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The Conflicting Portrayals of Origen in the Byzantine Tradition

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*Whether what I have dared seems good or not,
God knows and his Christ and the One who shares
the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ...*

Origen¹

***Abstract:** The portrayal of Origen the Alexandrian represents a conundrum for the Byzantine tradition. The allegorical tendencies in his writings were exaggerated by some of his admirers, leading to a repudiation of his person and works by such prominent figures as St Epiphanius of Salamis, St Jerome and Theophilus of Alexandria. These repudiations anticipated his condemnation as a heretic by the emperor Justinian and the fifth ecumenical council. Paradoxically, Origen's condemnation by the Byzantine establishment was inconsistent with the views of those saints, venerated by the same establishment, who considered him a holy person, including Sts Pamphilus and Gregory Thaumaturgus. These two representations, both negative and positive, will be explored below for the purpose of demonstrating that the former portrayal is far too often emphasised at the expense of the latter, which, it is made clear, deserves much more attention.*

This paper addresses the conflicting portrayals of the third century AD ecclesiastical writer Origen the Alexandrian, positive and negative, firstly by contextualising the emperor Justinian's

I am grateful to Protopresbyter Dr Doru Costache, Professor Garry W. Trompf, Professor Paul M. Blowers and Professor Lorenzo Perrone for their insightful suggestions that have led to this paper's improvement.

1 *Letter of Origen to Gregory 4 in St Gregory Thaumaturgus: Life and Works*, trans. Michael Slusser (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998) 192.

motives for pushing for the condemnation of Origen and the Origenists (and the two should be distinguished) in the fifth ecumenical council held in 553 AD, and by assessing the First and Second Origenist Controversies that broke out in Palestine (in the fourth and sixth centuries respectively) as motivated by matters that were predominantly extraneous to Origen and his legacy.² The paper then turns to the positive approaches towards this much-maligned figure inhering within Christian tradition: beginning with brief references to those saints who engaged with his writings including St Athanasius the Great and the Cappadocian Fathers, as well as Socrates Scholasticus' defence of the Alexandrine. Next, it focuses on the biography of Origen given by Eusebius of Caesarea, followed by St Pamphilus the Martyr's *Apology for Origen*, as well as the blessed Rufinus of Aquileia's *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen*. These works include quotes by Origen that actually demonstrate that the Alexandrine contradicted and denied three of the tenets that he is accused of by the fifth ecumenical council, namely, the pre-existence of souls, reincarnation, and universal salvation (including the salvation of the devil).³ The paper then turns to St Gregory Thaumaturge's portrayal of Origen, which goes beyond St Pamphilus and Rufinus by depicting him as a participant in God. This article will address the representation of Origen in the above-mentioned and related sources in order to demonstrate that, once the circumstances for the negative approaches

2 Below I address at length the contextual factors that led to his negative portrayal. In doing so, I am not presuming that there were not also contextual factors that led to his positive portrayal. It is just that some of the positive approaches to Origen unfold within the non-polemical parameters of tradition, thus making them easier to identify and assess.

3 The first of these must be qualified in light of Mark J. Edwards's pertinent remark that before the fifth ecumenical council, "the bare hypothesis of the pre-existence of the soul, without the corollary of transmigration or a fall from heaven, was not a heresy." *Origen Against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 90. Thus, when referring to the notion of the soul's pre-existence in Origen, we must keep in mind the fact that what was attributed to him was the belief that souls pre-existed in close proximity to God before lapsing into bodies. I will demonstrate why I believe he did not assert this 'literally' below, but I must make clear from the outset that I am not the first to question the prevailing scholarly consensus on Origen's belief in the pre-existence of souls. Mark Edwards (ibid. 89) has been a trailblazer in this regard.

towards him are contextualised, one must first sharply distinguish between Origen and Origenism, and, secondly, affirm – especially in light of the positive portrayal – the consistency between the faith and life of this great Alexandrine in his commitment to Christ. In other words, the negative portrayal that has so often been promulgated needs to be counterbalanced by the positive portrayal, which, I believe, does greater justice to this misunderstood figure. It must be noted that these two representations, positive and negative, are still well represented by modern scholarship, with Fr John Anthony McGuckin exemplifying the positive approach,⁴ and the negative more or less addressed in relation to the First and Second Origenist controversies in a way that takes for granted that he asserted those doctrines that he was condemned for.⁵ Whilst acknowledging the recent scholarship, this paper will focus predominantly on the aforementioned earlier representations – such as those by Sts Pamphilus and Gregory – that are often not addressed in modern trends.

The Origenist Controversies

In the sixth century AD, the emperor Justinian was profoundly convinced that his self-proclaimed task of *renovatio imperii* – based

4 John Anthony McGuckin, ‘The Life of Origen’ in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. McGuckin (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004) 22.

5 Whilst giving a fairly positive assessment of Origen, Hilarion Alfeyev seems to presuppose these objectionable beliefs – such as the pre-existence of souls and the salvation of the devil – in *Orthodox Christianity*, vol. 1: *The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Basil Bush (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011) 40. Earlier, Fr John Meyendorff was right to assert that the soul’s pre-existence and the universal restoration attributed to Origen were “hardly compatible with either the biblical message or orthodox tradition,” but he also regrettably took for granted that these beliefs “represented the very heart of Origen’s metaphysical system.” Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450-680 A.D.* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989) 232. Joseph W. Trigg has aptly pointed out, however, that it is “an open question to what extent, in both of these [Origenist] controversies [i.e. the first and second], the views of others were actually ascribed to Origen.” Trigg, *Origen* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 66. Indeed, we will see below that Origen himself objected to having asserted these beliefs.

on the Constantinian paradigm crystallised in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life* of the emperor – would not be effective unless stability in the state, which Justinian effected by his re-conquest of Western European territories that were under the yoke of disparate barbarian kingdoms, did not involve a concomitant unification of the churches within that same empire.⁶ Specifically, Justinian – who inherited all of the trappings of the imperial cult⁷ – was interested in re-integrating the monophysite or non-Chalcedonian churches that had broken off from communion with Orthodoxy on account of their belief that the Definition of Faith promulgated by the fourth ecumenical council was 'Nestorian.'⁸ Thus, the eighth session of the fifth ecumenical council, convoked in 553 by Justinian in Constantinople, and presided by Eutychius, patriarch of that city, includes the canons that were issued in order to reintegrate monophysite Christians into the Church by anathematising the person and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, selected writings of Theodoret of Cyrhus, and a letter by Ibas of Edessa to the Persian bishop Maris. These were the so-called Three Chapters or texts that were associated with Nestorian teachings that had been consecutively condemned by the two previous ecumenical councils, in Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon

6 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 2.64-65, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 116. Whilst by the time of Justinian's Sixth Novella the "priesthood and the imperial rule [*sacerdotium et imperium*]," or the state and the Church, were considered as two distinct institutions coming from the same source, that is, God, nevertheless this Novella continued by delineating a list of regulations concerning the life of the clergy and, especially, the bishops. It thereby demonstrates the continued attempts to 'stabilise' the Church for the sake of the empire. Sixth Novella quoted from a recent translation in M. Shane Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the 'Variae,' 527-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 70. Latin taken from footnote 52 of this citation, where the Novella is quoted in its entirety.

7 For evidence of the persistence of the imperial cult during Justinian's reign, see the emperor's *Institutes*, where he describes himself in the proemium as "*semper augustus*" (ever augustus) and "*perpetuo augusto*" (eternal augustus). My translation of the Latin in *The Institutes of Justinian*, trans. John Thomas Adby and Bryan Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1876) xxi and xxiv.

8 Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* 236.

(451) respectively. Whilst with the fifth ecumenical council the Church certainly had legitimate reasons for condemning Nestorius' perniciously dissociative Christology, and to defend itself against accusations that the Definition of Faith promulgated at Chalcedon – which had since become a staple of Christological Orthodoxy – included elements of that Christology, it is interesting to find in Canon 11, which reiterates anathemas made in previous councils against the persons and writings of the heresiarchs Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinarius, Nestorius, and Eutyches, the name of Origen.⁹ This name appears last, and, according to Richard Price, “reflects the renewed condemnation of Origenism by Justinian and the bishops immediately before the council [of Constantinople] formally opened.”¹⁰

The form of Origenism condemned by Justinian during what is known as the Second Origenist Controversy was occasioned by “disputes between Origenists and their opponents in Palestine”¹¹ – disputes that, according to the Palestinian monk Cyril of Scythopolis,¹² involved the former storming and demolishing the Great Lavra of St Sabas, leading to an appeal by the patriarchs Ephrem of Antioch and Peter of Jerusalem to Justinian to deal with the situation,¹³ which was followed by more disturbances that led to more requests for imperial intervention.¹⁴ These disturbances were accentuated by ongoing disagreements between the Origenists and the admirers of Theodore of Mopsuestia – seen as the conceptual predecessor of Nestorius – with the former repeatedly pressing Justinian to condemn Theodore.¹⁵ E. M. Harding laments that we do not

9 ‘The Eighth Session’ in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, vol. 2, trans. with intro. and notes by Richard Price (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 2009) 123.

10 See fn. 86 in ‘The Eighth Session’ (cit. n. 9) 123.

11 ‘II. The Ecclesiastical Policy of the Emperor Justinian’ in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, vol. 1, trans. with intro. and notes by Richard Price (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 2009) 17.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* 231.

