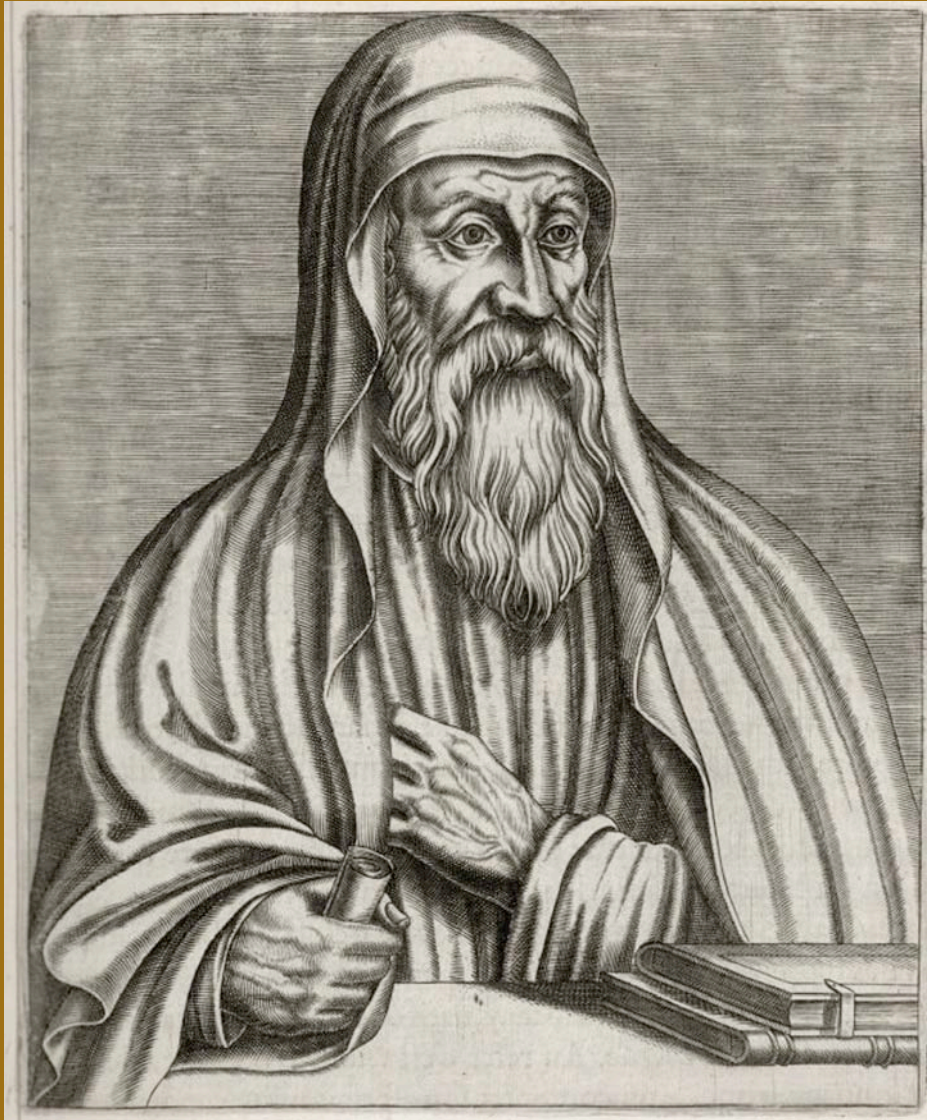


SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

The Restoration of Origen

by

Dimitrios Elias Makrygiannis



Origen, illustration from "Les Vrais Portraits Et Vies Des Hommes Illustres"

by Andre Thevet

www.divinepharos.org

THE RESTORATION OF ORIGEN

(SHORTENED VERSION)

BY DIMITRIOS EL. MAKRYGIANNIS

FOREWORD

The starting point for writing this book was the realisation that while Origen died in the year 253, his conviction took place precisely **three centuries later**, namely the year 553, during the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Thus we rightfully wondered: To what was this substantial delay owed? What came to pass within this time frame? Why did the great Fathers of the Church not attend earlier to nullify those views, which were then and are up until today, considered to be opposed to the Christian teachings?

