in the past.

52 Ibid. 526: "Il faut donc avoüer qu'il seroit étonnant que l'on eust pû proceder contre sa personne avec une si extrême rigueur et pendant sa vie et après sa mort, si l'experience de tous les siecles ne faisoit connoistre ce qu'à toujours pû contre le plus grands hommes l'animosité qui est appuyée d'une autorité considerable."

53 The account concerning the nuns, who had drafted a declaration of faith but refused to sign the formulary without reservations, is significant in this regard, *Mémoires* (n. 4), vol. 2, 173: "C'est ainsy que, dans le temps meme qu'on vouloit les faire passer, malgré elles, pour heretiques, elles s'unissoient plus que jamais à l'Eglise, par la profession authentique qu'elles faisoient de sa foy. Et, pour peu qu'on fasse d'attention sur ces actes d'une foy pure, et d'une pieté ardente, auxquels elles auoient recours deuant Dieu, et qu'elles exposent meme aux yeux de tout le public, on sera sans doute étonné, et on aura de la peine à concevoir comment des filles, si inuiolablement attachées à l'Eglise, ont pu estre traitées aussitost après avec les dernieres rigueurs, resserrées tres étroitement, séparées de leurs Meres, priuées de sacremens, et interdittes de toute communication avec leurs amis et leurs anciens directeurs."

54 *Histoire de Tertullien et d'Origenes* (n. 2) 766 f.

## 5. Conclusion: the Canvas and the Embroidery

In tracing Origen's life – as I have tried to show – du Fossé swings between the need for historicity and hagiographic temptation. Like Hermant in his biographies, he aims to edify, educate, and persuade. From Origen's story, the reader should learn lessons for the present time. As he will do in the *Mémoires*, du Fossé chooses not to deal with theology or dogmas but to stick to the facts. In this way – and not through the apology of the Jansenist doctrine – this “Solitaire dans le monde” thinks he is serving Port-Royal's cause. And yet, a certain vision or undercurrent of the way that God's grace acts in history emerges from the facts he presents. This *Histoire d'Origenes* is a militant work, which can be read through the lens of current times, thereby taking on a different aspect. It could be said that in telling the history of the Church, the *Messieurs* tell the history of Port-Royal.<sup>55</sup>

Origen's portrait, traced by du Fossé, is not an exception. On delivering the *Mémoires* to his friend Le Mettayer, on August 21<sup>st</sup> 1698, du Fossé writes:

“Je fais entrer, autant que je peux, l'histoire generale dans mon histoire particuliere, afin que les choses paroissent moins recherchées, et soient plus fauorablement receuës comme faisant parti de mon sujet. Je marque cecy exprès, affin qu'entrant dans mes veuës, vous supportiez plus aisement plusieurs choses qui sont comme le canneuas sur lequel est la broderie, ou comme les ombres dans le tableau.”<sup>56</sup>

In a way similar to Origen's story, du Fossé can say of his own time: the former is the canvas, but Port-Royal is the embroidery – as in a painting where there is a play of light and shade.

55 Cf. Mesnard, *Port-Royal et l'histoire* (n. 12) 71: “En définitive, Port-Royal ne devait réussir en histoire qu'en racontant sa propre histoire.”

56 Du Fossé, *Mémoires* (n. 4), vol. 1, *Introduction*, liv–lv; vol. 4, 369.



# Henry Hallywell (1641–1703)

## A Cambridge Origenist in Parochial Sussex\*

MARILYN A. LEWIS, BRISTOL

### 1. Introduction

Scholarship over the last decade at the University of Münster has affirmed the Origenism of the circle of thinkers known as the Cambridge Platonists and thereby opened up a rich vein of research in understanding their philosophical theology. Alternatively, a recent author has denied the Platonism and intellectual coherence of this group altogether.<sup>1</sup> This article assumes that the Cambridge Platonists did constitute a definable group of philosophical theologians who drew heavily on Origen's teaching concerning the pre-eminent goodness of God, the freedom of the will and consequent moral responsibility, and the journey of individual souls back to God through the practice of deiformity.<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that they followed Origen in every particular nor that they always agreed about which aspects of Origenism to adopt but rather that he was a major source for their eclectic construction of Christian Platonism within the intellectual milieu of seventeenth-century Cambridge. They drew on Platonist, Plotinist, Porphyrean and Origenian sources, often without critical distinction, to construct a synthesis sometimes referred to as "Origenian Platonisme."<sup>3</sup> This was the "perennial

\* The author is grateful to Dr David Leech and Dr Christian Hengstermann for assistance in transcribing and translating Hallywell's Greek quotations from Origen in this article.

1 For strong affirmations of the Origenism of the Cambridge Platonists, see Alfons Fürst / Christian Hengstermann (eds.), *Die Cambridge Origenisten: George Rusts Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of his Opinions* (Adamantina 4), Münster 2013; iid. (eds.), *Origenes Cantabrigiensis*: Ralph Cudworth, Predigt vor dem Unterhaus und andere Schriften (Adamantina 11), Münster 2018; Christian Hengstermann (ed.), "That Miracle of the Christian World:" Origenism and Christian Platonism in Henry More (Adamantina 12), Münster 2020. For a denial of the existence of Cambridge Platonism, see Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England, c. 1640–1700*, Cambridge 2015, 126–88.

2 See David Leech, *Defining 'Cambridge Platonism:'* <http://www.cambridge-platonism.divinity.cam.ac.uk/view/texts/normalised/about-the-cambridge-platonists/defining-cambridge-platonism> (accessed 6 January 2020); Marilyn A. Lewis, *Circle, Network, Constellation*: <http://www.cambridge-platonism.divinity.cam.ac.uk/view/texts/normalised/about-the-cambridge-platonists/circle-network-constellation> (accessed 6 January 2020).

3 For this term, see Rhodri Lewis, "Of 'Origenian Platonisme,'" Joseph Glanvill on the Pre-Existence of Souls, in: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69 (2006) 267–300.

philosophy,” thought to have been divinely revealed to Moses, borrowed and developed by the Greeks, held by the Alexandrian Fathers, brought to Europe by Marsilio Ficino and Agostino Steuco during the Renaissance and newly studied by the growing intellectual elite of England who were competent Greek scholars.<sup>4</sup> Christ’s College, Cambridge, where Henry More was a fellow from 1641 until his death in 1687 and Ralph Cudworth was master from 1654 until his death in 1688, was a major centre of Origenian Platonism.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Learning about Origen at Christ’s College, Cambridge

Henry Hallywell (1641–1703) was an early reader of William Spencer’s 1658 edition of Origen’s *Contra Celsum*, and the main thrust of this article is to explore the considerable evidence for his use of that volume. His thinking was also thoroughly imbued with Origen’s *On First Principles*, and he had seen the manuscript of Origen’s treatise *De oratione (On Prayer)* at Trinity College, Cambridge.<sup>6</sup> Hallywell was a graduate of Christ’s College, where he had been a pupil between 1657 and 1659 of George Rust, the probable author of *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of his Opinions*, published anonymously in 1661.<sup>7</sup> Rust seems to have written this pro-Origenian book during the period between his ten years as a fellow of Christ’s College, from 1649 to 1659, and his journey to Ireland with Lord and Lady Conway in 1661.<sup>8</sup> Rust had apparently sought the fellowship at Christ’s so as to read towards his Bachelor of Divinity degree under the supervision of Henry More,<sup>9</sup> and he was deeply influenced by both More and Cudworth

4 For the most recent discussions of the sources of Cambridge Origenian Platonism, see Douglas Hedley/David Leech (eds.), *Revisioning Cambridge Platonism: Sources and Legacy* (AIHI 222), Cham 2019, 13–15.

5 Marilyn A. Lewis, *The Educational Influence of Cambridge Platonism: Tutorial Relationships and Student Networks at Christ’s College, Cambridge, 1641–1688*, PhD Diss. University of London 2010 (available at <https://ethos.bl.uk>, accessed 13 January 2020); ead., “Educational Influence:” A New Model for Understanding Tutorial Relationships in Seventeenth-Century Oxbridge, in: *History of Universities* 27 (2013) 70–115; ead., “Christ’s College and the Latitudinarians” Revisited: A Seminary of Heretics?, in: *History of Universities* 33 (2020) 17–68. These papers reconstruct the tutorial relationships and fellowship elections which helped to create an Origenian Platonist ethos within the college.

6 For specific references, see part 3 of this article.

7 [George Rust], *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of his Opinions*, London 1661 (reprinted with a Bibliographical Note by Marjorie H. Nicolson, New York 1933); John Peile, *Biographical Register of Christ’s College, 1505–1905, and of the Earlier Foundation of God’s House, 1448–1605*, 2 vols., Cambridge 1910–1913, vol. 1, 57.

8 Jon Parkin, *Art. Rust, George (c. 1628–1670)*, in: *ODNB* 48 (2004) 373f.; for the Conways, see Sarah Hutton, *Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher*, Cambridge 2004.

9 Peile, *Biographical Register* (n. 7), vol. 1, 486 f.

in his disputations for that degree.<sup>10</sup> Hallywell's particular role in the Cambridge Platonist circle was to simplify and popularise the thought of More, Cudworth and Rust for an intelligent readership outside academia, and he published a series of short books which elegantly summarised their thought.<sup>11</sup> After five years as a fellow of Christ's from 1662 to 1667, Hallywell spent the rest of his career as a clerical incumbent in a succession of Sussex parishes.<sup>12</sup> He has been described as a "pastoral Platonist,"<sup>13</sup> but his Platonism was, to a large extent, filtered through the writings of Origen of Alexandria.

Beyond the teaching about Origenism which Hallywell received from George Rust at Christ's College, we must consider his access to the writings of Origen. As an undergraduate, he would have been debarred from using the college library, but as a fellow he had the right to consult books there.<sup>14</sup> Christ's College does today own a copy of the Latin two-volume 1620 Basel edition of Origen's *Opera*, but in the absence of a record of acquisition the date of its arrival remains uncertain. This is a clean copy without marginalia.<sup>15</sup> So, we have no proof that More, Cudworth, Rust or Hallywell used these exact volumes, but it is possible. Cudworth's library catalogue (this is the only such catalogue extant from the group) lacks this – or any – folio edition of Origen's works,<sup>16</sup> suggesting that the Basel 1620 copy in the college library might have been of use to him.

- 10 Marilyn A. Lewis / Davide A. Sec ci / Christian Hengs termann , "Origenian Platonisme" in *Interregnum Cambridge: Three Academic Texts by George Rust, 1656 and 1658*, in: *History of Universities* 30 (2017) 43–124.
- 11 Henry Hallywell's writings are: *A Private Letter of Satisfaction to a Friend*, n. p. 1667; *Deus Justificatus*, London 1668; *A Discourse of the Excellency of Christianity*, London 1671; *An Account of Familism*, London 1673; *The Sacred Method of Saving Humane Souls by Jesus Christ*, London 1677; *Melampronoea, or, A Discourse of the Polity and Kingdom of Darkness*, London 1681; *An Improvement of the Way of Teaching the Latin Tongue by the English*, London 1690; *The Excellency of Moral Vertue*, London 1692; *A Defence of Revealed Religion in Six Sermons upon Rom. I, 16*, London 1694. He also edited some of the works of George Rust: *A Discourse of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion*, London 1683; *The Remains of that Reverend and Learned Prelate, Dr George Rust*, London 1686.
- 12 Marilyn A. Lewis , *Henry Hallywell (1641–1703): A Sussex Platonist*, in: *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 151 (2013) 15–127
- 13 Ead., *Pastoral Platonism in the Writings of Henry Hallywell (1641–1703)*, in: *The Seventeenth Century* 28 (2013) 441–463.
- 14 For restrictions on the use of college libraries, see John Twigg , *A History of Queen's College, Cambridge, 1448–1986*, Woodbridge 1987, 105.
- 15 Origen, *Opera*, 2 vols., Basel 1620, Christ's College Old Library, shelf mark A.2.23f. In an email to the author on 24 September 2014, Amelie Roper, *quondam* librarian of Christ's College, said that these volumes contain a series of shelf marks, the earliest of which looked to her like those used in the seventeenth century, perhaps at Christ's.
- 16 For Cudworth's library, see Edward Millingt on, *Bibliotheca Cudworthiana*, London 1691, but this catalogue only lists books owned by Cudworth at his death in 1688, with no record of when he acquired them.

We have much greater certainty about Hallywell's use of the 1658 edition of *Contra Celsum*, edited by William Spencer of Trinity College, Cambridge.<sup>17</sup> As we shall see, all of Hallywell's explicit citations from Origen came from this volume, with page numbers twice confirming its use.<sup>18</sup> Spencer's edition reprinted the texts of the 1605 Augsburg Greek/Latin edition of *Contra Celsum*, translated into Latin by Erasmus's associate Sigmund Gelen and annotated by David Hoeschel.<sup>19</sup> While Gelen's Latin translation was printed following the complete Greek text (and was sometimes bound separately as a second volume),<sup>20</sup> Spencer much more conveniently arranged the Greek and Latin texts in parallel columns on each page. Spencer's volume also contains the *Philocalia*, reprinted from Jean Tarin's 1618 Paris edition, and Tarin's annotations were also included by Spencer.<sup>21</sup> Hallywell's single quotation from the *Philocalia* was in Greek. Both the 1618 Paris edition and Spencer's 1658 edition have the Greek and Latin texts in parallel columns, but the clue to which edition Hallywell used lies in the numbering of the chapters. Hallywell cited chapter 27, and, since Tarin divided the text into only 26 chapters, it seems certain that Hallywell was using Spencer's edition.<sup>22</sup>

Spencer's edition was published just over a year after Hallywell had arrived at Christ's as an undergraduate under Rust's tuition.<sup>23</sup> Again, Christ's College library does contain this book but without a record of acquisition.<sup>24</sup> Whether the college acquired the book as soon as it was published or later is impossible to say, but recent research on Origenism in Cambridge during the summer of 1658 would certainly confirm the interest of Cudworth, More and Rust in its publication.<sup>25</sup>

17 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. by William Spencer, Cambridge 1658.

18 See n. 40 and 49 below.

19 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. and ed. by Sigmund Gelen, annotated by David Hoeschel, Augsburg 1605, Greek and Latin texts separately paginated. For Spencer's use of this edition, see *Contra Celsum* 1658 (n. 17) "Lectori" [sig.] \* 4, Hoeschel's annotations are separately paginated at the end, [sig.] (a)-(b3)<sup>v</sup>.

20 See, e. g., the copy of the Latin translation at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, found on Google Books: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=iflIAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=origen+contra+celsum+1605&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiSlaPipIXnAhXDYcAKHQraDeEQ6AEIKzAA#v=onepage&q=origen%20contra%20celsum%201605&f=false> (accessed 15 January 2020).

21 Origen, *Philocalia*, ed. by Jean Tarin, Paris 1618. For Spencer's use of this edition, see *Contra Celsum* 1658 (n. 17) "Lectori" [sig.] \* 4, text separately paginated 1-10, [sig.] Kkk-Aaaa<sup>v</sup>; annotations separately paginated at the end, [sig.] (c)<sup>v</sup>-(d2)<sup>v</sup>.

22 Origen, *Philocalia*, ed. by Tarin (n. 21), cap. 26 ends on 453; in *Contra Celsum* 1658 (n. 17) *Philocalia* contains 27 caps; [Hallywell], *Deus Justificatus* (n. 10) 244 f.

23 *Contra Celsum* 1658 (n. 17) [sig.] \* 2<sup>v</sup>, dedication to Lord Roos dated 1 July 1658; Peile, *Biographical Register* (n. 7), vol. 1, 577. Hallywell was admitted to Christ's College 11 May 1657.

24 Christ's College Old Library, shelf mark A.14.34.

25 Marilyn A. Lewis, *Expanding the Origenist Moment: Nathaniel Ingelo, George Rust and Henry Hallywell*, in: Hengs termann, "Miracle of the Christian World" (n. 1), 221-239.