15 ‘II. The Ecclesiastical Policy of the Emperor Justinian’ 18.

have too many historical accounts detailing these circumstances – Cyril of Scythopolis constituting the main source¹⁶ – but he nevertheless aptly states that, at least at this initial stage, the controversy constituted “a conflict over intellectual freedom and its place within monastic life [...] rather than a real battle over specific doctrinal issues.”¹⁷ What is important is that Justinian condemned the Origenists and the admirers of Theodore, and whilst the condemnation of the Mopsuestian was not entirely ratified until the council in 553, the ruling on Origen was swift; and in 543 an edict was issued that condemned those who adhered to the belief in the pre-existence of souls – including the Lord’s both before and during the incarnation – the transformation of Christ into various holy powers during his divine economy (including cherubim and seraphim), the spherical constitution of the resurrectional body, the rationality of various aspects of the cosmos (including heaven, the sun, the moon and the stars), the fact that Christ was crucified on behalf of demons as well as humans, that God’s power is finite, and the *apokatastasis* or universal restoration of both humans and demons on the last day – all who believe in such things are anathema.¹⁸ Whilst Origen is not explicitly named in this edict, in 553 Justinian wrote his *Letter to the Holy Council About Origen and Those Like-Minded*, which criticises the “impiety and error” and “insanity” of Origen¹⁹ (along with the ancient Greek philosophers Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus),²⁰ and lists again some of these tenets, focusing especially on the problem of the pre-existence of souls (with an emphasis on Christ’s soul), the pagan belief in reincarnation, and Christ’s final restoration of all intellectual beings including the devil and the demons;²¹ tenets which are summarily condemned by the canons of the fifth ecumenical council.²²

16 See cit. n. 24 below.

17 ‘Origenist Crises’ in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (cit. n. 4) 165.

18 ‘The Canons of 543’ in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2 (cit. n. 9) 281.

19 ‘Letter to the Holy Council About Origen and Those Like-Minded’ in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2 (cit. n. 9) 282, 284.

20 Ibid. 282-83.

21 Ibid. 282-84.

22 ‘The Canons of 543’ 284-86.

Undoubtedly these beliefs are un-ecclesial,²³ however, as Richard Price points out, these tenets pertained to only one ‘Origenist’ group, namely the ‘Isochrists,’ whereas Cyril of Scythopolis, the main source for the beliefs of the Origenist monks in this period, applied them to all those who utilised Origen’s works in Palestine and to Origen himself.²⁴ The representation of Origen at the time of his condemnation is thus nuanced. On the one hand, he is grouped amongst the Greek philosophers by Justinian as declaring beliefs that were, according to Cyril the Scythopolitan, prevalent amongst the Origenist monks in Palestine, despite the fact that only one group actually adhered to them. On the other hand, the beliefs of this group seem to be anachronistically attributed to Origen, and coupled with Justinian’s desire to effectuate stability in the region of Palestine that was inflamed by the strife between the Origenists and the adherents of Theodore of Mopsuestia, all of this suggests that the condemnation of Origen almost three hundred years after his death was a strategic maneuver that would silence both parties, making the representation of Origen in the sixth century a theological means to a political end. But the sacrifice of Origen on the altar of imperial politics had a precedent in Palestine, a precedent that once again had more to do with reasons that were extraneous to his person and writings.

23 I highlighted above, in n. 3, that in Origen’s time the status of the soul’s pre-existence had not been officially determined. If Origen held this position at a time when the doctrine had not been definitely pronounced upon, then at this point I could have simply highlighted Justinian’s unfairness in anachronistically judging Origen based on the standards of sixth century Orthodoxy. Whilst there would be merit to the latter, I argue below that Origen never in fact held this position, especially in relation to the pre-existent souls *literally* falling into bodies, meaning that I can in fact claim that it was always un-ecclesial – both in Origen’s time and Justinian’s – without it hindering my argument.

24 Richard Price, ‘The Anti-Origenist Canons (543 and 553)’ in *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople 553*, vol. 2 (cit. n. 9) 272-73. Indeed, throughout his *Life of St Sabas* that appears in his *Lives of the Palestinian Monks*, Cyril of Scythopolis refers to the Origenists in a general sense, especially at the end of the *Life* where the author affirms that St Sabas “saved and freed us from the oppression of the Origenists and cast them away from our persons” (ἔσωσεν καὶ ἐλυτρώσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς καταδυναστείας τῶν Ὀριγενιαστῶν καὶ ἐξέβαλεν αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ προσώπου ἡμῶν). See the edited Greek text of *Leben des Sabas in Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, trans. Eduard Schwartz (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1939) 200 (my translation).

The First Origenist Controversy was triggered in Palestine when in 393 St Epiphanius of Salamis – whose compendium of heresies, the *Panarion*, clearly struggles to reconcile Origen’s famous asceticism with his ostensible theological errors²⁵ – sent a band of monks led by one Artabius to the monastery of St Jerome in Bethlehem and to the monastery of the latter’s friend, the blessed Rufinus of Aquileia, which was on the Mount of Olives, to convince them to condemn Origen.²⁶ The fact that Rufinus did not comply caused a wedge between he and Jerome: a wedge that became permanent when Rufinus began his translation of Origen’s *On Principles* in 398 and included in his preface references to Jerome’s former enthusiasm for Origen’s work.²⁷ Jerome’s harsh retaliation is well known,²⁸ and whilst his reaction can be interpreted as either a need

25 Epiphanius concedes that some believe that Origen once “suffered a great deal for the holy word of the faith and the name of Christ,” nevertheless he is quick to claim that others assert that he ended up sacrificing to idols out of fear of persecution, which is incredibly unlikely. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Books II and III (Sects 47-80, De Fide)* 64.1.3, trans. Frank Williams, ed. Einar Thomassen and Johannes von Oort (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 132. In addition to this, he mentions that Origen took drugs to aid his memory, and that his thought was, absurdly, the source of Arianism. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Books II and III* 64.3.12-4.2 (Williams 134-35). E. M. Harding clarifies this when he states that it is regrettable that leading members of the Homean party, a branch of Arianism, tried to use Origen to promote their ideas. ‘Origenist Crises’ 163.

26 J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (London: Duckworth, 1975) 198.

27 *Ibid.* 230-33, 237. In fact he stated that he was simply completing a work that Jerome had previously promised to deliver. *Ibid.* 235. Jerome once respected the Alexandrine to the degree that he incorporated translations from Origen’s works into his own commentaries on Galatians and Ephesians (*ibid.* 145) and even “translated certain of Origen’s homilies on Isaiah.” *Ibid.* 76.

28 Jerome even began what he called his own ‘literal’ translation of Origen’s *On Principles* in order to expose its heresies. This may have been on account of the fact that Jerome’s friends Marcella and Pammachius were disturbed by Rufinus’ suggestion that Jerome had intended to translate this work, as well as their suspicion of Rufinus’ translation which was far too orthodox and from which they inferred that Rufinus must have deliberately omitted unorthodox statements from the work. Kelly, *Jerome* 235 and 237. I call this text *On Principles* instead of *On First Principles* since the latter, which is the current rendition into English of both the Greek (*Peri Archon*) and Latin (*De Principiis*), constitutes a pleonasm.

to “brush off the slightest suspicion of unorthodoxy” or not,²⁹ the most important factor in the first controversy was John of Jerusalem’s refusal to accept Epiphanius’ condemnation of Origen during a sermon that the former invited the latter to deliver in September 393 on “the annual Dedication Festival of the Church of the Resurrection.”³⁰ This caused such a furor that John eventually invited Theophilus of Alexandria³¹ to mediate peace between himself, Epiphanius, and the latter’s supporter, Jerome. Theophilus initially tolerated Origen,³² though perhaps he cannot be construed as avid a fan as Jerome, whom John had incidentally excommunicated for translating and giving widespread distribution

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- 29 Kelly, *Jerome* 81 and 97. Kelly has suggested that Jerome’s *volte face* could also have been motivated out of fear of insulting Epiphanius who had accompanied Jerome to Rome in 382 and had given him hospitality when the latter was in Cyprus in 385. Since Jerome felt indebted to Epiphanius, he obviously complied. *Ibid.* 197.
- 30 Norman Russell, ‘Introduction: The Life of Theophilus of Alexandria’ in *Theophilus of Alexandria* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) 15.
- 31 Clearly taking the side of the bishop of Salamis, Jerome gives us the details of this event in his letter *To Pachomius Against John of Jerusalem*: the bishop of the city sent his archdeacon to silence Epiphanius mid-sermon, and after this John of Jerusalem preached against the anthropomorphites, those that “believe” that God has “a human form” [οἱ δὲ Ἀνθρωπομορφιανοῦς ... φρονοῦντας]. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.12.5 in *Sozomenus. Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Joseph Bidez and Günther Christian Hansen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960) (retrieved via TLG); my translation. The issue was that bishop John did this in a way that alluded to Epiphanius as holding the latter sentiment, and that he reflected, according to Frank Williams, the usual way in which “Origenists stigmatized their accusers,” which set the bishop of Salamis against him. Frank Williams, ‘Introduction’ in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1-46)*, trans. Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2009) xviii.
- 32 Whilst perhaps not an explicit admirer of Origen in this period, Theophilus displayed enough contempt for anthropomorphism (Kevin Wagner, ‘Theophilus of Alexandria and the Episcopal Ordination of Synesius of Cyrene’ *Phronema* 29:2 (2014) 127-72, 132-33) that he could be described as having “Origenist tendencies.” Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) 37. The latter claim is bolstered by the truism that, in the dispute between Epiphanius and John of Jerusalem that sparked off the controversy, Theophilus initially sided with the latter. Megan Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) 99.

to an inflammatory pamphlet written by Epiphanius against him.³³ In the adjudication of this dispute, Theophilus sent the eighty-year old Alexandrian priest Isidore to Palestine as his emissary in 396. But Isidore was explicitly partisan in his support for John of Jerusalem.³⁴ This polarised Jerome, who, though eventually readmitted into communion by John,³⁵ nevertheless pressed Theophilus to do more to condemn Origenism,³⁶ to which Theophilus responded in conciliatory terms.³⁷ But very soon two factors contributed to the mobilisation of Theophilus against both Origen and Origenism that were extraneous to the personal legacy and writings of Origen himself. The first is the breakdown of the bishop of Alexandria's relationship with his former confidants, the aforementioned Isidore and the so-called 'Tall Brothers' from Nitria,³⁸ Ammonius, Dioscorus, Eusebius, and Enthymius (all of whom just happened to love Origen),³⁹ and the second is the reaction of the anthropomorphic monks against Theophilus' *Paschal Letter* issued in 399 (now lost).⁴⁰

33 Russell, 'Introduction: The Life of Theophilus of Alexandria' 16. Jerome mentions the circumstances of his translating this letter in his *Letter 57: To Pammachius on the Best Method of Translating 2* in *St Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, trans. W. H. Fremantle et al., NPNF (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954) 112. This excommunication was indirectly occasioned by Epiphanius, who in 394 had ordained Jerome's brother, Paulinian, to the diaconate in Palestine – in other words, within the bishop John's diocese – but without the latter's consent. Russell, 'Introduction: The Life of Theophilus of Alexandria' 15. John's outrage at this uncanonical act was met with the inflammatory pamphlet written by Epiphanius accusing the former of heresy that was translated into Latin by Jerome.