The effort to clarify these questions led the writer to a more thorough investigation of the subject. Our work expands gradually across four time periods. These are:

First Period: The duration of Origen's earthly life, including his manifold activities, but also the reactions stemming from several parties. Particularly, we explore those topics of Origen's teachings, which stood as points for conflict and controversy (Chapter 1 and 3).

Second Period: The time frame originating from Origen's death to the period when the Fifth Ecumenical Council took place. It was during the latter when Origen's great admirers as well as his relatively few prosecutors emerged. (Chapter 2).

Third Period: The short time span of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, including the events preceding and following it. This refers to the most critical period, which upon closer inspection and examination, captures and condenses in minimum space and time all the trends of previous centuries in order to allow them thereafter to develop under new and changed forms in the coming centuries (Chapters 4 and 5).

Fourth Period: The time frame spanning from the third period to date. This period presents two clear distinct phases: the rejection of Origen through all Byzantine Era due to his conviction, and the recognition of his great theological value during the two last centuries (Chapter 6).

During the critical Third Period, another issue, known as the "Three Chapters", which is not directly relevant to the topics referring to Origenism and Origenistic controversies, unfolds and intertwines. The special expansion dedicated to this issue in this book is mainly due to the fact that it consisted of the sole and exclusive topic for which the Fifth Ecumenical Council was actually summoned and formed. Our intention, thus, was to prove, via the use of every possible historical detail, that this Council was formed with its sole purpose to condemn only

the "Three Chapters". The issues relating to Origen and his teachings were officially initiated and tackled following the Council's completion, while the decision for his condemnation was taken after the Council ended its work. In this manner, we provide the fully and thoroughly established answer to the unsolved until this day problem pertaining to whether and when the particular Council was involved and preoccupied with Origen.

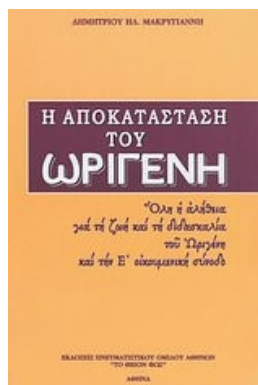
We believe that the present work, not only resolves multiple problems, but also clears up the spiritual mapping opening up new horizons for the deeper and more essential study of the life, work and teachings of the Father of the science of Theology, the great Origen.

The Author

The present work is a shortened version consisting of approximately one fourth (1/4) of the fully published Greek edition as the following have been omitted:

- a) Several of the presented excerpts originating from works of the Fathers of the Church, as well as all original Greek texts of the above-mentioned excerpts.
- b) Those sections of the subjects being developed which are of secondary importance for the reader, whose interest does not lie in many historical and theological details.

The cover of the Greek edition



(ISBN: 978-960-7874-16-0)

CONTENTS

Foreword	1
----------------	---

CHAPTER 1: ORIGEN

1. Biography	5
2. Literary Works	7
3. The start of all misconception	8
4. The shameful act	11
a. The incident	
b. The subsequent common belief about the incident	
5. The rumor around the self-castration	12
a. The general stance on the subject	
b. The external criteria	
c. The internal criteria	
d. What Origen actually did	
e. The subsequent common belief	
6. The ordination	16
a. The preceding events	
b. The normalcy of the ordination	
c. The reaction of Demetrius	
d. The proceeding events	

CHAPTER 2: ORIGEN'S ADMIRERS AND ACCUSERS

1. General	18
2. The successors, Dionysius, Theognostus, and Pierius	19
3. Peter of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus, Eustathius of Antioch	19
4. Pamphilus and Eusebius	20
5. St. Athanasius the Great	20
6. Pachomius	21
7. Didymus the Blind	21
8. St. Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus	22
9. Gregory of Nyssa	22
10. Evagrius Ponticus	23
11. Epiphanius of Cyprus and Theophilus of Alexandria	23
12. Jerome and Rufinus	25
13. John Chrysostom	26
14. Palladius Synesius, Socrates, Vincent	27
15. Cyrillus, Isidore, Antipatrus, Theodore	27
16. Recapitulation	28

CHAPTER 3: ORIGEN'S «MISBELIEFS»

1. Which were Origen's «misbeliefs»	30
2. The confidential teaching	32
3. The preexistence of souls	33
4. Reincarnation	34