More and Cudworth used this edition extensively, and it appears in Cudworth's library catalogue.<sup>26</sup> It is possible that Hallywell used it in the college library after he became a fellow in 1662, making extensive quotations in a commonplace book (although no such book of Hallywell's survives), but it seems more likely that he purchased the book himself and had it open on his desk as he wrote his own books in a succession of Sussex parsonage houses. Hallywell's use of Origen, which will be explored in the following sections of this paper, thus constitutes important evidence for the early reception of Spencer's edition.<sup>27</sup>

Spencer's edition inaugurated what Sarah Hutton has called "an Origenist moment in English theology."<sup>28</sup> This suggestion – so fruitful for the study of Hallywell's place within the Cambridge Platonist circle – has been rebutted by Dmitri Levitin, who has asserted that this edition of *Contra Celsum* "does not really deserve to be aligned" with the clutch of overtly Origenist works which immediately followed its publication because the editor had no interest in Henry More's "outré philosophical speculations" but rather "explicitly commented on Origen's heresies." Levitin noted that Spencer "said that he prepared the edition for no reason other than to fill his *otium* while he held no public office."<sup>29</sup> According to Levitin, "there was nothing strange about editing a patristic author one partially disagreed with: [Herbert] Thorndike, after all, was planning an important edition of Origen despite having no time whatsoever for More's dabbings in Origenist heterodoxies like the pre-existence of the soul."<sup>30</sup>

Spencer, Thorndike and their colleague Thomas Gale, all fellows of Trinity in the early 1660s, constitute an important group of Origen scholars – not necessarily Origenists – with whom Hallywell had contact while writing his first book, *A Private Letter of Satisfaction to a Friend* (1667).<sup>31</sup> While more research on this group is urgently needed, a few comments here may suggest that Levitin's summary dismissal of Spencer as an Origenist may be mistaken. Spencer contributed his own Latin preface and annotations on both *Contra Celsum* and the *Philo-*

26 Millington, *Bibliotheca* (n. 16) 5. The author is indebted to conversations with colleagues on the Cambridge Platonists Project for observations concerning More and Cudworth's use of this book; for the project, see <http://www.cambridge-platonism.divinity.cam.ac.uk/> (accessed 16 January 2020).

27 The copy of Spencer's 1658 edition of *Contra Celsum* at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, has the signature of "Tho. Lynford" on the title page; this is the copy reproduced on Early English Books Online. Lynford was a fellow of Christ's College from 1675 until 1686, for whom see Lewis, *Educational Influence* (n. 5) 212–215.

28 Sarah Hutton, Henry More and Anne Conway on Preexistence and Universal Salvation, in: Marialuisa Baldi (ed.), "Mind Senior to the World:" *Stoicismo e origenismo nella filosofia platonica del Seicento inglese*, Milan 1996, 1B–125, here 1B.

29 Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom* (n. 1) 485f.

30 *Ibid.* 486.

31 Lewis, *Expanding the Origenist Moment* (n. 25) 229–238.

*calia*.<sup>32</sup> His preface relates in some detail Origen's status as a heretic, but Spencer did not indicate that he agreed with it. He might have been suggesting that such a condemnation was absurd, although he hesitated to say so outright within the context of the pervasive Augustinian Calvinism of Interregnum Cambridge. Origenism would, however, be publicly affirmed by Nathaniel Ingelo and George Rust at the 1658 Cambridge Annual Commencement ceremonies, which occurred very shortly before the publication of Spencer's edition.<sup>33</sup> The *otium* which Spencer attempted to remedy by preparing the edition may be construed as a disinclination to accept a clerical living in the Cromwellian church of the Interregnum; he would wait until the episcopal Church of England had been restored before becoming rector of St Helen Thurnscoe in Yorkshire.<sup>34</sup> From Thurnscoe, Spencer would later go to the trouble of travelling to Cambridge to have a second edition of his *Contra Celsum* published,<sup>35</sup> an effort which seems unlikely if he had little interest in the text. Whatever Spencer's intention might have been, his Latin annotations provided a large number of parallel references which members of the Cambridge Platonist circle would quarry for use in their subsequent works.<sup>36</sup> We shall return to this group at Trinity when we discuss Hallywell's writings on prayer for the departed below.

### 3. Salvation through Free Will, Persuasion and Deiformity

The Origenian Platonist synthesis developed by the Cambridge philosophical theologians drew on their reading of Platonist, Neoplatonist and Renaissance Platonist sources to construct a system of human salvation by a pre-eminently good God in response to both Calvinism and Hobbism.<sup>37</sup> Calvin, whose theol-

32 *Contra Celsum* 1658 (n. 17) "Lectori" [sigs] \* 3<sup>r</sup>-\* 4<sup>v</sup>; the annotations are separately paginated at the end, 1-98, [sigs] Aaaa2<sup>r</sup>-Nnnn3<sup>v</sup>; for a German translation of Spencer's preface with notes by Alfons Fürs t, see Fürs t/H engs termann , *Cambridge Origenists* (n. 1), 220-231.

33 Lewis , *Expanding the Origenist Moment* (n. 25). For changing estimations of Origen's writings in the early modern period, see Edgar Wind , *The Revival of Origen*, in: Dorothy Miner (ed.), *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle Da Costa Greene*, Princeton NJ 1954, 412-424; Erasmus's *Life of Origen: A New Annotated Translation of the Prefaces to Erasmus of Rotterdam's Edition of Origen's Writings (1536)*, trans. with commentary by Thomas P. Scheck , Washington D. C. 2016.

34 Art. Spencer, William, in: John Venn/John A. Venn , *Alumni Cantabrigienses: From the Earliest Times to 1751*, 4 vols., Cambridge 1922-1924, vol. 4, 134.

35 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. by William Spencer, Cambridge 1677, was published 14 years after Spencer had resigned his Trinity fellowship and become rector of the Yorkshire parish of St Helen Thurnscoe.

36 Private conversation between Dr Christian Hengsternann and the author.

37 Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality: with A Treatise of Freewill*, ed. by Sarah Hut t on, Cambridge 1996, develops this scheme fully. See

ogy largely prevailed in Interregnum Cambridge, posited a God whose will was pre-eminent and who predestined individuals to heavenly bliss or eternal torture simply to manifest his own glory. Hobbes asserted the legitimacy of established power, while denying the immortality of the soul and the reality of incorporeal substance, and he essentially excluded God from his materialist universe. Against these two profound threats to human flourishing, the Cambridge Origenian Platonists held that God's three chief attributes are his goodness, his wisdom and his power, but, of these, his goodness always prevails. God is essentially constrained by his own nature – absolute goodness – to allow his goodness to control his wisdom and his power. As Hallywell neatly phrased it, God's "Goodness is of a universal latitude and extent," ruling his power and wisdom, because unfettered power would be no more than "a furious and Gygantick self-will," while "Wisdom which is devoid of Goodness, is nothing but a higher degree of craft."<sup>38</sup> Human beings are made in God's image and likeness and therefore have an innate sense of God's "eternal and immutable" morality, often described as "the Candle of the Lord" (Prov. 20:27); but they also have free will, which allows them to choose to follow divine morality and adhere to God's goodness or to deviate from it in their own sensual and short-term interests. This inevitably brings eventual consequences – rewards for good behaviour and punishments for evil – which are entirely consistent with God's justice and veracity in communicating himself to his creatures. For humankind, the way to become fully human is to choose consistently to imitate the example of Christ. This is the process of becoming deiform, not by presuming to imitate God's dominical attributes but by adhering to his moral attributes, practising, in Rust's words, "patience, self-denial as to the most delightful pleasures, pity, compassion, fortitude and magnanimity of spirit, dependence upon God, and faith in him."<sup>39</sup> Deiformity pre-supposes not a moment of conversion but a lifetime of patient effort supported by grace.

In this section, we shall see how Hallywell adopted Origen's thinking about free will and divine persuasion, about the theory of accommodation in God's saving actions towards humankind, about deiformity as a prerequisite for salvation, and about the pre-existence of the soul and the restitution of souls at the end of time. This account of Cambridge Origenian Platonist soteriology resonates strongly with the understanding of God and human salvation set out by Origen in *On First Principles*, but, in accordance with our argument that Hallywell was a constant reader of the 1658 edition of *Contra Celsum*, we shall see that most of the quotations cited come from that volume, with one from the *Philocalia* and

also George Rust, *God is Love*, in: Fürs t/H engs termann , Cambridge Origenists (n. 1), 232–266.

38 [Hallywell], *Deus Justificatus* (n. 11) 69–81, quotations *ibid.* 72–74.

39 Rust, *God is Love* (n. 37) 264. Cf. Origen, *princ.* I 3,1; trans. by George W. Butterworth, Gloucester MA 1973, 38 f.

one from the manuscript of *De oratione*. But before we begin to explore Hallywell's Origenian soteriology, it is useful to look at his use of Origen as a source of quotable phrases, in awareness that this suggests his attribution of authority to the Alexandrian Father.

#### a) Origen as a Source of Quotations

In Hallywell's *A Discourse of the Excellency of Christianity* (1671), he followed Origen in pointing out that even Celsus had "never questioned [...] [Jesus'] Existence and Being upon Earth," although he had been unwilling to admit that healing the blind and the lame meant that he was the Son of God.<sup>40</sup> On the same page, Hallywell cited "*Numenius the Pythagorean*" as one who had affirmed the historical existence of Jesus. Origen had mentioned him as a skilled expositor of Platonic and Pythagorean doctrines who studied the Old and New Testaments with care and interpreted them allegorically.<sup>41</sup> In the same work, Hallywell mentioned "*Chaeremon the Stoick*" as one who had taught that comets sometimes "presage the Approach of good things," which he found in Origen's discussion of the star of Bethlehem.<sup>42</sup> In *Melampronoëa, or, A Discourse of the Polity and Kingdom of Darkness* (1681), a book which supported More's doctrine of spirits and was heavily indebted to *Contra Celsum* VIII, Hallywell referred to good angels who "take care of the variety of seasons, and superintend the Tillage and Fruits of the Earth" as "*invisible Husbandmen*," using a term found in *Contra Celsum*.<sup>43</sup> From a few lines later in Origen's text, Hallywell copied a reference to evil angels as "*publick Executioners*" who "carry the Souls of wicked men to their places of punishment."<sup>44</sup> Hallywell cited the place where Origen agreed with Celsus that "the Devils were not only delighted with the Idolatry of the *Pagans* in their sacrifices" but even fed on "the *Vapours and Fumes arising from them*."<sup>45</sup> Finally,

40 [Hallywell], *Excellency of Christianity* (n. 11)21, citing Cels. II 48; giving the page number in the edition of 1658 (n. 17) 87; Origen: *Contra Celsum*, trans. by Henry Chadwick, Cambridge 1953, 10.

41 Ibid. 21, citing Cels. IV 51; 1658 (n. 17) 198; p. 226 Chadwick.

42 Ibid. 56 f., citing Cels. I 59; 1658 (n. 17) 45; p. 54 Chadwick.

43 *Melampronoëa* (n. 11)91, citing Cels. VIII 31; 1658 (n. 17) 398; p. 474 Chadwick. For More's doctrine of spirits, see Robert Crocker, Henry More, 1614–1687: A Biography of the Cambridge Platonist (AIHI 185), Dordrecht/Boston/London 2003, 127–42; Anna Corrias, *Dii medioximi* and the Place of Theurgy in the Philosophy of Henry More, in: Hedley/Leech, *Revisioning Cambridge Platonism* (n. 4), 13–30, but neither refers to More's possible use of Cels. VIII. Hallywell makes his own debt explicit.

44 Hallywell, *ibid.* 21; citing Cels. VIII 31; 1658 (n. 17) 398, where someone – perhaps Thomas Lynford (see n. 27 above) – has marked this place in the margin; p. 475 Chadwick.

45 Ibid. 101, citing Cels. VII 6; VIII 30; 1658 (n. 17) 33 f. 396 f.; p. 400. 473 Chadwick.

Hallywell wrote that “I remember that *Origen* somewhere tells *Celsus*, that it is no more incongruous for God to let the Devil Rule over whole Nations for some time than to suffer a Tyrant to preside over them: as some of the *Roman Emperors* were.” Hallywell was probably summarising the end of *Contra Celsum* VIII, although it is not clear why he could not find the reference, since he had been working from this text in writing *Melampronoea*.<sup>46</sup> In his annotations to George Rust’s *Discourse of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion* (1688), Hallywell cited *Contra Celsum* in support of what he called “Miracles of Falsehood” performed by Apollonius of Tyana.<sup>47</sup>

### b) Free Will and God’s Persuasion of Sinners

Hallywell’s *Deus Justificatus* (1668) was his longest book and a very full defence of the role of free will in human salvation. This book refutes Calvinist denials of human free will by means of a basically Arminian skeletal structure fleshed out with an Origenian plea for deiformity.<sup>48</sup> Arguing that God wants humankind to choose a life of virtue freely, Hallywell quoted Origen among several other Patristic authors: “For, if you take away the element of free will from virtue, you also destroy its essence.”<sup>49</sup> In his annotations to Rust’s *Discourse of Reason*, Hallywell again cited Origen concerning free will:

“And if any shall Object with that Impious Epicurean [*Celsus*], and ask, Why could not God appear, and at once take away all wickedness and sin out of the Soul, and plant Virtue there? To this *Origen* replies, 1. That it may well be doubted *ει δυνατόν ἐστι τῇ φύσει τὸ τοιοῦτον* whether such a thing be naturally possible or not. 2. Supposing it be, *ποῦ οὖν τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῶν* where will be the Liberty of our will? and where that laudable Assent to the Truth, and Aversation from Lies and Falshood? For if we take away Liberty and Spontaneity, we destroy the very Essence of Virtue. So that no Course could have been taken more agreeable and suitable to the Nature of Man, then what is made choice of in the Christian Religion.”<sup>50</sup>

46 Ibid. 35, probably citing *Cels.* VIII 63–75; 1668 (n. 17) 418–428; p. 500–510 Chadwick .

47 Hallywell in: Rust, *Discourse of Reason* (n. 11)63, citing *Cels.* VI 41; 1658 (n. 17), 302; p. 356 Chadwick .

48 Marilyn A. Lewis, “Somewhere in Episcopius:” George Rust and Henry Hallywell’s Use of the Dutch Arminians, in: Alfons Fürst (ed.), *Origen’s Philosophy of Freedom in Early Modern Times: Debates about Free Will and Apokatastasis in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century England and Europe* (Adamantiana 13), Münster 2019, 105–125.

49 [Hallywell], *Deus Justificatus* (n. 11)173, citing *Cels.* IV 3; 1658 (n. 17) 163; p. 186 Chadwick ; cf. princ. II 1,2 (p. 77f. Butterworth).

50 Rust, *Discourse of Reason* (n. 11)74f., citing *Cels.* IV 3; 1658 (n. 17) specifically citing 163; p. 186 Chadwick .

Following Origen, Hallywell affirmed that God seeks to persuade human beings to return his love but allows them the freedom to accept or reject his message:

“Why is it that all Men are not effectually convinced and wrought upon by it [the Gospel]? For the solution of this difficulty, I shall return [...] that of *Origen*, that to an effectual persuasion there is required not only that the Perswader offer such things as are apt to beget belief, but likewise a suitable disposition and tractable frame in him that is to be persuaded. So that the Reason why many Men do not entertain and believe the Gospel, is not that the Gospel is unfurnished of perswasory Arguments, or that God is wanting in any thing on his part, but because they reject and refuse those things which do in others, and might in them (if it were not for their own obstinacy) produce faith and belief. As (says the Father) the most eloquent Orator that ever spake may persuade in vain where he meets with a stubborn and refractory disposition. It is sufficient therefore that the Gospel suggests and offers πιστικὸς λόγος such rational Arguments and Motives as are proper to beget Belief in Moral Agents, but the τὸ πείθεσθαι perswasibility, or the Act of being persuaded is a work of Mens own.”<sup>51</sup>

Yet, as Hallywell said in *A Discourse of the Excellency of Christianity*, God makes it as easy as possible for us to hear his message. Celsus had extolled the writings of Plato above the Christian Scriptures, but Hallywell agreed with Origen’s response:

“As *Origen* acutely enough replies, the Design of God in the Gospel being to make men good and virtuous, it was necessary the Precepts tending to that end should be delivered plainly and perspicuously, suitable to the Capacities of the illiterate Vulgar, who are better allured and won by a common and usual form of Speech, than by the artificial Deckings and gay Schemes of Rhetorick. Οὐδὲ πάλιν ὑπὸ τοῦ κάλλους τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς φράσεως λεγόμενον τὸ αὐτὸ πάντως κρεῖττον εἶναι νομιστέον τοῦ εὐτελέστερον ἀπαγγελλομένου καὶ ἀπλουστέραις λέξεσι παρὰ Ἰουδαίους ἢ Χριστιανοῖς. [Nor again are we to think that the same doctrine expressed in the beauty of Greek style is in any way superior to its expression in the poorer style and simpler language used by Jews and Christians.] And therefore Christ and his Apostles did much more advance that which was their chief aim, the Life and Nature of God in the World by that (as *Celsus* calls it) rude and rustical manner of speaking, than all the elegant Writings of *Plato*, which if they ever were advantageous for the rectifying and amending the Lives of men, it was only to such whose Intellectual faculties were raised and elevated above the Plebeian Strain.”<sup>52</sup>

God’s method for making it easy for all humans to understand the Gospel involves Origen’s doctrine of accommodation, to which we now turn.