34 Russell, 'Introduction: The Life of Theophilus of Alexandria' 18; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* 37.

35 Williams, *The Monk and the Book* 99.

36 See his *Letter LXIII: To Theophilus 3* in *St Jerome: Letters and Select Works* (cit. n. 33) 134.

37 Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* 37.

38 Harding describes the Nitrian monks as being largely Origenist. 'Origenist Crises' 165.

39 Russell, 'Introduction: The Life of Theophilus of Alexandria' 18.

40 Wagner affirms that "one must rely on secondary evidence to determine its content." 'Theophilus of Alexandria and the Episcopal Ordination of Synesius of Cyrene' 134.

According to Harding, Theophilus' *Paschal Letter* "addressed the incorporeality of God and denounced 'anthropomorphic' prayer,"⁴¹ which led to riots by a large body of anthropomorphic monks⁴² in Alexandria that the Church historian Socrates described as instead occasioned by a sermon against the anthropomorphites delivered by Theophilus in church.⁴³ This sermon could very well have been that *Paschal Letter*, but in any case what is important is that Theophilus immediately did an about-face and instead blamed "the Tall Brothers and other Origenists" for the disagreement between himself and the anthropomorphic monks.⁴⁴ Thus, Origen became a convenient scapegoat used by Theophilus to preserve his episcopate and perhaps even his life. This self-preservation, however, was executed against Theophilus' former friends Isidore and the Tall Brothers in such a way as to eventually lead to the first exile of St John Chrysostom; an exile that was precipitated by Theophilus at the Synod of the Oak held in Chalcedon in 403⁴⁵ as an outcome of the bishop of Alexandria's attempt to condemn Chrysostom ostensibly for readmitting Isidore and the Tall Brothers into communion⁴⁶ – which

41 'Origenist Crises' 165.

42 Ibid. 165.

43 *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.6, trans. A. C. Zenos in *Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories*, NPNF (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976) 142.

44 Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* 37.

45 *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.14 (NPNF 148-49).

46 Sozomen even claims that St John, having found that the sentiments of the Tall Brothers concerning God were correct (The Greek reads: "ὁρθῶς περὶ θεοῦ δοξάζουσιν which translates into "their worship concerning God was right" – see Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.13.3), besought Theophilus to readmit them into communion. *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.13, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, NPNF (cit. n. 37) 407. If this were indeed true, then any imposition of the term 'Origenists' to the Nitrian monks would become dubious at best. Both Socrates and Sozomen also agree in relation to what happened next, namely that Theophilus heard a false report that St John had actually permitted the brothers to participate in holy communion (*The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.13 (NPNF 407); *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.9 (NPNF 145)), which would have been uncanonical (if it were true), and from that point onwards sought the way in which he would depose the saint, namely by invoking canonical grounds. *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.10 and 6.15 (NPNF 145 and 149); *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.14 (NPNF

according to Socrates St John never did⁴⁷ – but which, as Russell points out, was probably motivated by the fact that Theophilus considered John a threat to the prominence of the Alexandrine see.⁴⁸ Indeed, the fact that Theophilus was motivated by factors extraneous to Origen and his legacy is especially made clear by the complete neglect of the ostensible problems posed by either Origen or Origenism at the Synod of the Oak.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, in his *Second Synodal Letter* published three years earlier (in 400 AD) Theophilus is very much concerned with Origen, and writes “to prevent the Cypriot and Palestinian bishops from giving hospitality to the monks”⁵⁰ Isidore and the Tall Brothers,⁵¹

407-8).

47 The Greek reads something like he could not admit them into communion “before a diagnosis could be given to them (πρὸ διαγνώσεως μεταδώσειν αὐτοῖς).” Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.9.34 in *Socrate de Constantinople, Histoire ecclésiastique*, trans. Pierre Maraval and Pierre Périchon (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004-2007) (retrieved via TLG); my translation. See also *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.13 (NPNF 407).

48 Ibid. 29.

49 *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.14 (NPNF 149); *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.17 (NPNF 410).

50 Russell, ‘Introduction: The Life of Theophilus of Alexandria’ 90

51 Theophilus’ *Second Synodal Letter to the Bishops of Palestine and Cyprus* mentions unspecified charges and a trial against Isidore involving a woman and her son as witnesses. *Second Synodal Letter* 3, trans. Russell in *Theophilus of Alexandria* (cit. n. 30) 96. Norman Russell reads Palladius of Helenopolis’ construal of this event as a false accusation of sexual harassment against the woman’s son as literally taking place (Russell, ‘Introduction: The Life of Theophilus of Alexandria’ 21) but the bishop did not want the accusation to be made public for “the sake of decency and ecclesiastical discipline” (*Second Synodal Letter* 3 (Russell 95)) which means the matter remains ambiguous. Palladius in fact accuses Theophilus – whom it is no secret he disliked – as falsifying this charge against Isidore and that it involved usury. *Palladius: Dialogue on the Life of St John Chrysostom* 6, trans. and ed. Robert T. Meyer, Ancient Christian Writers (New York, NY/Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 1985) 43. Socrates and Sozomen, however, give entirely different accounts, attributing the cause of the falling out between Theophilus and Isidore to an arch-presbyter in the Alexandrine church named Peter who admitted a Manichaean woman to participate in “the sacred mysteries [τὰ ἱερὰ μυστήρια]” without however compelling her to reject that faith. Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.9.11 (my translation). See also *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.12 (NPNF 406).

whilst fulminating against “Origen’s wicked doctrines”⁵² found in the *Peri archon*, *De resurrectione*, and the *De oratione*.⁵³ Since Isidore and the brothers were admirers of Origen, the mention of both the Nitrian monks and the condemnation of Origenism in this *Letter* was no doubt intentional. In this *Letter*, Theophilus accuses Origen of asserting the salvation of the devil⁵⁴ – an accusation made earlier by Epiphanius⁵⁵ – as well as repeating the bishop of Salamis’ claim that Origen asserted that God the Father and the Son are unlike each other.⁵⁶ But this is not the

Peter complained to Isidore, who supported Peter’s contention that the woman had indeed renounced Manichaeism. This led to Theophilus’ ire being directed towards Isidore and Peter, both of whom he excommunicated. *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.9 (NPNF 145); *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.12 (NPNF 406). In Sozomen’s account, we read that Isidore returned to his former home in Scetis to join the Tall Brothers, and that this prompted this group to visit Theophilus, entreating him to restore Isidore to communion. They soon found themselves in prison (*The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.12 (NPNF 406)), but this did not phase them and at this point Socrates’ and Sozomen’s accounts diverge: the former, without mentioning the prison sentence, claims that Isidore and Dioscorus – one of the tall brothers – went to Constantinople to seek the recognition of both the emperor and the bishop of that city, St John Chrysostom (*The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.9 (NPNF 145)); whereas the latter states that after releasing the Tall Brothers from prison, Theophilus “from his former intercourse with them” had gathered “that they adhered to the opinions of Origen” (*The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.12 (NPNF 407)) which, in this context, was related to the belief that God is bodiless (ἄσώματον τὸν θεόν). Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.12.12 (my translation). The NPNF version cit. at fn. 43 renders it as “incorporeality of the deity.” *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.12 (NPNF 407).

52 *Second Synodal Letter* 4 (Russell 97).

53 *Second Synodal Letter* 2 (Russell 94) and 4 (Russell 97).

54 *Second Synodal Letter* 2 (Russell 94).

55 *Letter 51: From Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, in Cyprus, to John, bishop of Jerusalem* 5 in *St Jerome: Letters and Select Works* (cit. n. 33) 86.

56 *Second Synodal Letter* 2 (Russell 94). In his reflections on Christ, Origen asks rhetorically: “And who that is capable of reverential thoughts or feeling regarding God, can suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a moment of time, without having generated this Wisdom [that is, God the Son]?” This refutes any notion of the Son’s creatureliness. *De Principiis* 1.2.2, trans. Frederick Crombie in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen; Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANF (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) 246. In *On Principles* 1.28 (Crombie 248), Origen declares that the

first letter written by Theophilus against Origen. His *First Synodal Letter* – occasioned by a synod he held against Origen in 399, the same year that the anthropomorphites broke out against him (and whom we saw, he tried to placate) – accused Origen of affirming the pre-existence of souls.⁵⁷ This accusation also appears previously in Epiphanius,⁵⁸ thereby becoming associated with Origenism in Palestine from this time onwards before reappearing – along with the accusation that Origen believed the devil would be saved – in Justinian’s *Letter to the Holy Council About Origen and Those Like-Minded* that we saw influenced the fifth ecumenical council’s condemnation of the Alexandrine in 553.