5. Where heavenly paradise lay	36
6. The universal involvement in the original sin	37
7. The material and the spiritual bodies	39
8. About the devil and demons	39
9. Is hell eternal?	40
10. The universal restoration (Apokatastasis)	41

CHAPTER 4: THE «THREE CHAPTERS»

1. «A sign that is spoken against»	42
2. The so-called «Three Chapters»	42
3. Theodore of Mopsuestia	43
4. Theodoret of Cyrus	43
5. Ibas of Edessa	43
6. The "Robber" council	44
7. The Fourth Ecumenical Council	44
8. The development of the issue until the Fifth Ecumenical Council	45

CHAPTER 5: THE FIFTH (5th) ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

1. The general problem	46
2. Justinian's "Speech against Origen" (543)	47
3. Raising again the issue of the Three Chapters	48
4. What preceded the Council	48
5. The three first sessions	49
6. The condemnation of the Three Chapters	49
7. The development of the relations with Vigilius	50
8. The date of the "sacra forma"	50
9. The citation of Origen in the transcripts	51
10. How Evagrius lays the facts	52
11. Justinian's letter	53
12. The libel against Origen	54
13. What truly happened at the Council	54
14. The extent which Origenism reached	55
15. The fifteen (15) rules against the Origenist teaching	56
16. The events that followed	56
17. Were the decisions taken valid?	57
18. The positive side of the events	58

CHAPTER 6: THE GENERAL APPROACH TOWARDS ORIGEN FROM 553 TO DATE

1. The general picture	60
2. The following Ecumenical Councils	61
3. Byzantine writers	61
4. Contemporary Greek writers	62

CONCLUSIONS	64
EPILOGUE	65
REFERENCES	66

CHAPTER 1

ORIGEN

1. Biography

Origen was born in Alexandria the year 185 A.C. His father was named Leonides. Leonides was quite educated and had embraced Christianity. He was very attentive to his son's education including the study of literary education, as much as the study of the Holy Scripture. As a young man, Origen showed exceptional willingness to learn, as he did not merely rest on the simple conversation topics but tried to enter in depth into the concepts of the Scripture, often putting his father in a difficult position by doing so.¹

In the year 202, the emperor Septimius Severus issued a decree against the practiced religious conversion by Christians. The decree pertained solely to those having been religiously converted from gentiles and not to Christians by birth. Leonides was arrested, locked in jail and eventually died an agonizing, martyr death while his assets were confiscated.

After the death of his father, Origen was found in a most unfortunate and grievous position along with his mother and six younger siblings. During this critical time, he was fortunate enough to fall under the protection and shelter of a very wealthy woman in Alexandria who had also adopted the leader of a philosophical sect called Paul. Origen did not strike up a close relationship with him but rather went on towards the completion of his literary studies and finally managed to become a schoolmaster, which enabled him to obtain sufficient means of living.

Origen is closely linked to the **Catechetical School** of Alexandria, whose long tradition and reputation, according to many historians dated back to the time of the Evangelist Mark, founder of the church of Alexandria.

Due to the religious persecution that was taking place at the time, all the teachers of the Catechetical School were either arrested or removed from Alexandria and, thus, the catechetical work had ceased. Nevertheless, as several of the gentiles were approaching Origen seeking to hear the word of God, a certain revival of the Christian movement commenced. Thus for this reason, the Bishop Demetrius assigned the overall management of the School to the then 18 year-old Origen in order for him to continue its work.⁴

In an earlier time, and during his childhood, Origen had suffered the "**shameful act**", which substantially affected and scarred his life in a profound way. This incident is not mentioned by Eusebius, but it is known through other sources and will be presented extensively in a following section.

Through his diligent ardour, Origen managed to give the school a renowned reputation which subsequently attracted not only Christians to pursue their studies but also members of the gentiles as well as Jews, many of whom had adopted Christianity. Origen's virtue and wisdom constituted a means of attraction for those seeking to know the truth.

¹. References are provided at the end of the book. The numbers of those references which are missing are pertaining to topics which have been omitted from this current shortened version.

Due to the fact that the number of incoming students in the school was increasing, Origen was compelled to leave the occupation he maintained for a living as a schoolmaster and devote himself exclusively to the work of the school. As he consequently found himself in great financial indigence, however, he resorted to selling all the books he possessed and made an agreement with the buyer to receive four mites daily for them.