51 Hallywell, *Sacred Method* (n.11)38 f.; citing Cels. VI 57; 1658 (n. 17) 315; p. 373 Chadwick .

52 [Hallywell], *Excellency of Christianity* (n. 11)13f., citing Cels. VII 41f., with inserted Greek quotation from Cels. VII 59; 1658 (n. 17) 359 f. 371; p. 429 f. 444 Chadwick (this translation used).

## c) Hallywell's Use of Origen's Doctrine of Accommodation

In *The Sacred Method of Saving Humane Souls by Jesus Christ* (1677), Hallywell was writing pastorally and therefore understandably simplified his adoption of Origen's doctrine of accommodation, but he specifically cited Phil. 2:5–11 and his interpretation strongly resonates with that of Origen.<sup>53</sup> "Jesus Christ," he wrote, "the only begotten Son of God, [...] left the Sacred Mansions of Heaven, and veiled his Glory under a cloud of Flesh and Blood," enduring a painful life and death to demonstrate the "Infinite Love" of God.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that the Logos did not empty himself of his divinity but nevertheless came to us in a human body, so as to communicate God's love to us. Further,

"He was *in the form of God*, clothed with all the Majesty and Glory of the supramundane life, yet emptied himself of all this unspeakable Felicity, and took upon him the form of a *Servant*, i. e. an Earthly, or a body of flesh and blood, in opposition to that state, which he before called, *the form of God*; and being bound in that servile scheme, *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*. What higher expressions of love, can Humane Understandings, possibly conceive, than these?"<sup>55</sup>

Again, the Logos' self-emptying seems to consist in his assumption of a human body so as to become comprehensible to those whom he will save, abandoning only the "form" of his divinity, although Hallywell did not explain further what he meant by that. But Hallywell's adoption of Origen's theory of accommodation was tempered by his pastoral experience, which led him to argue that the self-emptying of the Logos was not the best way to reach *all* human souls. It can reach those who are "incouraged to Action, out of a Principle of Gratitude and innate Nobility," but those who respond better to offers of "Advantage and Interest" need firm moral rules, while still others need "the menaces of a severe and uneasy Discipline." "God in the Evangelical Dispensation," wrote Hallywell, "hath interwoven the most effectual and cogent Arguments, to meet with each of these tempers in Men."<sup>56</sup> So the efficacy of the Gospel depends on a free response to whatever means God has deemed appropriate for each "temper in Men." Those who respond to the kenosis of the Logos will be saved, as well as those who can

53 Cels. IV 15; 1658 (n. 17) 169f.; p. 193f. Chadwick; cf. Cels. VI 77; VII 16; p. 390f. 407f. Chadwick; princ. I 2,8 (p. 21f. Butterworth). See also Gerald Bostock, Origen's Exegesis of the Kenosis Hymn, in: Gilles Dorival / Alain Le Boulluec (eds.), *Origeniana Sexta: Origen and the Bible* (BETL 118), Leuven 1995, 531–547; Anders-Christian Jacobsen, *Christ – the Teacher of Salvation: A Study of Origen's Christology and Soteriology* (Adamantina 6), Münster 2015, 299–301. 307–312.

54 Hallywell, *Sacred Method* (n. 11) B.

55 Ibid. 18f., see also ibid. 57f.

56 Ibid. 87.

keep moral rules, but those who are deaf even to threats of punishment are liable to be consumed in the conflagration of the earth.<sup>57</sup>

Yet Hallywell endorsed the Origenian doctrine that all punishment for sin is inflicted by God for the sake of the healing of the sinner, that all may have the opportunity of reformation and eventual deiformity. Drawing on Origen's discussion of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in the *Philocalia*, ch. 27, Hallywell commented that "this *hardning* which is attributed to God" did not consist "in any positive act, nor yet in the total subtraction of his grace" but was "an accidental effect of his kindness and mercy toward *Pharaoh*," which might eventually result in Pharaoh's repentance, suggesting that he was prepared to go even further than Origen in his compassion for Pharaoh.<sup>58</sup> Hallywell's citation of chapter 27 of the *Philocalia* here is proof that he was using Spencer's edition, not that of Tarin, who divided the text into only 26 chapters.<sup>59</sup>

#### d) Salvation through Deiformity

Hallywell's *Sacred Method* was the most concise and yet complete attempt by any of the Cambridge Origenists to present the soteriological work of Christ in a way which was intended to be accessible to the ordinary, non-theologically trained, reader. Here, the influence of Origen's *On First Principles* is obvious. Hallywell set out to describe the "Evangelical Oeconomy" by which "*the Blessed Son of God, that Eternal Logos*" brought about the means of human salvation.<sup>60</sup> Hallywell knew that his presentation of the economy of salvation was at considerable odds with the doctrines of total human depravity and penal substitution which were held by large swathes of the Calvinist reading public in Restoration England, so he urged the reader "to lay aside his Prejudices, and not to charge every thing that he shall find disagreeing with his present sentiments and perswasions, with the opprobrious and invidious term of Heresie."<sup>61</sup>

Hallywell admitted that "sin and wickedness is the misery, not of a part only, but of the whole Race of Mankind [...] [who] by their fall from God, were under

57 Ibid. 88f.

58 [Hallywell], *Deus Justificatus* (n. 11)223–229, quotations *ibid.* 225; *philoc.* 275; 1658 (n. 17) 104f.; *The Philocalia of Origen*, trans. by George Lewis, Edinburgh 1911,229f.; cf. *princ.* II 5,3 (p. 104 But ter worth ); II 10,3 (p. 146); III 1,7–11(p. 167–177). See also Lorenzo Per rone (ed.), *Il cuore indurito del Faraone: Origene e il problema del libero arbitrio*, Genoa 1992; Lewis , *Somewhere in Episcopius* (n. 48) 122f.

59 See n. 22 above.

60 Hallywell, *Sacred Method* (n. 11)[sig.] A2<sup>r</sup>; cf. *princ.* III 6,14 (p. 185f. But ter worth ). This section is heavily indebted to Ja cobsen , *Teacher of Salvation* (n. 53) 260–33.

61 Hallywell, *ibid.* [sig.] A3<sup>r</sup>; cf. *princ.* I 6,1 (p. 52 But ter worth ).

the reign, Dominion and Power of sin and death [...] [from which] no Man could extricate and deliver himself.”<sup>62</sup> Yet God, who is infinite goodness and love, has rescued “Men from the Power of sin and death, and [...] [delivered] them from the Tyranny of the Devil, through the meritorious Death and Passion of Jesus Christ.”<sup>63</sup> Hallywell spoke of “Christ becoming a Propitiation for our sins” and of his death as “an Expiatory Sacrifice.”<sup>64</sup> So far, he might not have antagonised believers in total human depravity and penal substitution, but his understanding of *how* the death of Christ enables human souls to be saved was deeply Origenian. For Hallywell the death of Christ opens up the possibility of our participation in the life of God, which will restore the damaged image of God in each of us. He wrote that “God, through his Eternal Wisdome, resolved upon a course, which should both effectually extirpate and eradicate sin and evil out of the World, and yet reduce those strayed souls, which through it, had revolted from his blessed Life and Nature, to a participation of it again.”<sup>65</sup> “The Participation of the Divine Nature,” he said, is “the highest Perfection and Accomplishment of the Soul of Man, and the ultimate end of Christianity it self.”<sup>66</sup> The “Eternal *Logos*” came “to form our minds according to his own Image, and to regenerate our spirits into a living nature of Truth and Righteousness.”<sup>67</sup>

For Hallywell, Christian salvation entailed constant, life-long effort, supported by grace, in order to become deiform. A soul must become Christlike in order to know God and participate in the divine nature – a basic Origenian premise.<sup>68</sup> For Hallywell, the pursuit of deiformity was first an intellectual or rational activity and then a practical one. The soul has revelation – the Bible – for guidance, but also “the Candle of the Lord,”<sup>69</sup> God-given innate notions of morality to which continuous attention must be paid. The mind and the will must be fully engaged. Then, rather than practising asceticism in isolation merely for the sake of humility, Hallywell’s programme – set out in some detail in *The Excellency of Moral Vertue* (1692) – involved living in society in loving relationship with all whom one encounters. His explicit guiding principle was the Golden Rule: “Whatever you

62 Ibid. 9 f.

63 Ibid. 10.

64 Ibid. 1 f. (quotations). 16–24. 55. 88.

65 Ibid. 16.

66 Ibid. 108; cf. princ. I 3,6–9 (p. 35–39 But ter worth ); II 6,3 (p. 110); III 6,1 (p. 247); IV 4,4 f. (p. 319 f.); IV 4,9 (p. 326 f.).

67 Ibid. 76 f.; cf. princ. III 6,1 (p. 245 f. But ter worth ). See Jacobsen, *Teacher of Salvation* (n. 53) 312–33.

68 Ibid. 34 f. 90 f. 108. 111; cf. princ. *ibid.*; Plotinus, *enn.* V 1,4 (p. 426 f. MacKenna).

69 Prov. 20:27; [Hallywell], *Deus Justificatus* (n. 11)16; *id.*, *Excellency of Moral Vertue* (n. 11) 29; *id.*, *Defence of Revealed Religion* (n. 11)48. See Robert A. Greene, *Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis*, in: *JHI* 52 (1991) 617–644.

would that Men should do to you, do ye so to them.”<sup>70</sup> Living this kind of life, the soul slowly regains her own native pulchritude and her capacity for communion with and participation in God. To love God and to love all other rational souls is what it means truly to be a human being. Hallywell, in love and striving by God’s grace towards deiformity and participation in the divine nature, desired that all human beings should become truly human, fulfilling their own nature as made in the image of God who is perfect love.

### e) The Journey of the Soul

We turn finally to Hallywell’s slightly modified acceptance of Origen’s doctrines of the pre-existence of the soul and universal salvation.<sup>71</sup> Evidence for Hallywell’s thinking on both of these doctrines is found in his first book, *A Private Letter of Satisfaction to a Friend*, which was published anonymously because of its highly controversial nature. It appeared in 1667, but he had finished writing it by 25 June 1665, about two and a half years after his election to a Christ’s fellowship.<sup>72</sup> It reflects very strongly Hallywell’s immersion in the intellectual milieu of Origenian Platonism in More and Cudworth’s circle at Christ’s College, especially his earlier tuition under George Rust, but it also provides evidence of the influence and assistance of Herbert Thorndike of Trinity College. *A Private Letter* is mainly concerned with the post-terrestrial life of the soul, and it provides only hints of Hallywell’s belief in pre-existence. He did not explicitly endorse pre-existence, although, according to both David Dockrill and Robert Crocker, the doctrine is pre-supposed throughout this text.<sup>73</sup> The main clue is on the title page, where Hallywell quoted *Contra Celsum*: Ἀρχὴ Θανάτου ἢ ἐπὶ γῆς γένεσις (“Birth on this earth is the begin-

70 Mt. 7:12; Hallywell, *Excellency of Moral Vertue* (n. 11)63 (quotation). 65. 68. 77. See Marilyn A. Lewis, “Think on these things:” Benjamin Whichcote and Henry Hallywell on Philippians 4:8 as a Guide to Deiformity, in: Hedley/Leech, *Revisioning Cambridge Platonism* (n. 4), 17–131.

71 For pre-existence, cf. princ. I 8,4 (p. 72f. But ter worth ); II 8,3 (p. 124); III 1,22(p. 204 f.); III 3,5(p. 227 n. 3); III 5,4 (p. 239–241); IV 3,10(p. 305). See Antonia Tripolitis, *The Doctrine of the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen*, San Diego CA 1978, 94–121; Terry L. Givens, *When Souls had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought*, New York 2012, 91–98. For universal salvation, see n. 78 below.

72 [Hallywell], *Private Letter* (n. 11) 8. See Peile, *Biographical Register* (n. 7), vol. 1, 577.

73 David W. Dockrill, *The Heritage of Patristic Platonism in Seventeenth Century English Philosophical Theology*, in: Graham A. J. Rogers /Jean-Michel Vienne /Yves Charles Zarka (eds.), *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics, Metaphysics, and Religion* (AIHI 150), Dordrecht 1997, 55–77, here 75 n. 23; Crocker, *Henry More* (n. 43) 1 B. Hallywell’s *Private Letter* is described at some length in my *Expanding the Origenist Moment* (n. 25) 229–238.

ning of death”).<sup>74</sup> Elsewhere in Hallywell’s published writings, there are odd hints of pre-existence, such as his advice to remember that “our Souls once came from the pure and incorruptible Mansions of Heaven [...] and since we are of a Divine Extraction, Religion puts us in Mind to behave our selves as Citizens of that Heavenly Country” in his final book, *A Defence of Revealed Religion* (1694).<sup>75</sup> Hallywell knew that the advocacy of pre-existence by Rust, More and Joseph Glanvill had occasioned much criticism, so he seems to have avoided endorsing it explicitly.<sup>76</sup> He was more candid in a letter to More, dated 17<sup>th</sup> March 1672, saying that “I have always looked upon the Doctrine of Preexistence not only as very exact and con-cinnous [i. e. neat, elegant] in it selfe, but hugely agreeable with the Phaenomena of Providence in the World.” Echoing Origen, he referred to “the Terrestrial life being a Punishment as well as a State of Probation.” Yet he was concerned that a high rate of infant mortality might require a “Transmigration of Souls,” allowing “those little souls” to ascend and descend frequently, which seemed “too harsh and unkind” to be consistent with “the Exactness of Divine Providence.”<sup>77</sup>

It would seem, then, that pastoral concerns may have prevented Hallywell from accepting Origen’s doctrine of pre-existence unreservedly, and these may also have coloured his reception of Origen’s doctrine of universal salvation.<sup>78</sup> He ardently desired the salvation of every human soul, but as a parish priest in rural Sussex he was all too aware of the recalcitrance of his parishioners when faced with the effort involved in choosing life and freedom. We have seen that he thought that some people were incapable of benefiting from God’s accommodation of his message to weak human capacities. It was for this reason that he advocated prayer for the departed in *A Private Letter*.<sup>79</sup> Hallywell’s discussion of prayer for the departed, which we shall examine below, seems to offer proof that he had seen Origen’s treatise *De oratione* in the Codex Holmiensis at Trinity College, Cambridge, more

74 [Hallywell], *Private Letter* (n. 11) title page; Cels. III 43; 1658 (n. 17) 137; p. 158 n. 2 Chadwick, attributes this philosophical axiom to Seneca, Philo and Clement of Alexandria, but Hallywell simply cites Origen. See Daniel P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment*, London 1964, 153 (this translation used).

75 Hallywell, *Defence of Revealed Religion* (n. 11) 90.

76 Crocker, *Henry More* (n. 43) 111–125.

77 Christ’s College, Ms. 21, fol. 21, quoted with permission of the Master and Fellows of Christ’s College, Cambridge, with thanks to the college librarian, Amelie Roper, for her kind assistance. See also Lewis, *Expanding the Origenist Moment* (n. 25). For Origen’s doctrine that the terrestrial life is a punishment and purgation, see princ. II 5,3 (p. 104 *But ter worth*); Tripolitis, *Doctrine of the Soul* (n. 71) 97f.; Givens, *When Souls had Wings* (n. 71) 96.