Hence we have, in both the fourth and sixth centuries AD, a particular, negative representation of Origen induced by the historical circumstances pertaining to the First and Second Origenist Controversies. The reason I address this first is because it is this representation that has persisted within ecclesiastical milieus.⁵⁹ But there existed another representation of Origen by his near contemporaries and admirers that construed his beliefs, and thus his way of life (the two are related) in an entirely different way. This positive representation was anchored

Son “alone knows the Father,” and although he does not affirm that the Son of God has the same essence as the Father – indeed, it would be anachronistic for him to have done so – nevertheless Fr John Behr has demonstrated that, in his *Commentary on John*, Origen at least implied it. *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1: *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001) 186.

57 *First Synodal Letter in Theophilus of Alexandria* (cit. n. 30) 92.

58 *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* 6.4.5 (Williams 215).

59 This is something that I have been exposed to personally on a popular or lay level. Although much has been done in scholarship to rehabilitate the reputation of Origen, amongst Orthodox scholars there is an evident tension: whilst Fr John Meyendorff saw the destruction of Origen’s works after the fifth ecumenical council as a restoration of “Biblical Christianity” as opposed to “Ancient Hellenism” (*Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983) 27), more recently Fr John Anthony McGuckin has given a positive portrayal of Origen, poignantly affirming that despite the official censure of his person, nevertheless “the broken wreck” of Origen’s body “preached his total loyalty to Christ in its most persuasive form.” ‘The Life of Origen’ in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (cit. n. 4) 23.

predominantly in the *Oration and Panegyric addressed to Origen* by his devoted student St Gregory Thaumaturgus, the *Apology for Origen* by St Pamphilus the Martyr, which was written, according to Pamphilus' pupil Eusebius of Caesarea, jointly with the latter,⁶⁰ and finally book six of Eusebius' *History of the Church*, which is dedicated mostly to the life and writings of Origen. Eusebius' *History* also mentions the saintly company and contacts kept by Origen, including St Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia,⁶¹ St Alexander of Jerusalem,⁶² and St Dionysius of Alexandria,⁶³ amongst others. Beyond these three figures – whose approaches to Origen will be assessed below – we have St Athanasius the Great's favourable approach to the Christology of the "labour-loving Origen [τοῦ φιλοπόνου Ὠριγένους]" who he quotes several times in his *Defense of the Nicene Definition*;⁶⁴ a fact that is mentioned on more than one occasion by Socrates Scholasticus, one of the continuators of the Eusebian historiographical tradition and also an avid admirer of both Athanasius and Origen.⁶⁵ In fact, it was Socrates who relates St Theotimus of Scythia's response to Epiphanius' maneuvers against Origen as follows:

"I neither choose, Epiphanius, to insult one who in the past fell asleep piously, nor do I dare put my hand to enact this blasphemy,

60 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.33, trans. G. A. Williamson (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 206.

61 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.27 (Williamson 203).

62 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.14 (Williamson 192).

63 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.46 (Williamson 219).

64 St Athanasius, *Defense of the Nicene Definition* 6.27 in *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, trans. Archibald Robinson, NPNF (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978) 168. For the Greek text, see *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi* 27.3 in H. G. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke*, vol. 2.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940) (TLG).

65 Socrates refers to St Athanasius' above construal of Origen as appearing in the latter's *Discourse Against the Arians*, which is incorrect, but the translator has amended this in a footnote stipulating that he was probably referring to *Defense of the Nicene Definition*. If Socrates was indeed referring to the latter text, then he embellishes it when he quotes Athanasius as describing "the most admirable and assiduous Origen." *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.13 (NPNF 148). Despite this possible embellishment, the description is still consistent with what Athanasius says above insofar as it is a positive one.

as that of throwing out what our predecessors did not reject, especially since I cannot find an evil teaching in Origen's books." He then brought forward one of Origen's books and reading clause-by-clause he showed that the latter's expositions were ecclesial (ἐκκλησιαστικὰς τὰς ἐκθέσεις) [...] These things did Theotimus, renowned for his piety and upright life, answer to Epiphanius.⁶⁶

Socrates did not stop there. He complained that Epiphanius of Salamis⁶⁷ should not have written to St John Chrysostom to condemn the person and works of one whom "had been dead nearly two hundred years".⁶⁸ and it is telling that St John, on more than one occasion, is depicted by Socrates as simply ignoring Epiphanius' exhortations to condemn Origen.⁶⁹ Moreover, in his description of Theophilus' use of Origen to overthrow St John Socrates includes an apology for the former, where he highlights the inconsistencies in the criticisms against him and points to the fact that since St Athanasius held him in high regard, then to criticise Origen is to criticise the holy Athanasius, "the praiser of Origen (τὸν ἐπαινέτην αὐτοῦ)".⁷⁰ There is also of course the blessed Rufinus of Aquileia's *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen*, which, along with Pamphilus' *Apology*, clearly indicate that Origen did not assert some of the beliefs

66 Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.12.18-24 and 26-27 (my translation). This is given credence by the fact that Sozomen also describes this encounter (without attempting to quote St Theotimus) in *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.14 (NPNF 408). Whilst Ilaria Ramelli points out that the latter depends on the former, she finds no reason to doubt the authenticity of their reports. *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) 592-93. Ramelli also points out in footnote 672 (p. 593) of her aforementioned work that only fragments of St Theotimus' works are still preserved in St John of Damascus' "*Sacra Parallela* II 640, 675, 694, 785 Le Quien."

67 *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.10 (NPNF 145).

68 *Ibid.* Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.10.22-23.

69 *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* 6.14 (NPNF 148); *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* 8.14 (NPNF 408). Perhaps it was clear to St John that, in encouraging Epiphanius to condemn Origen, what Theophilus was doing was merely trying to finish off the condemnation of the Nitrian monks, and also of himself for harbouring them.

70 Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.13.32 (my translation).

that he was later accused of, not just by Justinian, but by those in his immediate context who misunderstood or added to his writings. This is to mention nothing of the critical engagement with Origen's works by Sts Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, whose *Philokalia*, the first in the Orthodox tradition, was based on Origen's writings;⁷¹ an endeavour perhaps influenced by the favourable disposition towards Origen coming from St Gregory Thaumaturgus to his student St Macrina the Elder, the grandmother of St Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa (with the latter also engaging with Origen).⁷² It is to these positive sources, namely those by Eusebius, St Pamphilus, Rufinus, and St Gregory Thaumaturge, that we know turn.

Positive Representations of Origen

Eusebius of Caesarea

Although chronologically posterior to the Thaumaturge's *Oration and Panegyric* and Pamphilus' *Apology*, it would be prudent to first address book six of Eusebius of Caesarea's *History of the Church* insofar as it gives a thorough representation of Origen's life.⁷³ Highlighting the boy

71 An older translation of this into English is available that includes in its first preface a letter written and sent by St Gregory the Theologian to bishop Theodore of Tyana which points out that the *Philokalia* was compiled by himself and St Basil. George Lewis (trans.), *The Philokalia of Origen: A Compilation of Selected Passages from Origen's Works made by St Gregory of Nazianzus and St Basil of Caesarea* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911) ix. A second preface that inconsistently disparages Origen and was thus written in a later period, nevertheless still acknowledges that the text was compiled by Sts Gregory and Basil and that the aforementioned letter by the former is authentic. Ibid. xi-xiv.

72 Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995) 10, 21-22.

73 The fifth and final version of Eusebius' *History of the Church* was published in AD 326 (Warren Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 39), many years after the *Oration* that was delivered by St Gregory Thaumaturge in 245, almost a decade before Origen's death. See Arthur P. Urbano, *The Philosophical Life: Biography and the Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 2013) 146.

Origen's ambition for martyrdom, which was prevented by "Almighty God" through his mother for "the benefit of all (εις την πλειστον ωφέλειαν),"⁷⁴ Origen's father St Leonidas was martyred during the reign of Septimius Severus in 202 AD.⁷⁵ This made Origen, son of a martyr, eager to assist their cause and even to become a martyr himself.⁷⁶ Eusebius thus spends a considerable amount of time demonstrating Origen's help of the martyrs, including his tutelage of martyr-saints (such as Sts Plutarch, Serenus, Heraclides, Hero, a second Serenus, Herais, Basilides, Potamiaena and Marcella)⁷⁷ and his frequent visits to those imprisoned for the faith, so that whilst the "divine and heavenly grace protected him" nevertheless "the persecution against him grew daily hotter."⁷⁸ A strange anecdote then follows concerning Origen's "boldness" or "daring" (τολμήματος), a euphemism for self-castration based on a literal reading of Matthew 19:12 – "there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" – which he purportedly enacted in order to avoid being tempted by his female students.⁷⁹ But this is inconsistent with Origen's notorious predilection for allegorical interpretations of scripture,⁸⁰ not to mention Eusebius'

74 Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.2.4 in Eusèbe de Césarée. *Histoire ecclésiastique*, trans. Gustave Bardy (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, vols 1:1952; 2:1955; 3:1958) (retrieved via TLG); my translation.

75 McGuckin, 'The Life of Origen' 2-3.

76 Eusebius states that although as a boy Origen was "within a hair's breadth of arriving at the end of his days [...] for the benefit of mankind the providence of Almighty God used his mother to defeat his ambition." Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.2 (Williamson 180). Although his mother restrained him from lunging headfirst into martyrdom in his youth, it is clear that later in life he did not fear death on account of the faith in Christ, as is evidenced by his direct assistance of martyrs to the extent that he was present with them during their respective executions. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.3 (Williamson 182).