With these resources he led a very modest and thrifty life. He went about wearing merely a chiton, wandered with no shoes on, slept on the ground, and submitted himself to many voluntary deprivations and fasting. For approximately thirty years (202-232), during which he served as head of the school, he stood as a model ascetic, a paradigm Christian and philosopher, and obtained an utmost reputation and recognition within all the Christian community.

It is a generally admissible fact that Origen, while being young and overly enthusiastic, interpreted literally the evangelic saying which quoted: "*There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven*" (Matthew 19, 12) and thus submitted himself to self-castration. A reasonable and most likely explanation of this action seems to be the fact that among his students were also women, and therefore he resorted to this doing in order to avoid the potential slander, defamation (libel) and judgment associated with that. However, the common viewpoint surrounding Origen's self-castration constitutes a tragic historical misunderstanding, which we will explore and unfold in more detail in section 4.

During 30 years as school principal, Origen made several trips and visits to various places. In the year 212 he visited Rome for a short period, and the year 215 he traveled to Arabia as a guest of the country's ruler.

In 216, while located in Caesarea Palestine, Origen started preaching in the temples after being urged and encouraged by Alexander of Jerusalem and Theoctistus of Caesarea. As soon as the bishop of Alexandria Demetrius found out, however, he was outraged and ordered Origen to return to Alexandria at once, which he did.⁵

In 231 Demetrius sent Origen to Greece in order for him to take care of certain matters relating to the church. On his way there, and while passing through Caesarea, he was ordained as a priest by his two Bishop friends. As a consequence, this caused Demetrius' strong indignation. He severely deprecated through his letters the two Bishops who ordained Origen and convened a local council, which came into effect to restrict Origen's sojourn in Alexandria.

His ordination constituted the third in order most crucially controversial incident in Origen's life because it is linked and related to the two previous incidents mentioned (i.e. the shameful act he was submitted to as well as the alleged self-castration). All of the above incidents, in turn, are intertwined to become part of the great historical misconception, which is almost fully maintained until today. This issue will be especially touched-on following the discussion and examination of the two other above-mentioned issues, as well as the question of whether the local council, which was recalled resulted in the deposition of Origen from the position of priest.

Due to this unfortunate situation that had been created at the time, Origen departed from Alexandria leaving the administration and overall management of the school to his pupil Heraklas. He fled to Caesarea Palestine where Theoctistus was still Bishop and there he established a new school, which signaled a new career path for him.

The school of Caesarea acquired as good a reputation as that of the one in Alexandria. Students who came there to attend and pursue their studies were not only local residents but also many foreigners who came from other countries solely for that purpose. One of Origen's students was Gregory the Thaumaturgus, who was later appointed bishop of Neocaesarea. During his graduation he (Gregory) delivered a wonderful "Farewell Address" (Thanksgiving speech) to Origen. It is from Gregory that we have acquired the information that Origen taught theology, philosophy, astronomy, geometry, ethics and physiology using the dialectical method.

During the persecution in the years of Decius (249-250), Origen was arrested, imprisoned, and was brutally tortured. He was 65 years old at the time. In the end, he was released but tired, wretched and run down as he was by all the hardship he had suffered, he did not continue his work at the school where he had worked actively for 17 years (232-249). Subsequently, he retired to Tyre (Lebanon) where he passed away shortly after, the year 253 at the age of 69 years old approximately.

2. Literary Works

Origen has written the most work among all the fathers of the Christian church. He possessed the gift of rhetoric speech to an astute degree, as well as the ability to infiltrate and plunge directly into the deeper meanings of the scriptures and texts capturing their symbolic sense or edifying other meanings agreeable and compatible with the Christian teachings.