78 For Origen’s doctrine of universal salvation, see princ. I 6,1–4 (p. 52–58 *But ter worth*); II 1,1–3 (p. 76–78); II 3 (p. 83–94); III 5 (p. 237–244); III 6,1–3 (p. 245–249); Tripolitis, *ibid.* 122–B3; Jacobsen, *Teacher of Salvation* (n. 53) 269–272.

79 [Hallywell], *Private Letter* (n. 11) 84–84.

than twenty years before its first publication.<sup>80</sup> It was then in the possession of Herbert Thorndike, a fellow of Trinity. Thorndike was a royalist who had been ejected from his Trinity fellowship in 1644 but restored in 1660. During his time away from Cambridge, he had begun to collect manuscripts of Origen's extant Greek works, planning an edition which unfortunately never came to fruition.<sup>81</sup> When the 21-year-old Hallywell was elected to a Christ's fellowship in 1662, Thorndike was 65, but he seems to have been willing to assist the younger man, in contrast to his unwillingness to assist the young William Spencer during the late 1650s.<sup>82</sup> But Hallywell's visits to Trinity College very likely also brought him into personal contact with Spencer, whose edition of *Contra Celsum* would prove to be such a rich resource for his own writings; Spencer would hold his Trinity fellowship until 1663.<sup>83</sup> Hallywell probably also met Thomas Gale, who would assist with the first printed edition of *De oratione* in 1686.<sup>84</sup> Gale, who would hold his fellowship until 1672, was a serious scholar of Neoplatonism, publishing a Greek/Latin edition of Iamblichus' *De mysteriis* in 1678 and a Latin translation from the Greek of John Scottus Eriugena's *De divisione naturae* in 1681.<sup>85</sup> This small group of Origen scholars at Trinity College is well worth further investigation. While they do not seem to have been committed Origenists in the sense that More, Cudworth, Rust and Hallywell were, they are surely of considerable importance for our understanding of the reception of Origen in Interregnum and Restoration Cambridge.

Turning now to Hallywell's advocacy of prayer for the departed, we need to examine its possible antecedents in the writings of Origen, More and Thorndike. In *De oratione*, Origen had discussed the prayers of angels and saints for human

80 Trinity College, Cambridge, Ms. B.8.10, described in The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts, with digital images of the manuscript, at <http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=470> (not currently available); Origenous peri euchês syntagma, Greek/Latin edition, Oxford 1686; Origen's Treatise on Prayer, trans. and ed. by Eric G. Jay, London 1954 (reprint Eugene OR 2010), 73f.

81 For a fuller account of Thorndike as a collector of Greek manuscripts of Origen, see my Expanding the Origenist Moment (n. 25) 234f.

82 For Thorndike's refusal to help Spencer, see British Library Ms. Harl. 3783, fol. 175<sup>v</sup>; noticed by Kristine L. Haugen, Richard Bentley: Poetry and Enlightenment, Cambridge MA/London 2011, 53f., and by Levitin, Ancient Wisdom (n. 1) 485 n. 214. For Thorndike's and Hallywell's ages, see William B. Paterson, Art. Thorndike, Herbert (1597?–1672), in: ODNB 54 (2004) 595–598; Peile, Biographical Register (n. 7), vol. 1, 577.

83 Art. Spencer, William, in: Venn/Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses (n. 34), vol. 4, 134.

84 Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origen, trans. and ed. by John E. L. Oulton/Henry Chadwick, London 1954, 235, notes Gale's assistance. For Gale, see Haugen, Richard Bentley (n. 86) 39–48, but his interest in Origen is not mentioned there.

85 Iamblichi Chalcidensis ex Coele-Syria, De Mysteriis Liber, trans. and ed. by Thomas Gale, Oxford 1678; Joannis Scoti Erigenæ, De Divisione Naturæ, trans. by Thomas Gale, Oxford 1681.

beings on earth. The saints, practising the “supreme virtue” of “love towards neighbour,” pray for “the brethren here below” and for the church in general, and angels also “conspire together for the things which he who prays has asked.”<sup>86</sup> So, in Origen, we find that departed saints pray for the church on earth, but there is no prescription that those on earth should pray for souls in their post-terrestrial life. Hallywell’s *Private Letter* is deeply indebted to More’s *Immortality of the Soul* (1659) which is in turn a deeply Origenian treatise,<sup>87</sup> but we must look elsewhere, at More’s anti-Roman Catholic writings, for anything that might touch on prayer by or for the departed. More seems not to have seen the manuscript of *De oratione*, but he was aware of Hallywell’s *Private Letter*, probably rather coyly telling Lady Conway that belief in the capacity of departed souls for “improving their time for the attainment of eternall happinesse [...] is no good friend to quicknesse and sedulity for the making our calling and election sure in this.”<sup>88</sup> In the context of refuting what he saw as Roman Catholic idolatry, More firmly rejected the “omnipercipience” of saints and angels, arguing not only that prayer to them is a derogation of our obligation to pray only to God but also that they cannot see or hear human beings on earth anyway. Prayer to saints is therefore idolatrous.<sup>89</sup> Further, More’s utter rejection of the doctrine of purgatory seems to have prevented him from any consideration of the church’s prayer for the departed.<sup>90</sup>

Thorndike discussed prayer by and for the departed in his *Just Weights and Measures* (1662), a book published in the year that Hallywell was elected to a fellowship at Christ’s. We might conjecture that this publication, alongside a rumour that Thorndike was collecting Greek manuscripts of Origen, might have encouraged Hallywell to seek his acquaintance. In an attempt to recover the authentic practice of the church in its most primitive times, Thorndike rejected the Mass as “a Sacrifice for quick and dead,” the invocation of particular saints, and prayers

86 Origen, *orat.* 11,1–4 (p111–14 Jay, quotations *ibid.* 112. 14).

87 Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul*, London/Cambridge 1659. For the influence of this book on George Rust and Henry Hallywell, see Lewis et al., *Origenian Platonisme* (n. 10) 61–66. 101–12; Lewis, *Expanding the Origenist Moment* (n. 25) 225–28.

88 *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their Friends, 1642–1684*, ed. by Marjorie H. Nicolson, revised by Sarah Hutton, Oxford 1992, 292.

89 Henry More, *An Exposition of the Seven Epistles to the Seven Churches; Together with a Brief Discourse of Idolatry; with Application to the Church of Rome*, London 1669, 13–40, esp. 20–27. 33–5. This was the first edition of this tract, for the subsequent publishing history of which, see Crocker, *Henry More* (n. 43) 210.

90 Henry More, *A Modest Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity*, London/Cambridge 1664, I 22, p. 82–86; but cf. *id.*, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, London/Cambridge 1660, III 174, p. 93f, where he allows that the pagan doctrine that “Good Men [...] for that dear affection they bear to man [...] will be the more kindly *Mediatours* and *Negotiatours* in our affairs” after their death is reasonable, so long as they are not worshipped.

for those suffering in purgatory as practices which had corrupted the church at an early date. Before that, however, the primitive practice was for the church on earth to pray at the Eucharist for the “*comfort and refreshment, rest and peace, and light*” of the departed before they faced the great trial of the final judgement. Likewise, the saints departed, without having any particular knowledge of those still living on earth, nevertheless were thought to “offer continual prayers to God for those necessities” which they understood to be needful for the “Church Militant.”<sup>91</sup> On his tombstone in Westminster Abbey, Thorndike requested the passer-by to “pray for his rest in Christ, and a happy Resurrection.”<sup>92</sup>

Hallywell travelled with both Origen and Thorndike in arguing that the departed saints, who increase in charity towards us as they are purified, pray for souls still struggling towards deformity here on earth. He followed Thorndike in supposing that this is a reciprocal relationship: he could not see why God should not also hear the prayers of good and holy persons for the departed, “supposing them to stand in need of those things he desires in their behalf.”<sup>93</sup> Then, pursuing his own line of thinking, Hallywell stressed that “there is then without doubt a Relation continued still” between faithful souls on earth and their departed loved ones, within which each can pray personally for the others’ further deification.<sup>94</sup> He posited “some middle State of Being between Death and the Resurrection,” not “that ridiculous Doctrine of Purgatory” taught by Rome, but “a state, wherein, by a due purification [...] the Soul of man becomes wholly dead to every inordinate affection, and daily kindles that fire of Divine Love” which will bring him “to the beatifical vision and enjoyment of God,” which strongly resonates with Origen’s *On First Principles*.<sup>95</sup> Then, following Origen in an argument from *De oratione* not reproduced by Thorndike, Hallywell urged that those who object that it is redundant to pray for what we know will come to pass, should consider the examples of the Lord’s Prayer: “God’s Name to be hallowed, his Kingdom to come, and his Will to be done.” For Origen, our faithful prayers formed an essential condition upon which these things would come to pass within us.<sup>96</sup> It is this quotation from *De oratione* which offers convincing evidence that Hallywell had seen the manuscript in Thorndike’s possession, and it further strongly suggests Hallywell’s

91 Herbert Thorndike, *Just Weights and Measures, that is, the Present State of Religion weighed in the Balance and Measured by the Standard of the Sanctuary*, London 1662, 105–112, quotations *ibid.* 105. 107.

92 Archibald Campbell, *The Doctrines of a Middle State between Death and Resurrection*, London 1721, 168.

93 [Hallywell], Private Letter (n. 11) 65–68, quotation *ibid.* 67; cf. Origen, *orat.* 11, f. (p. 111 Jay); Thorndike, *Just Weights* (n. 91) 107.

94 [Hallywell], *ibid.* 68.

95 *Ibid.* 35f.; cf. *princ.* II 11,3 (p. 149 Butterworth); III 1,13 (p. 182f.).

96 *Ibid.* 75; cf. *orat.* 24–26 (p. 153–162 Jay).

association with the small group of Origen scholars at Trinity. Yet Hallywell cautiously refrained from mentioning Thorndike's *Just Weights and Measures*, and he was silent concerning the manuscript at Trinity.<sup>97</sup> From Hallywell's thinking about prayer for the departed, then, we may conclude that he fervently wished that all rational souls might be saved but thought that more time, following the death of the terrestrial body, would normally be necessary to bring this about. Full conformity to the pattern of Christ is hardly possible before death but is part of a relational process in which we pray for the departed, God assists them with his grace and they grow in compassion for us.<sup>98</sup> In this sense, we may say that he accepted Origen's doctrine of universal salvation, although he never discussed the final restitution of all creation.

#### 4. Conclusion: Hallywell as a Reader of Origen

Our comparison of the writings of Henry Hallywell with William Spencer's 1658 edition of *Contra Celsum*, including the *Philocalia*, has shown that he was a constant reader of it, quoting from it frequently and accepting its soteriology. Not only did Hallywell find in it a source of apt quotations, but he used passages from it to illustrate his own theological points. His theology – of an absolutely good God who creates human beings with free will and then gently persuades them to turn to him in love through the practice of deiformity – was basically shaped by Origen's *On First Principles*. This Origenian soteriology was mediated to him by the teaching of his tutor at Christ's College, George Rust, and the conversation of Henry More and Ralph Cudworth in the senior common room while he was a fellow of Christ's between 1662 and 1667 and by their writings. We have seen that Hallywell wrote to More concerning his pastoral doubts about the pre-existence of the soul, a doctrine which he basically accepted. Further, Hallywell seems to have sought the acquaintance of Herbert Thorndike of Trinity College, with whom he shared an interest in prayer for the departed, in order to see the manuscript of *De oratione* in the Codex Holmiensis. While visiting Trinity, it seems highly likely that he met William Spencer and Thomas Gale, who, alongside Thorndike constituted a small group of Origen scholars there. Further research on this group is essential for a clearer understanding of the reception of Origen in mid-seventeenth-century Cambridge.

Hallywell's slight adaptations of Origen's thinking were brought about by his pastoral work in a succession of rural Sussex parishes, where he used the Alexandrian Father's theology to attempt to reform the lives of his parishioners and to

97 Ibid. 68–70. 80–84 lists authorities for prayer for the departed.

98 Ibid. 77–79.

bring them hope of salvation in response to the despair engendered by the still pervasive Calvinist doctrine of double predestination. Hallywell thus emerges as an important witness to the positive reception of Spencer's edition of *Contra Celsum* and to the Origenism of More, Cudworth and Rust's teaching at Christ's College. In this article, we have concentrated on those places where Hallywell cited Origen explicitly, but a thorough reading of his works reveals many more places in which the Alexandrian Father shaped his thinking. Hallywell was, truly, a Cambridge Origenist.

# Origen between Kabbalism and Divine Wisdom

## The Role of the Alexandrian in the Work of Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen\*

ELISA BELLUCCI, HALLE

### 1. Introduction

The reception of Origen's thought in the Early Modern period within a Protestant environment was characterized by Luther's critical stance on some Origenian tenets. The theologian of Wittenberg distanced himself from the Alexandrian on two issues particularly: free will and eschatology, two problems that he also debated with Erasmus. Whereas Erasmus, following Origen, emphasized the role of creatures' free will in salvation and God's infinite mercy – although without directly supporting the doctrine of *apokatastasis* – Luther stressed the weakness of creatures' wills and supported a dualistic eschatology, adopting the Augustinian paradigm and stressing God's justice at the expense of his mercy.<sup>1</sup> Luther's position was also followed by several Protestant reformers, and it was definitively ratified in article 17 of the *Confessio Augustana*, where the universalist position of the Anabaptists, i. e., their alleged doctrine of the salvation of every creature, was condemned along with the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of universal salvation reappears in German Protestant territories at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in two anonymous works: *Das ewige Evangelium der allgemeinen Wiederbringung aller Creaturen*, or *The Eternal Gospel of the Univer-*

\* This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 676258.

1 On the dispute, see E. Gordon Rupp/Philipp S. Watson (eds.), *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (The Library of Christian Classics 17), Philadelphia PA 1969; James D. Tracy, *Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers: Erasmus' Strategy in Defense of De libero arbitrio*, in: ARG 78 (1987) 37–60.

2 On Luther's position, his dispute with Erasmus, and the positions of other reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, see Pasquale Ter ra ciano, *Omnia in figura: L'impronta di Origene tra '400 e '500* (Centuria 7), Rome 2012; Albrecht Brand ens tein-Z eppelin, *Vom unfreien Willen: Martin Luther in der Auseinandersetzung mit Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Bad Schussenried 2015; Jörg Noller, *Luther und Erasmus über Freiheit: Rezeption und Relevanz eines gelehrten Streits*, Freiburg/München 2020. On *Confessio Augustana*, see Irene Dingel, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, Göttingen 2014.

sal *Return of all Creatures* (1698) and *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* (1700).<sup>3</sup> The first text was authored by Johanna Eleonora Petersen, née von und zu Merlau, and the second by her husband Johann Wilhelm Petersen.<sup>4</sup> Both authors had developed their thinking in close relationship with the Frankfurt circles gathered around the theologian Philipp Jakob Spener and the lawyer Johann Jakob Schütz, two personalities linked to the beginning of the so-called Pietism.<sup>5</sup> Although the conventicles held by Spener and Schütz developed within a Lutheran environment, they did not refuse contact with marginal groups, such as Labadists, Bourignonists, English Puritans, the Kabbalists of Sulzbach, and Jacob Böhme. Such contacts also had a strong influence on the thinking of the Petersens.

The central theme of Johanna Eleonora's and Johann Wilhelm's treatises is the idea of the universal return of all beings to God at the end of time, or the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. This doctrine – more extensively explained in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* – is built upon the following ideas:

1. God's main attribute is love. His justice is based on and measured by his love; in this sense, punishment acquires a cathartic meaning.
2. Evil is an *ens morale*, it originated in the voluntary turning away of creatures' wills from God's will. Everything was created good at the beginning, therefore, what will be saved are not the Devil or fallen angels as such but the origi-

3 Das Ewige Evangelium Der Allgemeinen Wiederbringung Aller Creaturen. / Wie solche unter andern In rechter Erkäntnuß Des Mitlern Zustandes der Seelen nach dem Tode tieff gegründet ist / Und nach Außführung der endlichen Gerichte Gottes dermaleins völlig erfolgen wird. Vorgesteller / Und zum Preiß des ewigliebreichen Gottes / auch zur Erweckung einer heiligen Gegen-Liebe verkündiget / Von einem Mitgliede der D. Ph. G. Zu Ende ist beygefüget ein kurtzer ANHANG Von einigen harmonischen Schrifft-Stellen / und verschiedenen sonderbahnen Zeugnissen LUTHERI, Pamphilia, Gedruckt im Jahr Christi 1698; *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton*, Das ist: Das Geheimniß Der Wiederbringung aller Dinge, Darinnen In einer Unterredung zwischen Philaletham und Agathophilum gelehret wird, Wie das Böse und die Sünde ... solle aufgehoben und vernichtet; Hergegen die Creaturen Gottes ... durch Jesum Christum, Den Wiederbringer aller Dinge, ... errettet werden ... / Offenbahret durch Einen Zeugen Gottes und seiner Warheit, s.l., 1700. The first work is entirely reported in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* and constitutes a part of it.