77 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.4-5 (Williamson 184). Of these, many are female (Herais, Potamiaena and Marcella), and one of which, St Plutarch, was a recent pagan convert. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.3 (Williamson 181).

78 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.3 (Williamson 182).

79 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.8 (Williamson 186). All references to the scriptures taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.

80 Within the context of an analysis of Origen's use of philology, Peter W.

overall depiction of Origen as a strenuous ascetic. If he could restrict the hours of sleep, sleep on the floor, constantly walk barefoot, and abstain from food for long periods,⁸¹ then why such a drastic move in relation to temperance?⁸² The fact that the reference to eunuchs in Matthew 19:2 can be, and often has been, interpreted as a metaphor for celibacy aside,⁸³

Martens affirms that “for Origen there were in principal two referents of any given scriptural text: the literal and the ‘nonliteral’ (i.e., allegorical, figurative, symbolic, spiritual, mystical or deeper).” *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 63. Martens however relegates both approaches, literal and nonliteral, to philology, which he clarifies in a footnote by providing a quote from Origen’s *Contra Celsum* 4.51 that legitimates allegory; a quote concerning which Martens states that “this is one of Origen’s clearest statements about allegorical interpretation as a serious, scholarly activity.” This apparent attempt to legitimise the so-called ‘nonliteral’ method as both seriously philological and scholarly is not without merit, but it only goes so far insofar as Origen viewed this method as replete with existential import that can assist one upon the Christian journey. To give just one example of how Origen uses allegory in an existentially significant manner, in his first *Homily* on Genesis, he states in an interpretation of Gen 1:3-5 that “[a]ccording to the letter God calls both the light day and the darkness night. But let us see according to the spiritual meaning...” *The Homilies on Genesis 1 in Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981) 48. Although in the following he immediately addresses Genesis 1:3-5, he eventually moves to chapter 1 verse 9 which depicts the emergence of the dry land which God calls earth, and interprets it as “the vices of the body which are the materials of sins” that we should cast off of ourselves if we are to be called “earth” and thus “bear fruit for God.” *Ibid.* 50-51.

81 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.3 (Williamson 183).

82 I am not the only one to doubt the veracity of Origen’s ostensible ‘boldness.’ G. A. Williamson, translator of Eusebius’ *History*, writes in a section at the back of the translation entitled ‘Who’s Who in Eusebius’ under the name of Origen: “The story about his self-emasculatation is not above suspicion: Eusebius seems to be relying on hearsay.” See *History of the Church*, page 400.

83 I give here just one example from St Jerome’s interpretation of Matthew 19:12: “Only the person who for Christ seeks chastity wholeheartedly and cuts off sexual impurity altogether [is the genuine eunuch].” This precedes a short exhortation to chastity that culminates in the following affirmation by the saint: “He who is able to receive this let him receive it; he who is able to fight, let him fight and conquer.” *Commentary on Matthew 3.19.12 in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 1b: Matthew 14-28*, ed. Manlio Simonetti et al. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002) 94.

Eusebius' attempt to justify this act perhaps consists of an exaggerated response to its source, bishop Demetrius of Alexandria, who publicly accused Origen of self-castration after the latter was ordained by the bishops of Palestine to the presbyterate;⁸⁴ an ordination which was indeed uncanonical but which was perhaps motivated by the fact that whilst he had remained the head of the catechetical school in Alexandria for many years from the early 200's to the early 230's, Origen was, according to Joseph W. Trigg, actively resented by bishop Demetrius, who could not endure the fact that the great Alexandrine's fame had overshadowed him as bishop of the diocese.⁸⁵ Thus, Demetrius not only accused Origen of self-castration (an accusation later repeated by Epiphanius)⁸⁶ in order to nullify his ordination,⁸⁷ but he also attributed to him the assertion that the devil would be saved,⁸⁸ thereby tarnishing his reputation in the Alexandrine church so that, even on the occasion of his former pupil Heraclas becoming successor to Demetrius after the latter's death in 233, Origen was no longer welcome back to this city.⁸⁹ Here we have the beginnings of the negative portrait of Origen that, after the First and Second Controversies, would be officially sanctioned by the Byzantine establishment in Justinian's time.

84 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.8 (Williamson 186) and 6.23 (Williamson 199). It is on p. 199 that the 'judgment' which was passed on him is described.

85 Trigg, *Origen* 15.

86 *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* 64.3.11-12 (Williams 134).

87 Insofar as this was antithetical to Apostolic Canons 21 and 22: the former permitting those who were forcefully made eunuchs to be ordained, the latter prohibiting ordination to anyone who performs an act of self-castration. See *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 8.47, trans. James Donaldson in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, ed. Alexander Roberts and Donaldson, ANF (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965) 501. Whilst the Apostolic Canons did not appear in their final form until the fourth century, nevertheless they are believed by some scholars to have been redacted over a period of centuries. See James Donaldson, 'Introductory Notice to Constitutions of the Holy Apostles' in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries* (cit. above) 388-89.

88 Ibid. 16.

89 Ibid. 16. As a result of these issues, "[i]n 214 Origen left Alexandria permanently for Caesarea in Palestine." Trigg, *Origen* 36.

Eusebius, however, went on to depict Origen as a man who laboured rigorously in the Church as an exegete,⁹⁰ apologist,⁹¹ teacher,⁹² and a confessor for the faith. The latter is especially significant insofar as the material warfare enacted against him became associated with the spiritual dimension when Eusebius affirmed that

the evil demon, bent on his destruction, brought all the weapons in his armoury to bear and fought him with every device and expedient, attacking him with more determination than anyone he was fighting at that time – the dreadful cruelties he endured for the word of Christ, chains and bodily torments, agony in iron and the darkness of his prison; how for days on end his legs were pulled four spaces apart in the torturer’s stocks...⁹³

The torture of Origen for his faith in Christ took place during the reign of the emperor Decius between the years 250 and 252 AD. As Fr John Anthony McGuckin has implied, Eusebius describes Origen in language identical to that which he used in relation to the plight of the martyrs.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, according to Fr McGuckin, the experience physically broke Origen who was already sixty-nine years old at this time, which, though not leading to his death as a martyr, nevertheless made him a confessor for Christ.⁹⁵ As a qualification to this, it should be noted that a martyric attitude is reflected any time a Christian suffers for Christ, and not just at the moment of their literal ‘execution.’⁹⁶ Thus, Origen can

90 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.24-25 (Williamson 200-201), 6.32 (Williamson 205), and 6.36 (Williamson 207).

91 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.36 (Williamson 207).

92 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.19 (Williamson 197-98).

93 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.40 (Williamson 209).

94 McGuckin, ‘The Life of Origen’ 22.

95 Ibid. 23.

96 Since, etymologically, *μάρτυς*, from where we get the English word ‘martyr,’ simply means ‘witness,’ then this witness to Christ can take place at any time, although it is perhaps fulfilled or perfected when someone dies for the Lord. For more on ‘*μάρτυς*,’ see G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961) 830. For the notion of martyrdom as fulfillment or perfection (*τελείωσις*), see Mario Baghos, ‘The Impact of Martyrdom on Eusebius of Caesarea’s Commentary on Luke: Anticipating the Imminent Eschaton’ *Phronema* 28:1 (2013) 87-125, 88-89.

indeed be construed as a martyr or witness to the faith, even though it took two years for him to die from the injuries he sustained under Decius – Eusebius’ depiction of him actually implies as much. We will now turn to further positive representations of Origen in the writings of three important figures, two of which are related to Eusebius of Caesarea, the first being his saintly teacher Pamphilus, who probably inherited Origen’s library in Caesarea in Palestine⁹⁷ – which is where Origen settled after leaving Alexandria in the 230s⁹⁸ – and also Rufinus of Aquileia, who almost a century after the publication of Eusebius’ *History of the Church* translated it into Latin and who, we know for a fact, shared its author’s positive view of Origen. Finally, we will end the next section with St Gregory Thaumaturge’s overwhelmingly positive representation of the great Alexandrine.

St Pamphilus, Rufinus of Aquileia, and St Gregory Thaumaturgus

Written almost sixty years after Origen’s death, St Pamphilus’ *Apology* was originally part of five books – to which Eusebius of Caesarea added a sixth after his master’s martyrdom⁹⁹ – and is distinguished by its use of lengthy quotations from Origen’s works, namely his *Peri Archon* or *On Principles*, including his exegetical works on various Old and New Testament scriptures. Only the first book of Pamphilus’ *Apology* survives, in the form of a Latin translation by Rufinus who attached to it an epilogue entitled *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen* that, along with the *Apology*, has recently been translated with a critical introduction by Thomas P. Scheck.¹⁰⁰ It is interesting that the *Apology* points to two extreme approaches to Origen’s works both by his contemporaries and posterity; those who, upon hearing his works read aloud, hold them

97 Anthony Grafton and Megan Hale Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) 179-80.

98 Trigg, *Origen* 16.

99 Thomas P. Scheck, ‘Introduction’ in *St Pamphilus, Apology for Origen; Rufinus, On the Falsification of the Books of Origen*, trans. Scheck (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 2010) 5.