4 On Johann Wilhelm (1649–1727) and Johanna Eleonora (1644–1724) Petersen, see Markus Matthis, Johann Wilhelm und Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Eine Biographie bis zur Amtsenthebung Petersens im Jahre 1692 (AGP 30), Göttingen 1993; Ruth Albrecht, Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Theologische Schriftstellerin des frühen Pietismus (AGP 45), Göttingen 2005; Elisa Bellucci, Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen's Eschatology in Context, Diss. Martin Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg 2020 (forthcoming).

5 The main historiographical references on Pietism and on the role of Spener (1635–1705) and Schütz (1640–1690) are Johannes Wallmann, Philipp Jakob Spener und die Anfänge des Pietismus (BHTh 42), Tübingen 1986; Martin Brecht (ed.), Geschichte des Pietismus, 4 vols., Göttingen 1993–2004; Andreas Deppermann, Johann Jakob Schütz und die Anfänge des Pietismus (BHTh 119), Tübingen 2002; Shantz H. Douglas, An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe, Baltimore 2013.

nally good creatures who were created according to God's image. Moreover, this implies that the roots of evil are not eternal.

3. Christ is at the center of the process of redemption. Nobody can be saved without recognizing him as the redeemer and without freely choosing him. Therefore, the Petersens' doctrine of *apokatastasis* is, on the one hand, strictly Christocentric and, on the other, based on the creatures' free assent to God's mercy.
4. To choose Christ is possible not only in this earthly life but also in the after-life, thanks to the doctrine of the middle condition of the soul. Contrary to the Lutheran position according to which souls receive their judgment immediately after death, the Petersens claimed that souls are in a "middle condition" which can last several "epochs" or "*aeonen*", during which souls undergo a purifying punishment and have the possibility of recognizing Christ as the Redeemer and converting to him.<sup>6</sup>

The Petersens claimed that the main source for discovering and supporting this doctrine was Scripture, particularly Rev. 21:4–6.<sup>7</sup> However, especially in light of the criticism received from other theologians, in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, Johann Wilhelm mentions several other authors who in former centuries also supported the doctrine of universal salvation or some ideas linked to it.<sup>8</sup> The

- 6 For a further explanation of these points, see Elisa Bellucci, Origenian, English and Kabbalistic Influences in Johann Wilhelm Petersen's Apokatastasis Doctrine: The case of *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, in: Alfons Fürt (ed.), Origen's Philosophy of Freedom in Early Modern Times: Debates about Free Will and Apokatastasis in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century England and Europe (Adamantiana 13), Münster 2019, 181–203; Bellucci, Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen (n. 4), ch. 1.
- 7 See in this regard *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen* written by herself: Pietism and Women's Autobiography in Seventeenth-Century Germany, ed. and trans. by Barbara Becker-Cantarelino, Chicago 2005, § 36, p. 91–93; and Johann Wilhelm Petersen, Lebens-Beschreibung Johannis Wilhelmi Petersen, Der Heiligen Schrift Doctoris, vormahls Professoris zu Rostock, nachgehends Predigers in Hanover an St. Egidii Kirche, darnach des Bischoffs in Lübeck Superintendentis und Hoff-Predigers endlich Superintendentis in Lüneburg, 1719, § 61, p. 297–301.
- 8 The publication of *Das ewige Evangelium* elicited considerable criticism. Among the authors who directly wrote on the positions presented in this text are Spener, Johann Fecht (1636–1716), Johann Joachim Wolf (1656–1706), Lichtscheid, Ferdinand Helffreich (1661–1707). Particularly significant to the scope of this article is the critique of Fecht in *Disputatio Theologica Inauguralis, libellum recentissimum, sub rubrica Das ewige Evangelium der allgemeinen Wiederbringung aller Creaturen / examinans, quam jussu maxime Reverendi ordinis Theologici, in illustri Universitate Rostochiensi, Praeside Dr. Johanne Fechtio, Rostock 1699*, where the theologian polemically asserts that the author of *Das ewige Evangelium* is like a "new evangelist" who seeks to announce a new gospel. Especially under the impact of this critique, Johann Wilhelm mentioned several "witnesses of the truth of universal salvation" in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* in order to support his position.

most frequently mentioned author is Origen. *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* includes, however, several other “witnesses to this truth,” among whom are Luther, Jane Lead, and the Kabbalistic tradition. To understand the reception of these authors, as well as the use that Petersen makes of them and the link between them, is the main scope of this article.

## 2. The Witnesses to the *Apokatastasis*

### a) Jane Lead

According to Johanna Eleonora’s and Johann Wilhelm’s autobiographical narrations, their interest in the doctrine of universal salvation was first aroused by *Eight Worlds*, a treatise published in 1695 and authored by the English theosophist Jane Lead. Together with Johan Pordage, Jane Lead established the Philadelphian Society in the 1690s, a group without ties to any particular confessional church. On the contrary, the group promoted a universal church and was also characterized by chiliastic expectations and the belief in the return of all beings to God.<sup>9</sup>

At first suspicious about Lead’s position, since she had grounded her universalist ideas on visions she claimed to have received directly from God, the Petersens sought to refute her thesis on the salvation of all beings. What led them eventually to embrace this doctrine was “not a mere conviction about Lead’s argumentation but a true discovery of it in the Bible.”<sup>10</sup> According to the Petersens’ narration, Scripture is thus the ultimate reason for supporting the doctrine of universal redemption. Lead’s treatise *Eight Worlds* served, however, as a catalyst for taking this doctrine into consideration. In addition to *Eight Worlds*, Lead’s *A Revelation of the Everlasting Gospel Message* (1697) was also highly influential on the Petersens’ understanding of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. Not only is the argumentation presented in Lead’s *Revelation* very similar to that of the Petersens, but it was also, most likely, an important reference for linking the doctrine of *apokatastasis* to Origen’s position.<sup>11</sup> Although Lead had denied the influence of other authors, including Origen, claiming that her standpoint was the “fruit of godly

9 On Jane Lead and the Philadelphian Society, see Julie Hirs t, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic*, Aldershot 2005; Ariel Hessa yon (ed.), *Jane Lead and her Transnational Legacy*, London 2016.

10 Johann Wilhelm Petersen, *Lebens-Beschreibung* (n. 7) §61, p 299.

11 Even though the Petersens do not mention this treatise as an important source for their doctrine of *apokatastasis*, Albr echt , *Johanna Eleonora Petersen* (n. 4) 277, states that it surely exerted an important influence on their position. On the similarities between the Petersens’ position and that presented in this treatise, see Bell uc ci , *Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen* (n. 4), ch. 3.2.1.

wisdom and not of human wisdom,” the preface to her work, written by her friend Francis Lee, directly established a link between the ideas presented in the treatise and Origen’s position. Lee writes:

“It matters not what Names the Zealots of any Party do fix upon what they have once received an Aversion against. Truth will be Truth, and Error will be Error, under whatever Disguise they pass. If Scripture and Nature be not against us, we hope we shall not be afraid, or asham’d though we should have as many Opponents as either Origen, or Athanasius had. Neither shall the Name of Origen be at all matter of confusion, if objected. There is a Letter of Resolution concerning Him, known well enough to have been written by an Eminent and Learned Bishop, and Printed in the Year 1661. That must be first confuted, together with other Authors of no mean Name, before we shall be asham’d of this Great Man.”<sup>12</sup>

Lead’s treatise could, therefore, represent a first suggestion that the Petersens might have resorted to Origen as a witness to the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.

## b) Origen

It was not uncommon among the Petersens’ contemporaries to turn to Origen in order to find support for the doctrine of universal salvation. As several authors’ works seem to suggest, to consider the Alexandrian as the first and most prominent supporter not only of the doctrine of *apokatastasis* but also that of the pre-existence of the souls was fairly common. In addition to the abovementioned preface to Lead’s treatise, Spener, writing on some contemporaries’ texts, commented on the “occult Origenism” contained in them; by “occult Origenism” he meant especially the doctrine of the pre-existence of the souls.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Leibniz wrote in his *System of Theology* about the Origenian doctrine of the salvation of all creatures: “[...] nor is there any necessity to recur to the merciful theory devised by Origen, who, affixing his own capricious interpretation to that mysterious passage of Paul, in which it is said that *all Israel should be saved*, extends the divine mercy eventually to every creature.” In a letter dealing with Petersen’s *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, Leibniz spoke about the Origenian doctrine of the pre-existence of the souls: “Voilà de plaisantes idées, aux quelles manque seulement la metempsychose, ou du moins la preexistence des ames, pour ache-

12 For a transcription of the manuscript see <http://www.passtheword.org/Jane-Lead/gospel.htm> (accessed 2 March 2020).

13 An Jacob Thomasius in Leipzig (Frankfurt a. M., 15. September 1675), in: Philipp Jakob Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit, 1666–1688*, ed. by Johannes Wallmann, vol. 2, Tübingen 1996, p. 174; An [Johann Ludwig Hartmann in Rothenburg o. T.] (Frankfurt a. M., Anfang Oktober 1675), in: *ibid.* p. 215; An Johann Wilhelm Petersen (Frankfurt a. M., 13. August 1677), in: *ibid.*, vol. 3, Tübingen 2000, p. 270.

ver l'origenisme.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, “Origen’s heretical doctrine of apokatastasis” was mentioned by Johann Joachim Wolf in *Kurtze Anmerckungen*, in criticism of Johanna Eleonora’s *Das ewige Evangelium*.<sup>15</sup> With the exception of Wolf, who cites some passages from Origen’s *On First Principles* dealing with universal salvation, the other authors generally speak about “Origenian doctrine,” without mentioning any particular work or passage. This presumes an indirect knowledge of the author, which might have been mediated by the English environment, where the opinions of Origen had been revived by the publication of *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of his Opinions* (1661).<sup>16</sup> In this *Letter*, the author defended some Origenian tenets, among them the pre-existence of the souls and universal salvation. Some authors, later known as the Cambridge Platonists, had also undertaken a rehabilitation of Platonic/Origenian topics, such as the two under discussion.<sup>17</sup> The English environment was also well known to both Spener and Leibniz, so that their knowledge of Origen’s position might have been directly influenced by the English authors.<sup>18</sup>

- 14 A system of theology by Godfrey William von Leibnitz, trans. and ed. by Charles William Russell, London 1850, p. 161; Leibniz and Thomas Burnett of Kemney (Hannover, 27 Februar 1702), in: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe I/20: Allgemeiner politischer und historischer Briefwechsel*, Berlin 2006, p. 811.
- 15 Johann Joachim Wolf, *Kurtze Anmerckungen / über die Frage: Ob nach diesem Leben / eine Allgemeine Wiederbringung aller Creaturen In Warheit zuhoffen ...: Nach Anleitung Des Ewigen Evangelii / Von einer Allgemeinen Wiederbringung aller Creaturen ... / Durch Johann J. Wolfium, Helmsted/Hamm 1699*, ch. II, p. 55–62.
- 16 *The Letter of Resolution* was published anonymously, and it was attributed to George Rust, even though its authorship still remains an open question. The reason for the anonymous publication was that its contents questioned the eternity of hell and supported universal salvation, a position which could lead to moral anarchy. On this letter, its importance for the debates on universal salvation and pre-existence of the soul, and its authorship, see Rhodri Lewis, “Origenian Platonism:” Joseph Glanvill on the Pre-existence of Souls, in: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69 (2006) 267–300. This *Letter of Resolution* is the same mentioned by Francis Lee in his preface to Lead’s work *A Revelation of the Everlasting Gospel Message* (see above n. 12).
- 17 On the Cambridge Platonists’ position on universal salvation and the pre-existence of the soul see Douglas Hedley, *The Cambridge Platonists and the “Miracle of the Christian World,”* in: Alfons Fürst/Christian Hengstermann (eds.), *Autonomie und Menschenwürde: Origenes in der Philosophie der Neuzeit* (Adamantiana 2), Münster 2012, 185–197; Sarah Hutson, *Origen and Anne Conway*, in: *ibid.* 221–234; and the contributions to Alfons Fürst/Christian Hengstermann (eds.), *Die Cambridge Origenisten. George Rusts Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of his Opinions* (Adamantiana 4), Münster 2013.
- 18 The Frankfurt lawyer Schütz had established several contacts all over Europe; thanks to his relationship with the Sulzbach Kabbalist Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, he had received several treatises from England, among which were works of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More. Leibniz was also in contact with the Cambridge Platonists and paid them several visits. See Rosmarie Zeller, *Naturmagie, Kabbala, Millennium: Das Sulz-*

Calling him “holy father,” the Petersens considered Origen an important authority from the primitive Church for the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.<sup>19</sup> This also presumes an influence from the English environment; the *Letter of Resolution* opens by referring to Origen as “the pious Father of the Church.”<sup>20</sup> Johann Wilhelm was aware that quoting Origen was not unproblematic and could give rise to further criticism in light of the numerous condemnations he had undergone, not least that of Luther.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, writing against the Petersens’ doctrine of *apokatastasis*, Wolf had remarked on “the controversial figure of Origen” in order to discredit the Petersens’ position, saying that Origen’s ideas could not be considered orthodox, in that he was taught by a heretic.<sup>22</sup>

In light of these problems, Johann Wilhelm spends several pages defending and rehabilitating Origen on the basis of his good and pious life. Following Eusebius’ and Nicephorus’ narrations on Origen’s life, Johann Wilhelm shows that, even though Origen came into contact with a heretic and learned grammar and other liberal disciplines from him, he never had him as a preceptor in theology.<sup>23</sup> Petersen points out some aspects of Origen’s life to show his piety, “so that the

bacher Projekt um Christian Knorr von Rosenroth und der Cambridger Platoniker Henri More, in: *Morgen-Glantz* 11 (2001) B–75; Deppermann, Johann Jakob Schütz (n. 5) 240.

- 19 To refer to a Father of the Church in order to corroborate a theological position was not uncommon among Protestants, despite their rejection of the tradition as doctrinal principle. On the use of the Patristic tradition in Protestantism, see Peter Frankel, *Testimonia Patrum: The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philipp Melancthon*, Geneva 1961; Günter Frank /Thomas Leinkauf/Markus Wriedt (eds.), *Die Patristik in der Frühen Neuzeit: Die Relektüre der Kirchenväter in den Wissenschaften des 15. bis 18. Jahrhunderts (Melancthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten 10)*, Stuttgart 2006; Irene Backus, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Patristic Tradition*, in: Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.), *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy (Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 40)*, Leiden/Boston 2013, 91–117.
- 20 [George Rust], *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of his Opinions*, London 1661 (reprinted with a Bibliographical Note by Marjorie H. Nicolson, New York 1933), without pagination (p. 17).
- 21 On the condemnations of Origen, see Elisabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton NJ 1992; Rowan Williams, *Art. Origenes/Origenismus*, in: *TRE* 25 (1995) 397–420, here 417; Ter raciano, *Omnia in figura* (n. 2) 10–23.
- 22 Wolf, *Kurtze Anmerckungen* (n. 15) p. 61. Wolf remarks on the fact that after the death of his father, Leonides, Origen lived at the home of a woman in Alexandria where he had daily conversations with a heretic; in this way, he sought to discredit his orthodoxy further.
- 23 Petersen, *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* (n. 3), *Gespräch I*, lxxviii §§ 9–11, p. 56–58. Petersen quotes from Rufinus’ Latin translation of Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* VI 2,12–5 (GCS Eus. 2, 522–524), and from Nicephorus Callistus, *hist. eccl.* V 4, Basel 1560, p. 212 (PG 145, 176). Peterson quotes from the Latin translation of Johannes Langus (printed in PG 145, 175). For these references, see also the reprint with added footnotes by Alfons Fürst of Petersen’s *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, *Gespräch I*, lxxvii § 1, p. 52 – lxxvii § 13, p. 72, in: *Fürst, Origen’s Philosophy of Freedom* (n. 6) 196–283.

reader can recognize the good fountain from which so many admirable doctrines sprang.<sup>24</sup> Despite the fact that Origen encountered numerous troubles, Petersen explains, he never disavowed his faith; on the contrary, he converted several people. Among the numerous works he wrote, Petersen continues, most were considered heretical after his death, when he could no longer defend himself. He also briefly mentions the fact that several of Origen's works were elaborated on by Rufinus, without, however, commenting further on this fact.<sup>25</sup> As to the condemnations, according to Petersen, they were caused by envy; specifically, they were determined by Demetrius' position and by the Emperor Justinian, whose opinions on Origen became the most influential.

The scheme adopted by Petersen to defend Origen by advocating his good and pious life was not a novelty. Other authors had already undertaken a similar defense in the previous century; among these he mentions Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus, Pierre-Daniel Huet, Merlin, Halloix, and Trithemius.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, one year before the publication of *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, Gottfried Arnold, a German theologian and Church historian, had devoted several apologetic pages to Origen's life in his monumental work *Unpartheische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* (1699). Arnold reported the position of other authors who defended Origen and, without taking a definitive position on the matter, remarked that sentences of heresy are often the result of particular opinions. Even though Petersen does not directly quote Arnold, the latter could represent a source for Petersen's defense of Origen's life, as the arguments presented are the same: the Alexandrian converted several people; he was a learned man, as his ample written works prove; he could not answer criticisms as most of these were made after his death; the charges and condemnations which he received were caused mainly by the opinion of some authors, such as Demetrius and Justinian, which became the generally accepted opinions on Origen's person and doctrine.<sup>27</sup>

After defending Origen from the charge of heresy, Petersen reports several passages in order to corroborate his doctrine of *apokatastasis* on the basis of the Alexandrian's writings. The long quotations from Origen's texts testify to a direct

24 Petersen, *ibid.* Gespräch I, lxxix–lxxxv, p. 58–66.

25 *Ibid.* Gespräch II, lxxxvii § 1, p. 88.

26 *Ibid.* Gespräch I, lxxxv, p. 65f. and Gespräch II, lxxxvii § 1, p. 88. On the position of these authors on Origen see Ter ra ci ano, *Omnia in figura* (n. 2).

27 Gottfried Arnold, *Unpartheische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments biß auf das Jahr Christi 1688*, Frankfurt 1699, p. 102–104. Although Petersen does not quote Arnold on this point, he quotes the work of the Church historian from other sections of the treatise. Petersen's knowledge of Arnold's *Unpartheische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* is, moreover, attested by the fact that he had this work in his library, as his library catalogue testifies, see *Bibliotheca Peterseniana Id Est Apparatus Librarius, Quo, Dum Viveret, Usus Est ... die XVII. Sept, seqq, An. MDCCXXXI, Berolini in Platea vulgo die Fridrichs-Strasse dicta auf dem Fridrichswerder*, in *Aedibus Küsterianis*.

knowledge of his work, which Petersen read in the edition of Erasmus published in Basel in 1571.<sup>28</sup> Origen's position is quoted to explain several points linked to the *apokatastasis*. Quoting *On First Principles* III 6, Petersen explains that he was among the first Christian authors to recognize the depth of God's mercy and to speak about the "eternal gospel" (another expression the Petersens use to indicate the doctrine of universal salvation).<sup>29</sup> Petersen also refers to Origen to define the meaning of the word *apokatastasis*: as Origen explains in *Homilia XI in Hieremiam*, to restore something means to bring it back to the place from whence it comes.<sup>30</sup> Referring to the third book of Origen's *On First Principles*, Petersen explains that the Devil himself will not be restored, but only his original angelic essence. Chapter 1 of the third book of *On First Principles* is quoted, among other works, about God's economies and the fact that salvation occurs in different epochs.<sup>31</sup> The theologian of Alexandria is, moreover, mentioned to clarify two other crucial points: the figure of Christ, and the relationship between free will and God's mercy. About Christ, Petersen quotes from Origen's *In Evangelium Johannis*, where the theologian claims that Christ came after John but existed before him. This passage is mentioned to prove that Christ is the beginning of every creature, from whom the entire creation comes and, therefore, through whom every creature can be restored to its original form.<sup>32</sup> Concerning the issue of the relationship between creatures' free will and God's mercy, Origen's *On First Principles* III 1 is mentioned as a "harmonious" position between those who highlight the necessity of mercy and those who, on the contrary, remark on the importance of free will. Petersen agrees with Origen that men can choose the good through their own will thanks to God's help, but, when their will is turned away from God, he intervenes through punishment to bring his creatures' wills back to him.<sup>33</sup>

The writings of Origen represent for the Petersens an important reference to support their doctrine of *apokatastasis* and to explain several points linked to it. In this sense, Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann rightly places Petersen's *Mysterion*

28 The edition used by Petersen is Erasmus, *Origenis Adamantii Magni Illius et Vetusti Scripturarum Interpretis Opera quae quidem extant omnia doctiss. virorum studio iam olim translate & recognita: Nunc vero ... ab innumeris repurgata mendis. Cum Vita Auctoris, & Indice copiosissimo*, Basel 1571.

29 Petersen, *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* (n. 3), Vorrede, § 1 and § 3. The quotation is from Erasmus, *Origenis Adamantii* (n. 28), part. I, p. 736. The expression "eternal gospel" is taken from Rev. 14:6 f. According to the Petersens, such "everlasting proclamation" is the universal salvation.

30 Ibid. Gespräch I, ii § 10, p. 4. The quotation is from Erasmus, *ibid.* part. I, p. 607.

31 Ibid. Gespräch I, cxx §§ 1–4, p. 17–18 and § 8, p. 120f. The quotation is from Erasmus, *ibid.* part. I, p. 717.

32 Ibid. Gespräch I, cxxx § 9, p. 136. The quotation is from Erasmus, *ibid.* part. II, p. 267.

33 Ibid. Gespräch I, ccxcviii § 3, p. 267. The quotation is from Erasmus, *ibid.* part. I, p. 722.

*apokatastaseos panton* in the Origenian tradition.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, Origen's name is quoted alongside that of other authors. It is useful to analyze Petersen's use of these authors, so as to understand the role and the reception of the Alexandrian in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* better.

### c) Luther

It is remarkable to mention Luther among the witnesses of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, since the Wittenberg theologian had openly criticized Origen's doctrine of universal salvation. Especially Johanna Eleonora's *Das ewige Evangelium* devotes several pages to Luther's position. Among other excerpts, a letter from Luther to Hans von Rechenberg dated 1522 is cited. Here the theologian of Wittenberg answers the question whether it is possible that someone who dies without faith can be saved. Luther's answer at first refutes Origen's position, for, according to the Alexandrian, God will undoubtedly save everyone, the Devil included, a position that, according to Luther, cannot be asserted with certainty. On the contrary, the theologian of Wittenberg remarks that without faith nobody can be saved. He then seems to reconsider his position and admits: "Who would doubt that he [scil. God] can do that [scil. save everyone]? But, that he will actually do that is impossible to prove."<sup>35</sup> Starting from this assertion, the Petersens claim that Luther could not grasp the truth of universal salvation thoroughly because the state of the Church was not yet completely fallen and the times were not yet ripe to understand how wide and deep God's mercy and love are.<sup>36</sup> What was admitted by Luther as a remote possibility becomes for the Petersens a certainty, clearly revealed by the Spirit through the reading of Scripture.

Referring to Luther, the Petersens seek to establish a continuity between their own position and the Lutheran tradition, and, in so doing, further to defend their position from the charge of heterodoxy. The references to Luther, however, occur in selected passages from his works that the Petersens can use in their favor, disregarding other points not compatible with their standpoint.<sup>37</sup>

34 See Wilhelm Schmid t-B iggemann , *Philosophia Perennis: Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought* (AIHI 189), Dordrecht 2004, 359–368.

35 Petersen, *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* (n. 3), *Ewiges Evangelium, Vorbericht*, p. 30 f. For the letter, see Luther, WA 10/2, 322–326: *Ein Sendbrief über die Frage, ob auch jemand, ohne Glauben verstorben, selig werden möge* (1522). Translation mine.

36 Petersen, *ibid.* *Gespräch I*, lxvi § 1, p. 37.

37 The reference to Luther is also based on the idea that revelation is progressive. According to the Petersens, Luther could glimpse the truth of universal salvation, but, since the times were not yet ripe, he could not completely grasp and understand this truth, as they did. The possibility of progress in revelation is strictly linked to the expectation of the last times,

## d) The Kabbalistic Tradition

Origen and Luther represent for the Petersens two important witnesses to the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. The former is an authority from the primitive Church, cited in order to show that their position is not the fruit of a “new gospel;” the latter is an important reference in asserting their continuity with the Lutheran tradition. The main source that helped the Petersens to explain universal salvation was, however, the Kabbalistic tradition. The Kabbalah is a mystical interpretation of the Talmud developed by some rabbis during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries in Provence and Spain. It successively entered Christian environments, starting with Pico della Mirandola’s *900 Theses*, and it found a quite large resonance among Christian authors, such as the Franciscan friar Francesco Zorzi, the German Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin, and, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Kabbalists of Sulzbach, Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont and Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, who used it to interpret the Bible. What attracted Christian authors to this kind of Jewish wisdom was the idea of finding through it God’s primordial wisdom concealed in Scripture and, in this way, to disclose its mysteries better. The main focus in studying the Jewish Kabbalah was, however, not Jewish culture but as a means for corroborating the Christian proclamation.<sup>38</sup>

Among the several Kabbalist authors and themes mentioned in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, two themes are particularly significant: the impossibility of creatures sinning eternally and Christ as cosmic redeemer. On the basis of these two tenets, Petersen can assert and explain the necessity of the return of all beings to God. Drawing from the Sulzbach Kabbalist Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont and from the English philosopher Anne Conway (who learned the Kabbalah directly from van Helmont), Petersen explains that creatures cannot sin to infinity, for they have no eternal paradigm to follow. As Anne Conway illustrates in her *Principia philosophiae*, spirit and matter are opposite ends of a continuum, although with a difference: only spirit is infinite. Creatures can ascend towards spirit and the good or descend towards matter and evil, but, as matter is not infinite, they cannot proceed towards evil forever. Conway believed that,

particularly to the prophetic passage contained in Dan. 12:4, where it is stated that knowledge will be increased in the last time before the end of the world. However, this position also finds a hermeneutical basis on Coccejus’ federal theology. For the use of Luther in the Petersens’ work, see Bellucci, Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen (n. 4), ch. 3.2.5; for Petersen’s reference to Coccejus’ federal theology, see Bellucci, *ibid.* ch. 2.2.4.

38 On the Kabbalah in general, see Otto Betz, Art. Kabbalah, in: TRE 17 (1988) 487–509; Gershom Scholem, Art. Kabbalah, in: Encyclopedia Judaica 10 (2007) 489–653; *id.*, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, Princeton NJ 2019. On the history of the Christian Kabbalah, see Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Geschichte der christlichen Kabbalah*, 4 vols., Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2012–2015. See also the articles on specific topics in: Morgen-Glantz, *Zeitschrift der Christian-Knorr-von-Rosenroth-Gesellschaft* (1991ff.).

at a certain point, the creatures' sin would have worked as an "impulse" for them to become better and to ascend towards spirit.<sup>39</sup> Without being concerned with metaphysical speculations on the ontological character of the world, Petersen retains the core of this position: evil cannot proceed to infinity, for it has no eternal paradigm, and God's punishment has a pedagogical and cathartic character, it is not to condemn sinners but to turn creatures back to good and to God.

In *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, such a return to God is, however, not described as an automatic process. The Petersens' doctrine of *apokatastasis* remains strictly Christocentric, and no one can be saved apart from Christ's mercy. The Petersens, in this way, seek on the one hand to show the consistency of their position with the Lutheran tenet of *sola gratia*; on the other, they resort to the Kabbalistic tradition, giving Christ a cosmological connotation.<sup>40</sup> Quoting from Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbalah Denudata*, a collection of Jewish Kabbalistic texts published between 1677 and 1684, Petersen explains the biblical passage from 1 Cor. 15:21f.: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>41</sup> Christ's universal redemption is made possible by his universal meaning that is explained through the Kabbalistic figures of *Ensoph* and *Adam Cadmon*. According to the Kabbalah, *Ensoph* (or *Ein Sof*), which literally means "without end," is the concept which indicates God. From the *Ensoph*, thanks to successive contractions, the *Sefiroth* come out; these are a representation of the entire creation. Between the *Ensoph*, which, as in the negative theology, has no attribute, and the *Sefiroth*, which represent the created universe, there is a medium, the

39 Petersen, *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* (n. 3), Gespräch I, xcvi §§2–4, p. 84–86. Petersen quotes from Francisci Mercurii Freyherrn von Helmont Paradoxal Discourses, oder, – Ungemeine Meynungen von dem Macrocosmo und Microcosmo, das ist – von der grossen und kleinern Welt und derselben Vereinigung mit einander worinnen von der Sonnen, Mond und Sternen, und ihrer Würckung und Einfluss, wie auch insonderkeit von dem Menschen, Thieren, Erdgewächsen, Metallen und Mineralien, Steinen und Salzen sampt anderen Curiosen Dingen aus der Erfahrung nachdencklich gehandelt wird. Auss der Englischen in die Hochdeutsche Sprache übersetzt durch Johann Lange, Hamburg, Verlegts Gottfried Liebernickel, 1691; and from Anne Conway, *Principia philosophiae antiquissimae et recentissimae de Deo, Christo & Creatura, id est de Spiritu et Materia in genere*, Amsterdam 1690. For a modern English edition of this text see Allison P. Coudert / Taylor Corse (eds.), *Anne Conway: The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, Cambridge 1996. On the positions of Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont and Anne Conway, see Allison Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614–1698)* (BSJS 9), Leiden 1999; Sarah Hutton, *Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher*, Cambridge 2004.

40 In a passage in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, Johann Wilhelm asserts that his doctrine of universal salvation is completely in agreement with the Lutheran church, whose faith is based on the fact that salvation is attained not through own efforts but only through Christ: Petersen, *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* (n. 3), Gespräch I, cxl § 1, p. 148.

41 On Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbalah Denudata*, see Coudert, *Impact of the Kabbalah* (n. 39) 100–136; Schmidtbiggemann, *Geschichte der christlichen Kabbala* (n. 38), vol. 3, 63–187

figure of *Adam Cadmon*, in which everything is contained. This Kabbalistic figure is nothing other than the Messiah's soul for the Jews or God's firstborn for Christians, as Petersen states, also mentioning other Christian kabbalists, such as Anne Conway and Guillaume Postel.<sup>42</sup>

The explanation of the figure of Christ through the Kabbalistic cosmic figure of *Adam Cadmon* can be taken as a case in point for understanding not only the influence of the Kabbalistic tradition, but also the role this tradition plays in the Petersens' doctrine of *apokatastasis* doctrine. Themes borrowed from the Kabbalah are often the lens through which Petersen interprets biblical passages and the work of other authors. The figure of *Adam Cadmon* is used by Petersen not only to explain the biblical verses from the First Letter to the Corinthians, but also to read the work of other authors, such as that of Origen and (Pseudo-)Clement of Rome. At the conclusion of this passage on *Adam Cadmon*, Petersen introduces quotations from Origen's *In Evangelium Johannis* and from (Pseudo-)Clement of Rome's *Recognitiones*, where they comment on the beginning of the prologue to John's gospel and claim that Christ was with the Father since the very beginning even though he was born after John the Baptist and became true man by being born of the Virgin Mary. In so doing, Petersen shows that their position expresses the same meaning as the Kabbalistic figure of *Adam Cadmon*, i. e., that each creature can return to God only through Christ since all creatures descend from him, Christ being the first fruit of the entire creation.<sup>43</sup>

### 3. The Conceptual Framework

In juxtaposing Origen with the Kabbalah, as well as with other traditions, the Petersens were not innovative; in fact, they could find numerous examples among their contemporaries, starting with the Cambridge Platonists. After the rehabilitation of Origen's opinions in 1661 with the publication of the *Letter of Resolu-*

42 Petersen, *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton* (n. 3), Gespräch I, cxxx §§7–9, p. 135f. On the figure of *Adam Cadmon* and its generation as explained in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, see also Schmid t-B iggemann , *Philosophia perennis* (n. 34) 363. On the figure of *Adam Cadmon* in the Jewish Kabbalah, see Gershom Scho lem , Art. Adam Cadmon, in: *Encyclopedia Judaica* 2 (2007) 248 f.