100 Referenced above.

in all admiration for as long as the name of the author remains unknown. But when it becomes known that what was pleasing was from Origen, all at once it becomes displeasing, all at once the reading is said to be heretical, and the things that a little while before were being extolled to heaven, by the same voices and by the same tongue are being plunged into hell.¹⁰¹

This approach is then contrasted to one that is just as negative, namely an approach exemplified by those persons who

exhibit the utmost zeal [in studying Origen's works] [...] For they want to take advantage of this teacher in every way and parade themselves as his special disciples. But an opportunity comes when they now prefer to name themselves "teachers" rather than "disciples," at a time when the audience's applause begins to follow. Then, if perchance someone in the audience whispers that these things that are being praised are from Origen, lest they either yield this praise to the teacher or risk being judged as blameworthy, they protest at once that Origen is estranged [from the Church].¹⁰²

Hence, whilst the first extreme response to Origen has rather blindly inherited the negative approach to him that had been around since the time of Demetrius of Alexandria, the second extreme response is the result of hypocrisy on the part of those who, whilst admiring and engaging with his works, on the one hand feared being associated with the false criticisms made against him, and on the other hand sought to claim his teachings as their own. That many of the criticisms made against Origen are in fact false is an ongoing theme of the *Apology*, which addresses one by one the attribution of heretical teachings to him, and attempts to critically refute them by using evidence from Origen's own works. These ostensible teachings, mentioned in consecutive order in chapter 87 of the *Apology*, include: the claim that the Son of God was not born; that the Son of God came into existence as an emission, that Christ is a mere man, that Christ only appeared to suffer (i.e. docetism), that Origen proclaimed two

101 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 12, trans. Scheck (cit. n. 99) 44.

102 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 15 (Scheck 45-46).

Christ, that he denied the literal understanding of scripture in preference of allegory, that he denied that sinners will be punished at the eschaton; and that he believed in transmigration of souls or reincarnation.¹⁰³ Now, some of these teachings, especially the ones pertaining to Christology, inherently contradict one another, and Rufinus makes the point in his epilogue that since not even madmen can hold so many contradictory views, and Origen was not insane, then if any such teachings crop up in his writings in contradiction to the orthodox statements that Origen himself had made, then they must be additions.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Rufinus quotes in full an epistle by Origen – which the translator Scheck has identified as authentic¹⁰⁵ – that reveals that on one occasion Origen was in a debate with a heretic, who, in the presence of many witnesses, snatched Origen’s document away from him and began to make additions to the work in order to “adorn and purify the discussion.”¹⁰⁶ As it would be beyond the scope of this article to assess all of the heretical opinions already mentioned that were attributed to Origen, I simply want to hone in on three that were mentioned by Justinian in his edict of 543 and his *Letter to the Holy Council About Origen and Those Like-Minded*, issued just before the council of Constantinople ten years later which reiterated, in the form of anathemas, the teachings listed in that *Letter*, namely: the pre-existence of souls, the problem of reincarnation, and the salvation of the devil (which is implied in the accusation addressed by Pamphilus regarding sinners not being punished).¹⁰⁷

Before embarking on a critical engagement with Origen’s

103 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 87 (Scheck 81-82).

104 Rufinus, *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen* 1, trans. Scheck (cit. n. 99) 123-24.

105 In a footnote (n. 12) on the translated text of this letter, Scheck states: “The following citation from one of Origen’s no longer extant epistles is also reproduced by Jerome, *Apol. adv. Ruf.* 2.18. Its authenticity is thus beyond doubt.” *Ibid.* 128.

106 Rufinus, *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen* 7 (Scheck 129).

107 St Pamphilus summarises this accusation as follows: “Moreover, with respect to the resurrection of the dead and the punishments of the ungodly, they impugn him with no trivial calumny, [that is], that he denies that penalties will be inflicted upon sinners.” *Apology for Origen* 87 (Scheck 82).

position on souls, St Pamphilus reiterated a distinction that he made earlier in his *Apology*, namely that Origen would sometimes discuss the definitive proclamations of the Church regarding the truth of certain matters, and that at other times he would explore or consider matters that the Church had not pronounced definitely on.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Origen himself affirms in his *On Principles* that he never asserted these topics in a “dogmatic manner, but simply as opinions, treated in the style of investigation and discussion.”¹⁰⁹ Pamphilus even preserves a fragment from this work where Origen claims that these matters were put forward for testing and even rejection by his readers; bringing them up in some circumstances “lest it seem that a question that had been raised has gone undiscussed.”¹¹⁰ There is a distinction, therefore, between what Origen enunciated in relation to the truth of the Church, and his speculations on certain topics that the Church had no definitive approach to, but which he nevertheless addressed only as the occasion demanded. To confuse the latter with the former is to definitively attribute to Origen matters that he discussed in relation to many varying interpretations and positions – held, indeed, by groups *outside* the Church – but matters that he himself asserted were occasioned by speculations or questions made by members *within* the Church. And it is not only the holy Pamphilus who asserts this concerning Origen, but also St Athanasius the Great, who, in his *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, declared concerning Origen’s approach:

For what he has written as if inquiring and by way of exercise, that let no one take as expressive of his own sentiments, but of parties who are contending in investigation, but what he definitely declares, that is the sentiment of the labour-loving man.¹¹¹

108 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 28 (Scheck 53).

109 Origen, *De Principiis* 2.8.4 (ANF 289).

110 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 175 (Scheck 115). Scheck includes a footnote that stipulates that this quote comes from “*Peri Archon* 1.8.4.” I checked both the English text (cit. n. 56) and the original text in PG 11, 176A-182A and could not find this quote. Scheck does not indicate which version of the *Peri Archon* he used, and since, as mentioned above, the only extant version of the *Apology for Origen* is the translation by Rufinus, it is difficult to trace the exact provenance of the above.

111 St Athanasius the Great, *Defense of the Nicene Definition* 6.27 (NPNF 168). McGuckin affirms that “Origen is the deep intelligence behind Alexander and

In any case, an example of the execution of Origen's method of investigation, where the Alexandrine offered the contentions of various parties in relation to the soul, is made clear in the following:

But there are also certain other dogmas that are not included in the apostolic traditions. You may be asking whether it is necessary to consider as heretics those who hold various opinions on these matters, or who investigate them in various ways. Consider for instance – and I mean this as an example – whether one should be considered a heretic who investigates the question of the human soul, since concerning it the Church's rule has handed down neither that it is derived from the propagation of seed, nor that it is more honorable and ancient than the structure of bodies. For that reason many have been unable to comprehend what their opinion should be concerning the question of the soul. Moreover, those who have seemed to hold some opinion or to discuss anything are held in suspicion by some, as men who are introducing novelties.¹¹²

Athanasius, although they do not mention him, knowing that his legacy is now too controversial.” *The Ascent of Christian Law: Patristic and Byzantine Formulations of a New Civilization* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012) 199. As we can see from the above reference however, Athanasius did mention him. Moreover, it is interesting to note that St Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, published c. 356 (Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 24) depicts St Antony the Great as both longing for martyrdom and ministering “to the confessors, both those in the mines and those in prisons.” St Athanasius of Alexandria, *The Life of Antony* 46 in *The Life of Antony: The Coptic Life and the Greek Life*, trans. Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2003) 157. This is very similar to Eusebius of Caesarea's portrayal of Origen as longing for martyrdom and as “lending a helping hand to all the holy martyrs” when in prison, during their cross-examination, final sentence, and execution in his *History of the Church* (see above). Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.3 (Williamson 182). Since the fifth and final version of Eusebius' *History* was published in 326, twenty years before the *Life of Antony*, it is not altogether improbable that St Athanasius to some extent modeled his depiction of St Antony on Eusebius' portrayal of Origen, without disregarding of course that in early Christian literature the encouragement of martyrs is a general behavioural characteristic of holy persons.

112 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 163 (Scheck 110-11). Scheck indicates in footnote 480 that this has been taken from Origen's *Commentary on Titus* 3:10-11. I checked the *Patrologia Graeca* and it appears under *Fragmenta in Epistolam ad Titum* (PG 14, 1306B).

Here, Origen does not assert definitively that the soul is pre-existent, nor, admittedly, is he stating that it is not. Rather, he gives the various opinions and tacitly questions the motivations of people who would brand as a heretic one who would attempt to broach a topic that had not been addressed in the apostolic tradition before his time. Moreover, in places where he has been interpreted as implying the pre-existence of souls – namely in his interpretation of Genesis 1 in *On Principles* 2.8 – he describes God metaphorically as fire, and likewise the angels and the saints as ‘fiery’ and ‘fervent’ respectively (because of their proximity to God), before discussing those souls that turn away from God as ‘cool.’¹¹³ Many scholars, taking Theophilus of Alexandria’s misunderstanding (or, deliberate misinterpretation)¹¹⁴ of Origen as a pretext,¹¹⁵ have interpreted these statements in relation to other passages in *On Principles*, such as book two chapter nine, where Origen discusses the creation of the world,

113 “As God, then, is a fire, and the angels a flame of fire, and all the saints are fervent in spirit, so, on the contrary, those who have fallen away from the love of God are undoubtedly said to have cooled in their affection for Him, and to have become cold.” Origen, *De Principiis* 2.8.3 (ANF 228). Indeed, he ruminates that perhaps the Greek term for soul, which is ψυχή, is termed so from the word ψύχεσθαι which means “growing cold out of a better and more divine condition [...] because it seems to have cooled from the natural and divine warmth” (ibid.) but does not imply that this ‘cooling’ is the result of the fall of pre-existent souls (or entities) into bodies, as Theophilus had maintained concerning him. See Theophilus’ *Seventeenth Festal Letter* 15, trans. Russell in *Theophilus of Alexandria* (cit. n. 30) 130.