43 Petersen, *ibid.* Gespräch I, cxxx §9, p. 136. He quotes from Erasmus, *Origenis Adamantii* (n. 28), part II, p. 267: *Christus etiam dicitur praeter haec Vir veniens post Johannem, ante ipsum existens, ut edoceamur, etiam Hominem Filii Dei Divinitati ipsus commixtum ante fuisse, quam nascetur ex Maria, quem hominem dicit se nescire Johannes*, and from (Pseudo-)Clement of Rome's *Recognitiones* I 52,3 (GCS Ps.-Clem. 2, 38): *Christus ab initio & semper erat, per singulas quasque generationes piis, latenter licet, semper tamen aderat, his precipue, a quibus exspectabatur, quibus frequenter apparuit.*

tion, some authors came to adopt the position of the Alexandrian.<sup>44</sup> The reception of Origen (together with Neo-Platonic tenets) represented, in turn, fertile soil for the reception of the Kabbalah, which some Cambridge Platonists came to know thanks to their contacts with Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont. After all, the Kabbalah endorsed by van Helmont and by his disciple Anne Conway was the strand developed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, i. e., the Lurianic Kabbalah, a kind of Kabbalah influenced also by Neo-Platonic positions.<sup>45</sup> In turn, such a fusion between Origen and the Kabbalistic tradition in English authors is rooted in several Renaissance philosophers. The first to establish this link was Pico della Mirandola at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In his *900 Theses*, Pico presented the idea of a *prisca theologia* or *philosophia perennis*, i. e., the godly wisdom conveyed to Moses and from Moses to other authors, both heathens, such as Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras and Plato, and Christians, such as Origen, who is, for Pico, a witness to this *prisca sapientia*.<sup>46</sup> Following on from Pico, the Franciscan friar and Christian Kabbalist Francesco Zorzi, an author widely quoted in *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, also supported the idea of Origen as a witness to this original wisdom.<sup>47</sup>

In a polemical sense, the link between Origen and the Kabbalah was also established by the Lutheran theologian Daniel Colberg in *Das Platonisch-Hermetische*

44 See the references given in n. 17 above.

45 See Hut t o n, Anne Conway (n. 39) 164 f. Origen's name never appears in Conway's *Principles*, however, as Hutton explains in another article after analyzing the parallels between Conway and Origen on universal salvation, "the two most important strands in her thinking are Neoplatonism and Kabbalism. These do share a number of features, since Jewish Kabbalistic thought was heavenly influenced by Neoplatonism. She owes to these systems of thought the hierarchism of her own system, her concept of a single universal substance and the idea of the monad. In Kabbalah she would have found confirmation of, perhaps inspiration for, the restorative character of her system. She certainly aimed to devise a system which would be acceptable to Jews and Muslims as well as to Christians [...]. So, while we can single out kabbalist, Origenist and Neoplatonic sources for Anne Conway, it is impossible to privilege one as the major source." Sarah Hut t o n, Henry More and Anne Conway on Preexistence and Universal Salvation, in: Marialuisa Bald i (ed.), "Mind Senior to the World." Stoicismo e origenismo nella filosofia platonica del Seicento inglese, Milan 1996, 1 B–125, here 125.

46 On Pico's construction of Origen as Kabbalist, see Ter ra ci ano , *Omnia in figura* (n. 2) 98–101. The term *philosophia perennis* was coined in the following century by Agostino Steuco; it is also used, however, in an anachronistic way to indicate Pico's position. On this tradition, see Charles B. Schmit t, Perennial Philosophy from Agostino Steuco to Leibniz, in: *JHI* 27 (1966) 505–532; id., *Prisca theologia e philosophia perennis*: Due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna, in: *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro*, Florence 1970, 211–226; Schmid t-B iggemann , *Philosophia perennis* (n. 34).

47 See Schmid t-B iggemann , *ibid.* 207. 232.

*Christenthum*, published in two volumes between 1690 and 1691.<sup>48</sup> Colberg's treatise criticizes the concept of *philosophia perennis*, also polemically called "revelation" by him. According to Colberg, the "Platonic-Hermetic" tradition is a kind of theology based upon some Platonic tenets, such as the pre-existence of the soul and existence of an *anima mundi*, which lead to pantheism and atheism. Among the proponents of this theology, Colberg cites Origen and the Kabbalistic tradition. According to Colberg, Origen directly inherited the Platonic tradition, introducing some errors into Christianity concerning the doctrine of the Trinity (Origen would support a sort of subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father), the creation of angels and human beings (seen as a part of God's essence), and the pre-existence of souls (all souls have an originally good image lost after the Fall, a position directly linked to universal restoration). This kind of theology, disseminated in the Middle Ages thanks to Eriugena's translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, is, according to Colberg, the same theology proposed by the Kabbalah. He does not describe in detail the origin of the Kabbalah, however he concisely explains that the Kabbalah is a mystic theology and that every kind of mystic theology is a form of Platonism.

A link between the Kabbalah and Origen can also be found in Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbalah Denudata*. Even though Knorr von Rosenroth was not a supporter of the *philosophia perennis* like some other authors, the Kabbalist considered the Hebrew language to be the original language which could help uncover the mysteries of the Scriptures. In this context, he indicated that Origen was one of the authors who knew and made use of this language.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In light of this short analysis, a revival of Origenian motives and the influence of the Origenian tradition is clearly identifiable in the Petersens' doctrine of *apokatastasis*. The Petersens found in the work of the Alexandrian an important ally from the primitive Church in supporting their position on universal salvation. Nevertheless, the reception of Origen's work was mediated through the works of other authors, especially the Christian Kabbalists, which, for the Petersens, are

48 Daniel Colberg, *Das Platonisch-Hermetische Christenthum, Begreifend die Historische Erzählung vom Ursprung und vielerley Secten der heutigen Fanatischen Theologie, unterm Namen der Paracelsisten, Wigelianer, Rosencreutzer, Quäcker, Böhmisten, Wiedertäufer, Bourignisten, Labadisten und Quieristen*, Franckfurt/Leipzig 1690–1691. On Colberg's position, see Sicco Lehmann-Brauns, *Weisheit in der Weltgeschichte: Philosophiegeschichte zwischen Barock und Aufklärung (Frühe Neuzeit 99)*, Tübingen 2004, 112–18.

49 Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, *Kabbalah Denudata, 1677–1684*, vol. 2, *Lectori Philebraeo*, § 41.

key to interpreting and explaining the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. Such a reception, moreover, finds an explanation within the conceptual framework of the *philosophia perennis*, which, although not directly discussed by the Petersens, remains the horizon within which they quote different authors and thanks to which they establish the parallel between Origen, the Kabbalah, and the other traditions mentioned.<sup>50</sup>

50 The concept of *philosophia perennis* is not directly discussed by Petersen. However, that Petersen was influenced by this conceptual background becomes evident especially from the second edition of *Mysterion apokatastaseos panton*, where he directly makes a reference to the perennial philosophy. For the use of this tradition in Petersen's work, see Bellucci, Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen (n. 4), ch. 3.2.6.

## CONCLUSION



# The Losable and the Unlosable

## Origen's Anthropological Achievement and its Impact throughout Time

THEO KOBUSCH, BONN

On almost all questions, the thought of Origen has been understood as the Christian inspired continuation of ancient philosophy, and it also appears so to the unbiased observer. Origen's realm of thought is – there can be no doubt – the universal realm of philosophy. It is natural reason, which is here king. Here, the most heterogeneous subjects find their place: from biblical interpretations to the philosophical knowledge of principles, from the doctrine of the soul to cosmology, from speculations on freedom to the philosophy of nature, from logic to hermeneutics – in this richest arsenal of writings from ancient literature everything pertaining to philosophy is contained.

### 1. Image and Likeness

Of special significance to philosophical intellectual history are the anthropological insights of Origen, one of which is the doctrine of the godlikeness of man. For Origen, it is expressed in Gen. 1:26f.: “Let us make man in our image and likeness.” To Origen, this is a philosophical sentence, not a statement of revelation. This is the case since the Book of Genesis to Origen and those who philosophize in his sense, alongside that of Ecclesiastes, represents the discipline of physics within Christian philosophy. Most notably, however, the verse from Genesis betrays a close affiliation with a Platonic tenet. One could surmise this when one bears in mind the implications of the Origenian interpretation of the verse. Origen has, in a precise way, distinguished between the concepts of the “image” and the “likeness.” He accuses Celsus of having neglected the difference between their meanings.<sup>1</sup> What is there only insinuated, Origen has expounded upon elsewhere in his work. What the philosophers, i. e., most of all Plato, called becoming godlike (*ὁμοίωσις θεῶν*), was indeed something that Moses had in mind when he gave an account of the first creation of man with the words: “And God spoke: Let us make man in our image and after our likeness.” Yet when Moses says in the next verse: “In the image of God He created him, as male and female he created them,” he has

1 Cf. Origen, Cels. IV 30 (GCS Orig. 1, 299).

not carelessly forgotten the likeness but instead sought to indicate by withholding the “likeness” that man has indeed received the “dignity of the image” (*imagine dignitas*) in his first creation, yet the completion of the “likeness” lies in his own hands.<sup>2</sup> The enduring foundation of the image has thus already been laid for each man, while becoming the likeness is a matter for the future.<sup>3</sup> The “accordance to the image” (*κατ’ εικόνα*) is therefore also something which belongs to each man, not merely to the first.<sup>4</sup> It is nothing other than what God has placed inside man, his “heart,” where God Himself abides, the concealed inner self, the inner man, the conscience or, to use a modern term, his subjectivity.<sup>5</sup>

Through the concept of the likeness (*ὁμοίωσις*), however, Origen is deeply connected to the philosophy of Plato. Origen has indeed seen or rather established this connection himself. In *On First Principles*, where he elucidates the godlikeness of man, he cites, in alignment with its meaning, the central passage from the *Theaetetus*: “The highest good, then, towards which every rational being hastens, which is also called the end of all things, is defined even by many among the philosophers in this way, that the highest good is to become as far as possible like God.”<sup>6</sup> When Origen then draws a connection between the *ὁμοίωσις* of Plato and the *ὁμοίωσις* which appears in the formula of the godlikeness of man in the Book of Genesis (*κατ’ εικόνα καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν*, Gen. 1:26), he initially follows the general early Christian claim of the “anciennity” of Christianity, according to which, that which appears to be acceptable to Christianity in Plato is already prefigured in the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Origen makes it clear that his doctrine of godlikeness must be seen in the light of Platonic philosophy.

2 Princ. III 6,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 280): *Hoc ergo quod dixit “ad imaginem dei fecit eum” et de similitudine siluit, non aliud indicat nisi quod imaginis quidem dignitatem in prima conditione percepit, similitudinis vero ei perfectio in consummatione servata est: scilicet ut ipse sibi eam propriae industriae studiis ex dei imitatione conscisceret, quo possibilitate sibi perfectionis in initiis data per imaginis dignitatem, in fine demum per operum expletionem perfectam sibi ipse similitudinem consummaret.*

3 In Ioh. comm. XX 22,18 (GCS Orig. 4, 355): οὗ κατ’ εικόνα γεγονάμεν, ἐσόμεθα καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ.

4 In Hier. hom. 2,1 (GCS Orig. 3<sup>2</sup>, 17): τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἢ ψυχὴ οὐ τοῦ πρώτου μόνου γέγονε “κατ’ εικόνα,” ἀλλὰ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου. τὸ γὰρ “ποίησωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εικόνα καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν ἡμετέραν” φθάνει ἐπὶ πάντας ἀνθρώπους.

5 Cf. in Gen. hom. 13,3 (GCS Orig. 6, 118): *Non ergo in loco neque in terra habitat Deus, sed in corde habitat. Et si locum Dei requiris, cor mundum est locus eius [...] est quidam coelestis sensus et imago Dei latens; 13,4 (6, 18): Intra te namque collocata est imago regis coelestis. Cum enim faceret hominem ex initio Deus, “ad imaginem et similitudinem suam fecit eum;” et hanc imaginem non extrinsecus, sed intra eum collocavit.* To the heart as conscience, see in Matth. comm. ser. 18 (GCS Orig. 11, 33).

6 Princ. III 6,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 280). Translation: p. 441 Behr . Cf. Plato, Theaet. I76b.

7 See Theo Kobusch , *Christliche Philosophie: Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, Darmstadt 2006, 51–57.

At first glance, the doctrine of godlikeness is characterized by an inner contradiction, which also seems to underlie the thought of many Church Fathers, the Cappadocians as well as Origen. For in Plato, we have this constellation of thought before us: on the one hand the idea of the absolute transcendence of God in the *Politeia* – which has set a precedent –, on the other, the basic notion of “becoming like God” (the *ὁμοίωσις θεῶ*) in the *Theaetetus* – which is also omnipresent in Christian as well as pagan philosophy in late antiquity and beyond. In order to be capable of dissolving this seemingly contradictory constellation, one must bring to mind what the center of Plato’s philosophy is, and what has always remained central to all forms of Platonism. That is the thesis that God, from a theoretical perspective, appears as a transcendent being, which eludes our thought, intuition, and language, and yet from a practical perspective, i. e., from a moral one, the same God is connected with man in the closest possible way. This also means that God, according to Plato and Platonism, is indeed beyond being (*Sein*) and thought, but not beyond good and evil. The practical is, in fact, clearly highlighted in those passage in Plato’s work which advert to the *ὁμοίωσις θεῶ*. This is evident in the case of the locus classicus *Theaetetus* 176b. Yet *Politeia* 500c also expresses this by having the concept of “imitation,” which has a pejorative connotation in the theoretical sphere, signify the most intense form of becoming like God. If other striking passages of his works are taken into account (*Phaidon* 82a, *Phaidros* 248a, *Timaios* 90a–c), there can be no doubt that Plato understood the practical way, practical knowledge, as the only passable bridge to the divine in the sense of becoming like it.

This is precisely the basic idea which is assimilated by Origen. On the one hand, Origen very strongly emphasizes the transcendence of God and for this purpose repeatedly utilizes the Platonic formula “beyond spirit and essence” in the positive sense.<sup>8</sup> On the other, his philosophy is shaped by the thought of the closeness of God to men, as well as by the idea of being capable of becoming like God. These can only go together or be thought of jointly, as in Plato, if a distinction is made between the claims of theoretical and practical reason. The doctrine of the absolute transcendence of God and all allusions to negative theology are to be apprehended in Origen, as well as later in the Cappadocians, as assertions of theoretical reason, which are valid only for theoretical reason. By contrast, the *ὁμοίωσις θεῶ* concerns, as the passage in the *Theaetetus* indicates, morality and is a matter of practical reason, i. e., the will, which alone can accomplish a coming closer to the divine.<sup>9</sup> This possibility is grounded not least in the univocity of the moral.

8 Cf. Origen, Cels. VII 38 (GCS Orig. 2, 188). In Cels. VI 64 (2, 134f.) it is interestingly deliberated whether the Platonic formula may only be applicable to the divine Father in Christianity.

9 See Theo Kobusch, Practical Knowledge in ‘Christian Philosophy’: A New Way to God, in: Markus Vinzent et al. (eds.), *Studia Patristica LXXXIV*, Leuven/Paris/Bristol 2017, 157–164.

The distinction between the image and the likeness is thus also the distinction between the theoretical and the practical. The image is the metaphysical foundation of human existence, the likeness is the practical realization, which is contingent on freedom. By establishing this distinction, Origen has laid the foundation of what would be received in subsequent times, though modified in manifold ways while remaining unvarying in its basic structure. From Didymus the Blind, Athanasius, Ephrem the Syrian, John Chrysostom, and later also John Philoponus, Maximus the Confessor through to the authors of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Honorius of Autun, Rupert of Deutz, and especially Bernard of Clairvaux – all of them understood the image as the immediately given, physical or metaphysical endowment of human nature which stands in opposition to the feature of likeness, which is not given physically, but rather must be acquired practically through free will and can also be lost.<sup>10</sup> This opposition can also be expressed thus – as is found, e. g., in Pseudo-Augustine, i. e., Alcher of Clairvaux, or Bernard of Clairvaux or in the school of Chartres – that the image is the theoretical faculty of cognition and the likeness consists in “love,” i. e., in the will.<sup>11</sup>

In this connection, the so-called Pseudo-Clementines, originating from the fourth century, called attention to a feature implicitly contained within the concepts of the image and the likeness, which is of eminent importance to their comprehension thereof but also to the understanding of freedom as such. In this, a new standpoint is taken, according to which the attribute of being the image of God belongs to each human being without exception and is unlosable, while the attribute of being a likeness is acquirable through moral deeds and yet is also a good which can be lost.<sup>12</sup> What is realized here is that the quality of being the image expresses that which is unlosable in human freedom, while the quality of being a likeness, expresses the losable element, be it, as will be subsequently said, through the sin of Adam or through personal guilt.

10 See id., *Bild und Gleichnis Gottes: Elemente menschlicher Freiheit*, in: Iñigo Atuch a et al. (eds.), *Mots Médiévaux offerts à Ruedi Imbach*, Porto 2011, 81–90.

11 Alcher of Clairvaux (= Ps.-Augustine), spir. et an. 39 (PL 40, 809): *Anima rationalis et intellectualis facta est ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei, ut factorem suum pro imagine cognoscat, et pro similitudine diligat. Ex imagine namque Dei habet rationem, et ex similitudine charitatem*. Walter of St. Victor, serm. 11,9 (CChr.CM 30, 100): *Illud quidem quod in nobis capax est diuinae cognitionis, nunc ratio, nunc intellectus, nunc imago, nunc mens nuncupatur; illud uero quod in nobis capax est dilectionis, aliquando uoluntas, aliquando affectus, aliquando similitudo, aliquando cor dicitur*. Hughes of St. Victor, sacr. christ. fid. I 6,2 (PL 176, 264): *Imago secundum rationem, similitudo secundum dilectionem; imago secundum cognitionem veritatis, similitudo secundum amorem virtutis*. Cf. also Johannes Scotus Eriugena, expos. in hier. coel. III 190 (CChr.CM 31,60): *Ad hoc enim conditus est homo ut imitatio, hoc est imago Dei, fieret per naturam et similitudo per cooperationem [...]*.

12 Pseudo-Clemens, recogn. V 15,2f. (GCS 51, 172): *absit hoc ab unoquoque audientium; hoc enim maledictum potius et convicium credendum est homini, qui imaginem dei in se gerit, etiamsi similitudinem perdidit*; V 23,2f. (51, 178): *in omni enim homine est imago dei, non in omnibus vero similitudo, sed ubi benigna anima est et mens pura*.

## 2. Person and Act

As significant as these aforementioned insights of the fourth century into the relation of the image and the likeness are, they are overshadowed by an interpretation which is still of historical import today. This occurs when the concept of the person is brought into play. As much as this new notion may appear as an insertion into the history of interpretation of the concepts of image and likeness, it is evident that it is a continuation of ancient Greek thought.

What appears like a *conclusio* of the deliberations in the fourth century is what Gregory of Elvira says with reference to a biblical quotation: the image of God within man expresses his personhood, the likeness, however, is an allusion to his deeds.<sup>13</sup> When Gregory in a later passage of the *Tractatus Origenis* refers back to this interpretation by conceiving of the image as the “countenance” (*uultus*) of the human being, this means that he clearly knew of these connections of the Latin concept of person with the Greek concept of *πρόσωπον*, which are otherwise only later transmitted to us by Boethius. Accordingly, however, a person is one who can stand in front of us – as a face –, i. e., face us.<sup>14</sup> Thereby the image is the freedom of the personhood, yet the likeness is the freedom of our actions. The first kind of freedom is unlosable, but the second can be lost. Even Immanuel Kant speaks of the human dignity, which belongs only to the person, as being unlosable.<sup>15</sup>

This distinction between the person and his acts or deeds goes back to the influence of ancient rhetoric. There lies the origin of this concept of person, which, even before Roman Law, was distinguished from the concept of “thing.” Before the person entered the domain of philosophy and theology, he was the chief subject of rhetoric. Here, in a great rhetorical tradition, the foundation was laid for the development of the modern concept of the person, insofar as it becomes thematic in connection with practical philosophy. For here it has to do with the person who must take responsibility for a particular deed before a court. This is the subject of the kind of rhetoric which was founded by Hermagoras of Temnos (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) and which Hermogenes of Tarsus (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) and his famous commentators (Sopater and Syrianus) continued in the Greek domain. In the Latin world, it was first presented by Cicero in his early work *De inventione* and, in part, also in later works, and by the *Auctor ad Herennium*. The commentaries on Cicero by Marius Victorinus and Thierry of Chartres are of outstanding significance to

13 Gregory of Elvira, tract. Orig. I 21 (CChr.SL 69, 10.233f.): *Diximus enim imaginem in persona esse, similitudinem uero in factis (facto) [...]*.

14 Ibid. I 23 (69, 10.249 f.): *Imago enim uultus est, ut iam supra retulimus, similitudo uero referatur in factis*. Cf. Boethius, c. Eut. et Nest. III 14–16 (p. 86 Ste war t /Rand): *Graeci quoque has personas πρόσωπα vocant ab eo quod ponantur in facie atque ante oculos obtegant uultum: παρὰ τοῦ πρὸς τοὺς ὄψεις τίθεσθαι*.

15 Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten* §11, AA VI 434.

the rhetorical tradition.<sup>16</sup> Regarding the great rhetorical tradition, i. e., of Cicero and his great commentator Marius Victorinus, one must even say that the person and what he does are the actual subject of rhetoric. The person is the *who* of a human being, the *negotium* is the *what*, namely what he has done.<sup>17</sup> This *what* is the deed. Cicero calls it the *negotium* and thereby translates the Greek concept of *πρᾶγμα*, which is, however, also rendered in the Latin with *factum* or *res*.<sup>18</sup> Hermogenes is quite familiar with the distinction between “person” and “thing.”<sup>19</sup> The Greek writings on rhetoric, above all the writings of Hermogenes, the commentators Sopater and Syrianus, and, not least, the anonymous commentators, are all characterized by the opposition of *πρόσωπον* and *πρᾶγμα*. “Far divided are thing and person from one another,” says one of them.<sup>20</sup> *Πρᾶγμα* here always means the thing or the act itself which is involved in a context of action.<sup>21</sup> The rhetorical tradition thereby ties in with the original meaning of the word *πρᾶγμα*, which we find frequently verified, e. g., in the works of Plato.

Likewise Gregory of Elvira’s equation of the person with the face or the countenance stems from the rhetorical tradition. The facial expression can there be considered alongside the origin, name, sex, bodily posture, and so forth as an argument as to how a person who is accused of a deed before court should be morally appraised.<sup>22</sup>

- 16 Hermagoras *Fragmenta* (Matthes); Hermogenes (*Corpus Rhetoricum*); Sopater, scholia ad Herm. *status seu artem rhet.* (p. 1–26 Patillon); Syrianus/Sopater/Marcellinus, scholia ad Herm. *status* (*Rhetores Graeci* IV, 39–846); Syrianus, in Herm. *comm.* (Rabe); Cicero, *inv.*; Marius Victorinus, *explan.* in *Cic. rhet.* (CChr.SL 132); The Latin Rhetorical Commentaries by Thierry of Chartres (STPIMS 84). On the Ciceronian tradition, see the enlightening explanations of Peter von Moos, *Rhetorik, Dialektik und “civilis scientia” im Hochmittelalter*, in: Johannes Fried (Hg.), *Dialektik und Rhetorik im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, München 1997, 133–55, here 139 ff.; further: Mary Dicke, *Some Commentaries on the De Inventione and Rhetorica ad Herennium of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Century*, in: *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1968) 1–41, where the important role of Manegold von Lautenbach is emphasized, and Cristina Pepe, *The Rhetorical Commentary in Late Antiquity*, in: *AION* 40 (2018) 86–108.
- 17 Marius Victorinus, *explan.* in *Cic. rhet.* I 26,7 (CChr.SL 132, 116): *Atque haec ipsa Cicero propriis et apertioribus et ad rem uicinioribus nominibus appellauit: ‘quis’ enim personam dixit, ‘quid’ negotium uocauit.* Cf. Hermogenes, *stas.* III 9 f. (*Corpus Rhetoricum* II, 23f.).
- 18 Anonymus, in Herm. *comm.* (*Rhetores Graeci* VII/1, 125), explicitly states: *πράγματα γὰρ ἐν ταῦθα τὰς πράξεις καὶ τὰς ἐνεργείας τὰς διὰ τῶν προσώπων ἐνεργουμένας [...].*
- 19 Cf. Sopater, scholia ad Herm. *status seu artem rhet.* I 5,1 (p. 46 Patillon): *τὴν δὲ ἀμφισβήτησιν ταύτην ἀνάγκη περὶ τὰ πρόσωπα γίνεσθαι καὶ πράγματα.*
- 20 Anonymus, in Herm. *comm.* (*Rhetores Graeci* VII/1, 117): *πολὴ γὰρ ἀλλήλων κεχώρισται πρᾶγμα καὶ πρόσωπον.*
- 21 Pierre Hadot has quite rightly pointed out in an excellent essay: *Sur divers sens du mot πρᾶγμα dans la tradition philosophique grecque*, in: Pierre Aubenque (ed.), *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique*, Paris 1980, 309–319, that from the juridical-rhetorical perspective *πρᾶγμα* must not be regarded as an “événement brut.” However, the context in which the *πρᾶγμα* stands is not a context of thought or discourse, but a context of action.
- 22 Cf. Iulius Victor, *ars rhetorica: comm. arg. locis* 1 (p. 33 Giomini/Celentano): *Namque a persona considerabitur patria, nomen, genus, corporis habitudo, mores, uita, amici, aetas,*

The close connection of person and face already lies in the Greek concept of *πρόσωπον* itself. Indeed, *πρόσωπον*, of which Boethius, again, reminds us in late antiquity, is the mask which the actor holds in front of his face, who in this way conceals his own countenance (*uultus*).<sup>23</sup> In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in the “century of Boethius,” the visage then virtually stands for the person, and particularly, as William of Conches, the main representative of the school of Chartres, says with a daring etymology, as the expression of will, and this in contrast to the frontal visage, the countenance, which reflects moral beauty or ugliness.<sup>24</sup> Hence there are, according to this tradition, connections between what constitutes a person and his acts, and yet they are to be distinguished.

### 3. Person and Action in the Modern Age

The effect of the Origenian distinction between the image and the likeness, which is made comprehensible by Gregory of Elvira as the distinction between the person and the act, is noticeable even in our own times. For it is this distinction which constitutes the essential feature of the modern philosophical theory of forgiveness. What the four main proponents of this theory, namely Paul Ricoeur, Robert Spaemann, David Heyd and Klaus Michael Kodalle, unanimously and uniformly say is precisely this: the one who forgives knows about the distinction between the person and his act, and, in the moment of forgiveness the forgiver looks beyond the evil deed, he ignores it, he considers it a *quantité négligeable* and looks only at the person.

As I have described the details and interconnections of this theory more extensively elsewhere,<sup>25</sup> I shall confine myself here to the reception of the ancient distinction between person and act, in broad outline. As especially Ricoeur and Spaemann have expounded, there must, if forgiveness is to be possible, be an indissoluble connection between the subject, i. e., the person, and his deed on the one hand, while on the other an intellectual distinction is possible. “Hence that the acting subject can retrospectively take itself back from the so-being which had become apparent in this act, without however casting off the responsibility

*incessus, uultus [...]. Item aetas dat aliquod argumentum in utramque partem, dat etiam fortuna, nonnumquam et incessus et uultus et habitus; sed et nomen ipsum quasi indicium morum apprehenditur.*

23 Boethius, c. Eut. et Nest. III 14–16 (p. 86 Ste war t/R and ): quoted above in n. 14.

24 William of Conches, *Glosae super Plat.* II 136 (TPMÄ 13, 236): *Et nota quod eadem pars diuersis causis dicitur persona, uultus, facies: persona quia in ea est discretio personae, uultus quia in eo uoluntas perpenditur – et dicitur a ‘uolo, uis’ – facies quia pulcritudo uel deformitas ibi iudicatur, et dicitur a ‘facio, facis’ quia turpat uel decorat faciem.*

25 See Theo Kobusch, “You are better than your deeds:” Modern Theory of Forgiveness and its Christian Background, in: Maria S. Lotter (ed.), *Guilt, Forgiveness and Moral Repair* (forthcoming).

of having been such a subject, which was able to do this and indeed has.”<sup>26</sup> That is the view of the guilty one who is being forgiven. Yet to him who wishes, as it were, to apologize with the words: “It’s just the way I am,” the forgiver says: “No, that’s not the way you are.” In his word of forgiveness, the forgiver in this sense says that the way in which you appear after the act, is not how you are in reality. Your act is a false appearance, it is practically nothing, nothing which would have any meaning, a *quantité négligeable*, not truly recognizable.

In a similar way Ricœur, with a clear criticism of Derrida’s position and with reference to Martha Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach, which she sees as being anchored in Aristotelian philosophy and in Kant’s doctrine of an original predisposition for good, which underlies the radical proclivity to evil, calls attention to the following: that a decoupling or unbinding of the act from the acting subject is possible, without the subject thereby being, as it were, falsified. Since in this way the disregarding of the singular act, therefore not comprehending the subject and the act, would thus render the uncovering of an original goodness of the subject possible. The guilty subject would, precisely through this non-comprehension and hence through the non-recognition of a necessary connection between the reprehensible act and the acting subject, be put into the position of “once again beginning anew.”<sup>27</sup> This is precisely what the forgiver seeks to express when he says: “You are better than your deeds.”<sup>28</sup>

Certainly, Gregory of Elvira’s distinction between the person and the act has not directly informed the modern discussion. Moreover, Augustine might have played a mediating role by taking notice of particular works of Gregory, especially since Ricœur was profoundly knowledgeable on Augustine. Famous sentences such as: *Non igitur odit Deus Esau hominem, sed odit Deus Esau peccatorem* – “Therefore God does not hate Esau, the human being, but God hates Esau the sinner,” seem to confirm this, albeit not with regard to the terminology of the person and the act.<sup>29</sup>

We see that the modern concept of forgiveness is intimately connected to non-comprehension. The forgiver does not comprehend the connection between the person and his deed. Forgiving means not comprehending the two. Augustine sees this as being insinuated or expressed in the term *ignoscere*. In this respect the modern concept of forgiveness must be understood as a criticism of the ancient

26 Robert Spaemann , Glück und Wohlwollen, Stuttgart 1989, 246.

27 Paul Ricœur , La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli, Paris 2000, 638.

28 Ibid. 759. See also Thomas Dürr , Hannah Arendts Begriff des Verzeihens, Freiburg/München 2009, 348 f.

29 On Augustine’s role in the development of the Christian concept of forgiveness, see Theo Kobusch , Selbstwertung und Personalität: Spätantike Philosophie und ihr Einfluss auf die Moderne, Tübingen 2018, 31–34.

concept of forgiveness, which should, as *συγγνώμη* and *συγγιγνώσκειν*, precisely express comprehension.

We have arrived at the end of a long path. What Origen had distinguished as “image” and “likeness,” i. e., as the capacity and realization of freedom, is clothed by Gregory of Elvira in the terminology of ancient rhetoric and made comprehensible as person and act. Through Augustine as mediator, this distinction is conveyed to modern thought, i. e., to the modern theory of forgiveness. Accordingly, in forgiveness the guilty person, the image of God, is forgiven by having his mistaken acts overlooked and pardoned as transgressions of the likeness.



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