114 See section on ‘The Origenist Controversies’ above.

115 I thank Fr Doru Costache for this nuance. To give just one example here of Theophilus’ construal of Origen’s position on souls, the former asserts on more than one occasion that the latter believed in souls that “pre-existed in heaven before the body” and because these souls sinned in heaven, they were imprisoned in flesh by God for purification and punishment. *First Synodal Letter* (Russell 92). See also his *Third Letter to the Dissidents*, trans. Russell in *Theophilus of Alexandria* (cit. n. 30) 101. These sentiments can be related to his assertion in his *Seventeenth Festal Letter* that Origen’s “general argument” is that “human souls were called such because they lost the warmth of their pristine fervour.” *Seventeenth Festal Letter* 15, trans. Russell in *Theophilus of Alexandria* (cit. n. 30) 130. Hence, the souls cooled as a result of sinning, which, as I have said above, is not problematic if interpreted as a metaphor for an existential state, rather than a literal fall of souls from the heavenly realm into material bodies, which is what underlines Theophilus’ statement.

so that Origen is construed as depicting the fall of pre-existent souls from a fiery state to a cold one, which later resulted in their enfleshment in bodies.¹¹⁶ But this literalist approach is inconsistent with Origen's face value text which not only turns to the creation *after* his discussion on souls, but which is lost in the original language and is only preserved in Rufinus' abridged copy of the work in Latin.¹¹⁷ Moreover, any attempt to render Origen's interpretations literally should always be regulated by his insistence on the allegorical interpretations that he considered to be of much more existential significance than the literal text, but without disparaging the latter.¹¹⁸ To give one example, related to the discussion on souls but this time in regards to their ostensible transmigration

116 Peter W. Martens affirms the following concerning the modern emphasis on Origen's ostensible assertion of the pre-existence of souls: "While much of the contemporary Origenian scholarship has eschewed the overt denunciations that late antique authors often heaped upon this doctrine, a long standing modern trajectory has nevertheless cast suspicious light upon it"; and footnote 3 of his article refers to many modern scholars who in the twentieth century denounced Origen for upholding this view, including Eugène de Faye [see his *Origen and His Work*, trans. Fred Rothwell (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926) 92] and René Cadiou [see his *Origen: His Life at Alexandria*, trans. John A. Southwell (London: B. Herder, 1944) 224]. 'Origen's doctrine of Pre-Existence in the Opening Chapters of Genesis' *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 16 (2013) 516-49, 17. Martens here in fact points to two trends, those who have no problem with Origen's belief in the souls pre-existence and those who do (he builds his argument on the former). Some scholars, such as Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev and Mark S. M. Scott, are more adept at navigating the positive contributions of Origen and distinguishing between his person and the Origenism that was legitimately condemned by the fifth ecumenical council. Nevertheless they still presuppose, whether consciously or not, a Theophilus-like reading of Origen's position on souls. Alfeyev, *The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church* 37-40; Mark S. M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 53.

117 "Only fragments of the original Greek remain in the work, mainly preserved in the Philocalia, and in the edicts of the Emperor Justinian." McGuckin, 'The Life of Origen' 36. For Origen's comments on the creation of the world, see *De Principiis* 2.9 (ANF 289-93).

118 Identifying allegory with a spiritual interpretation, John O'Keefe makes this point clear by stating: "Origen's desire to uncover spiritual meaning did not mean that he trivialized the literal text or was unconcerned with the actual words." 'Scriptural Interpretation' in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (cit. n. 4) 194.

or reincarnation, he openly disparaged this concept by stating that

...we who have never found this provision [i.e. for reincarnation] in the divine Scripture [μηδαμῶς τοῦτο εὐρίσκοντες ἐν τῇ θεία γραφῇ] say that when the human intelligence, by means of great negligence in life, becomes wild and abandoned, it becomes like an irrational beast – by ignorance and negligence, not by nature.¹¹⁹

If Origen describes the negligent intelligence or reason (λόγος)¹²⁰ as metaphorically becoming beast-like – thereby precluding any hint of the possibility of reincarnation – could it not be possible that his description of ‘cold’ souls is also a metaphor for a passionate existence that is quite unlike the fire of God kindled in the saints?¹²¹

Moving on from the notion of the soul’s pre-existence, which is indeed antithetical to the teachings of the Church but which, we have seen, Origen seems to never have asserted as a doctrine, in relation to reincarnation or the “transmigration of souls” the Alexandrine’s position could not have been more clear. Describing such a position as neither

119 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 180 (Scheck 116-17). For the Greek text, see *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 11.17.110-14 in *Origène. Commentaire sur l'évangile selon Matthieu*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Girod (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970) (retrieved via TLG).

120 Origen speaks of the “λογικότερα μεταβάλλει εἰς ἀλογωτέραν” or “of the rational becoming irrational.” *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 11.17.111.

121 From a scriptural point of view, Hebrews 12:29 refers to God as a consuming fire, and Psalm 103(4):4, which is quoted in Hebrews 1:7, refers to his “ministers as a flame of fire (πῦρ φλέγον).” This motif is picked up by the *apothegmata* that describe the saints, i.e. the Lord’s servants or ministers, as being kindled by fire. For instance, saying n. 7 of Abba Joseph of Panephrisis recounts: “Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, ‘Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?’ Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, ‘If you will, you can become all flame.’” *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975) 108.

apostolic¹²² nor scriptural,¹²³ he referred to those who adhere to this belief as “estranged from the Word of the Church”¹²⁴ (ξένοι τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ λόγου).¹²⁵ As a doctrine “estranged from the Church of God”¹²⁶ (τὸ ἀλλότριον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ τῆς μετενσωματώσεως δόγμα)¹²⁷ he further addressed its cosmological implications, namely, the eternity of the universe, as antithetical to Christian eschatology.¹²⁸ Concerning the latter, he referred in several places to the two types of existential states that will characterise the eschaton: “one who lived here very blessedly will shine with a more divine radiance at the resurrection,”¹²⁹ whilst the one “who wasted the time granted to him for the present life by doing evil will be given a kind of body that is capable only of suffering.”¹³⁰ The

122 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 180 (Scheck 117). *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 13.1.51-52.

123 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 180 (Scheck 116). *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 11.17.109-10; also *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 13.1.52-53.

124 *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 11.17.107-8 (my translation). Appears in St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 180 (Scheck 116) under the following liberal translation: “estranged from the Catholic faith.”

125 *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 11.17.107-8.

126 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 182 (Scheck 117). *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 13.1.48-49.

127 *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 13.1.48-50.

128 He states that “those who want this teaching [i.e. the transmigration of souls] do not believe in our Scripture, which very openly declares that there will be an end of the world.” St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 183 (Scheck 119). See also *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 13.1.140-41 that refers to “φθορῆσθαι τὸν κόσμον” which is more like “the world will be destroyed.” Later, in line 143, he also refers to the same ‘destruction’ or ‘end’ as συντέλεια which is not only taken from Christ’s own words for the end of the world in Mt 24:3, but which in combining the word for ‘end’ – τέλος – with the prefix συν – which means ‘together’ – helps us to clarify the notion of the ‘end’ as instead signifying ‘consummation.’ It is, in fact, defined as “consummation” in Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* 1340. Origen’s approach, far from being totally apocalyptic, remained nuanced.

129 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 134 (Scheck 101). I checked the *Patrologia Graeca* and it appears under *Ex Libro Secundo Origenis De Resurrectione* (PG 11, 94C).

130 Ibid.

former will take part in “the resurrection of the good”¹³¹ and the latter in “the resurrection of the wretched,”¹³² meaning that Origen did not believe in universal salvation as has so often been asserted concerning him.¹³³ Regarding the theme of the devil’s salvation – which is implicit in the notion of universal salvation – and which we have seen Origen was condemned for by Justinian and the fifth ecumenical council, Origen himself is very clear on the matter. In his *Commentary on Proverbs*, he declared that

the Lord has determined in advance a single punishment for sins, both for the nature of demons as well as for the human race. The Lord himself has indicated it by his own judgment when he says: “Go into the eternal fire which God has prepared for the devil and his angels [Mt 25.41].” In that passage he shows that the same kind of punishments has [sic!] been prepared for human sinners as well as for the devil and his angels, though in that punishment the measure of punishment may be different.¹³⁴

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- 131 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 137 (Scheck 102-3). Scheck notes in fn. 425 on p. 102 that the above referenced text is from Origen’s *Commentary on Isaiah* 28 on Is 26.19 that I cannot double-check because it is lost. In an email correspondence between myself and the foremost expert on Origen, Professor Lorenzo Perrone (on the 17/12/2014), the latter confirmed that the very few Greek fragments of the commentary that do exist can be found in Pamphilus’ *Apology for Origen*. I duly thank him for this information.
- 132 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 137 (Scheck 103). Likewise identified by Scheck as coming from Origen’s *Commentary on Isaiah* 28 on Is 26.19. See my notes in fn. 123 above.
- 133 The notion of Origen propounding the doctrine of *apokatastasis* understood as universal salvation is pretty much widespread. See it presupposed in Ilaria L. E. Ramelli’s ‘Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 313-56. See also Mark S. M. Scott’s ‘Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: the Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen’s Universalism’ *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18:3 (2010) 276-89, which is nuanced, but still presupposes apokatastasis in Origen’s thought as an appropriate teaching for the spiritually mature.
- 134 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 188 (Scheck 120). Scheck hints in fn. 518 that this originally appeared in Origen’s *Commentary on Proverbs*, but from Professor Perrone (see above) I learned that no such commentary exists, and that from Jerome we know of three works on Proverbs by Origen, but only fragments of these survive.

This statement should suffice to demonstrate that Origen did not advocate the salvation of the devil; but it is indicative of the magnitude of the opposition against him – which, according to Eusebius, was on account of his piety – that he was accused of affirming this well before Justinian’s reign by persons who he himself does not name. The evidence for this has been preserved in the aforementioned letter included in Rufinus’ *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen*, where Origen himself states:

Some of those persons who gladly accuse their neighbors ascribe to us and to our doctrine the charge of blasphemy, which they have never heard from us. Let them take heed to themselves about this, how they are unwilling to observe the commandment which says, “Revilers shall not possess the kingdom of God.” They say that I <claim> that the father of wickedness and perdition, <and> of those who are cast out of the kingdom of God, that is, the devil, is to be saved. This is something which not even a madman and someone who is manifestly insane can say.¹³⁵

One wonders as to why Origen would have been the object of such incredible defamation by his contemporaries, defamation that we have seen ran the gamut of accusations ranging from self-castration to an affirmation of the devil’s salvation. St Pamphilus gives us a hint in his assertion that those who belittle “a teacher of the Church for so many years, who grew old in the Catholic Church, who fought so steadfastly and boldly against those heresies that were assailing the Church at that time” overlook “the effort he put into his studies, his self-discipline, his education, his humility – which beyond all his other virtues is his greatest gift.”¹³⁶ Such an account of Origen’s way of life undoubtedly influenced Pamphilus’ disciple Eusebius, who identifies the consistency between his works and life – “His deeds matched his words, as the saying goes, and his words His deeds [οἶον γοῦν τὸν λόγον, τοιόνδε, φασίν, τὸν τρόπον καὶ οἶον τὸν τρόπον, τοιόνδε τὸν λόγον ἐπεδείκνυτο].”¹³⁷ This identification between the works of Origen

135 Rufinus, *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen* 7 (Scheck 128).

136 St Pamphilus, *Apology for Origen* 16 (Scheck 46).

137 Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 6.3 (Williamson 182). The Greek text is from *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.3.7.

as an outcome of an ascetical way of life is surprising considering the fact that neither Pamphilus nor Eusebius knew him. They did however know of his positive reputation which ran contrary to the negative portrayal made by his detractors, and which was described by someone who indeed knew Origen – namely his student St Gregory Thaumaturgus – in hagiographical tones when he called him Christ’s¹³⁸ “friend and advocate”¹³⁹ and a participator in the “divine Spirit”¹⁴⁰ (τοῦ θείου πνεύματος).¹⁴¹ Going even further, he described his time as Origen’s pupil as paradisaical¹⁴² and facilitating access to the “divine mysteries” (τοῖς θείοις μυστηρίοις)¹⁴³ so that “it could be said that all there were always brought close together in God’s grasp” (καὶ ὅλως συνελόντα εἰπεῖν ἔνθα ἢ ἔνθεος διὰ παντὸς κατακωχή).¹⁴⁴ Gregory, who here addresses both Origen and his fellow pupils, refers to their ‘house’ in Caesarea, which “truly is our father’s [τοῦ ἀληθῶς πατρὸς ἡμῶν],”¹⁴⁵ before making allusions to his own departure from tutelage

138 It should be noted that the most recent translation of St Gregory’s *Oration and Panegyric*, alternately titled *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen*, includes a very important introduction by the translator, Michael Slusser, where he states that “[a]lthough [Gregory] never employs the name ‘Jesus’ or the title ‘Christ,’ he speaks of God’s divine Word in ways which reflect a Christian perspective.” ‘Introduction’ in *St Gregory Thaumaturgus: Life and Works* (cit. n. 1) 21.

139 The Greek is “φίλον καὶ προήγορον.” In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 6.70 in Grégoire le Thaumaturge. *Remerciement à Origène suivi de la lettre d’Origène à Grégoire*, Henri Crouzel (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1969) (retrieved via TLG). Slusser translates it as “friend and confidant” (see *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* 6.83 in *St Gregory Thaumaturgus: Life and Works*, trans. Slusser (cit. n. 1) 104), but I opted for this translation which corresponds to the one found in the *Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen* 6, trans. S. D. F. Salmody in *Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, Julius Africanus, Anatolius and Minor Writers, Methodius and Arnobius*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANF (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) 28.

140 *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* 15.179 (Slusser 121).

141 In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 15.30-31 (my translation).

142 Gregory refers to his experience with Origen as follows: “οὗτος παράδεισος ἀληθῶς τροφῆς,” which translates to “this is the paradise of true nourishment.” In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 16.1 (my translation).

143 In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 16.75-76 (my translation).

144 In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 16.77-78 (my translation).

145 *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* 16.189 (Slusser 123). In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 16.30.

under Origen as reflecting that of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32).¹⁴⁶ In short, reflecting the traditional relationship between the spiritual father or mother and his or her disciple that was in fact from the outset a hallmark of Orthodox tradition, Gregory in fact describes his own mystical participation in God as unfolding within the context of his discipleship to Origen – his father in the Lord – a participation that in the case of both men should be understood as initiated by God himself.¹⁴⁷ St Gregory is so convinced of this that he beseeches Origen, whom he refers to as “our beloved head [ὁ φίλη κεφαλή]”¹⁴⁸ to continue to pray to God on his and his fellow students’ behalf, so that the God who led them to Origen might continue to save them; a salvation that he asserts began with his teacher’s “holy instructions [ἱεροῖς ... μαθήμασι].”¹⁴⁹ These instructions are aptly exhibited in Origen’s own words when he writes in a letter to St Gregory on how the study of philosophy can be helpful in the interpretation of the scriptures (where he nevertheless prioritises the latter to the former):

As you know, the pursuit of understanding, since it calls for asceticism, can involve exertion, which leads as much as possible (if I may put it that way) toward the goal of that for which a person wishes to train [...] But I would wish you to employ the full power of your pursuit ultimately for Christianity.¹⁵⁰

146 This tutelage took place in Caesarea, which I mentioned above became Origen’s permanent residence from 234 onwards. Also, Slusser notes that the allusion to the parable of the prodigal son continues throughout 16.191 where Gregory describes himself (in the plural) as departing from Origen’s tutelage without his “entire legitimate inheritance” before stating that “while we do not take what we need, we go away nonetheless, leaving behind what we admire and love with you and around you, and receiving worse in exchange.” See *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* (Slusser 123-24).

147 This is implied throughout the panegyric but it is stated emphatically at the end when Gregory affirms that God “led us [i.e. Origen’s students] to you.” *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* 19.204 (Slusser 126).

148 *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* 19.204 (Slusser 126). In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 19.1. This expression also appears earlier in *In Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 2.52.

149 *Address of Thanksgiving to Origen* 19.204-205 (Slusser 126). In *Origenem Oratio Panegyrica* 19.12-13.

150 *Letter of Origen to Gregory* 1 (Slusser 190).

It is this pursuit that Origen instructed Gregory and his other disciples to follow, a pursuit that, according to the sources and witnesses addressed in this section, the great Alexandrine exemplified both in word and deed.

Conclusion

In this paper I have not, as some might presume, advocated the cause for Origen's canonisation, although if the phenomenology of the saints is to be taken at all seriously, in that they can identify each other as participants in God, then St Gregory Thaumaturgus' comments are difficult to ignore. In fact, these comments obscure the adverse descriptions made by other ecclesiastical figures such as St Epiphanius bishop of Salamis, the blessed Theophilus of Alexandria and St Jerome, or even by the fathers of the fifth ecumenical council, since none of them knew Origen the way that St Gregory Thaumaturgus did. Instead, what I have hoped to demonstrate is that both in Origen's immediate context, and later, there were two distinct representations of this Christian father, favourable and contrary, which are incompatible. On the one hand, his peers and admirers – who include amongst their company Orthodox saints – either revered him for his holiness of life, or positively engaged with his works, or both. On the other hand, both in his immediate context and after there were those who would exploit the fame and prolific activity of this figure by creating false rumours about his personal life (as in bishop Demetrius' accusation of self-castration), falsifying his works, interpreting his metaphorical elaborations literally, and using these and other elaborations – some of which were articulated by Origen on the level of mere speculation – to calumniate, not just Origen himself, but those who in later generations admired him. This is what we saw took place in the First Origenist Controversy, where Isidore and the 'Tall Brothers' were condemned by Theophilus who, in the first instance, endeavoured to exact revenge against them, and in the second instance, tried to overthrow St John Chrysostom. At the beginning of this paper, we saw that the Second Origenist Controversy was likewise precipitated at the outset by matters that had nothing to do with Origen; for how could he possibly be blamed for the behaviour of the ostensible adherents/

misinterpreters of his writings three hundred years after his death? In this instance, we saw that Justinian wanted to maintain order in Palestine, and although the condemnation of ‘Origenist’ beliefs such as the pre-existence of souls, reincarnation, and universal salvation by the fifth ecumenical council were indeed legitimate insofar as they contradict the teaching and experience of the Church, we have seen above that Origen claimed to have never asserted these things; in fact, he openly refuted them. In light of this, and given the fact that Origen was regarded as holy by Sts Pamphilus, Gregory Thaumaturge, and St Theotimus – saints extolled as such by the same Byzantine establishment that condemned him – not to mention the positive engagement with (or appraisal of) his person and works by Sts Athanasius, Basil, Gregory the Theologian, the blessed Rufinus, and the Church historians Eusebius, Socrates and Sozomen, then we need to ask ourselves if it would not be better, in the future, to always distinguish between Origen the confessor/martyr for Christ and Origenism, the former being illegitimately condemned in a single canon by a council that in any case had Nestorianism as its main concern, and the latter being quite legitimately condemned for espousing doctrines antithetical to the experience of the Church. Only in this way can we do justice to this much maligned figure who contributed so much to the life of the early Church, and whose person and legacy seems to embody the Lord’s saying in John 16:2: “the time is coming, and has now come, when those who kill you will think they are offering service to God.”