Origen's work can be classified in six (6) categories: a) **Critical**, b) **Interpretative**, c) **Apologetic**, d) **Dogmatic**, e) **Ethical** and f) **Letters**. In what follows, we will refer to each one of these categories in brief.

a) Critical

Origen was the first consistent and systematic critic of the content of the Old Testament. Realizing that the text translation did not entirely coincide with the Jewish text, he decided to make an in depth comparison between each single paragraph listing in six (6) parallel columns the Jewish text and all the existing, thus far, translations. This work of his is titled "Hexapla" and very few of its many parts have survived the years and been saved.

b) Interpretative

Origen interpreted nearly all of the Holy Scripture. His interpretations are characterized and distinguished between comments, speeches, and tomes. The **comments** were brief observations and remarks on words and phrases included in the text. The **speeches** were ethical discourses on various excerpts, which were documented by tachygraphs and were then published, either in the form in which they were given verbally, or in short summaries. Lastly, the **tomes** were highly extensive interpretations, including an in-depth and closer examination on theological, philosophical, physics and metaphysics matters.

The allegorical manner of interpretation of the Scriptures by Origen has become the subject of many discussions and dissent - influenced significantly by common belief in his conviction as well as the unorthodox nature of certain of Origen's notions and viewpoints. It is our belief that following the restoration of Origen, his allegorical interpretations should be treated in and approached from a completely different angle of perception.

c) Apologetic

Among Origen's apologetic pieces, only one quite important piece was saved. This was the "*Contra Celsum*" in 8 tomes.

d) Dogmatic

Origen wrote several dogmatic pieces. However, the only one widely and well known today is the "*On Principles*" which is given in Latin translation by Rufinus.

"*On Principles*" is considered to be Origen's most significant work. It was written in Alexandria around the year 220 and was initially available solely among the very close circle of Origen's students. However, induced by his officiousness, Ambrosius, (one of Origen's students), disseminated the work widely without his teacher's consent.

This work consists of the first systematic documentation of the Christian dogma. It is believed today that it contains "misbeliefs" contrary to those of the Christian teachings because of the writer being influenced by Greek philosophy or other theological perceptions. Criticism of this nature, however, is based on today's existing dogma with failure to examine if those are in all respects genuine or not. Nevertheless, following the verification that takes place through the present work, the dogmatic treatment and approach of Origen should also be reconsidered and revised.

From the Greek text only a few sections have been saved.

e) Ethics

Only two (2) of Origen's ethical pieces have been saved. These are namely: "*About prayer*", which deals with prayer in general and interprets the Lord's Prayer, and "*In urge of torment*", through which Origen encourages two imprisoned friends during the persecution of Maximinus of Thrace (235-238) to suffer in tolerance the physical torture and defy death.

f) Letters

Out of the many letters that Origen wrote, Eusebius gathered more than 100 in number. Only two (2) of them, however, are saved in full (length) and thorough form namely, "*To Julius African*" and "*To Gregory the Thaumaturgus*".

3. The start of all misconception

We now return to the biography of Origen in order to unravel the incredibly perplexing misconception that has been held against him.

It is suggested that readers pay close attention to the sequence of events, the accuracy and detail of words and phrases that are used by the ancient writers to depict the events, which they either experienced themselves or they discovered through tradition.

As we cited earlier in Origen's biographical note, this is in reference to three different events:

- a) **The shameful act** against Origen that took place during his childhood by pagans of Alexandria. This act is usually not taken into consideration by newer scholars,
- b) **The act of self-castration**, or rather the act that actually took place and was interpreted as such by later scholars and,
- c) **Origen's ordination** along with all the unfortunate consequences that followed.

The starting point for all misunderstanding is found in Chapter 6, section 8 of the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius, which is here below presented in full due to its exceptional importance to the present research:

*"While he was conducting his indoctrination work, Origen engaged in an act which might have partly reflected an imperfect and juvenile mind, but also incorporated a great sense of faith and prudence. 2. That is, because he perceived and interpreted the quote: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven" in a more simplistic and juvenile manner, believing that he was fulfilling a lifesaving saying. Also because, being young in age, he did not teach the heavenly word only to men but also to women, **he was urged to accomplish the lifesaving saying in practice** in order to preclude and eliminate any suspicion of vile slander coming from the nonbelievers and this way ensure that he avoids the attention of most of the people he knew. 3. However, even though he wished to, it was not possible to conceal such an act. When Demetrius, the selectman for the community then, discovered this act he expressed his admiration for Origen for his brave and daring act and, acknowledging his eagerness and genuine faith, he encouraged and prompted him to become even more engaged with the indoctrination work. 4. During that time, Demetrius was favorable, but not many years later, seeing Origen being successful, glorious and famous, he succumbed to a human reaction and while writing to the bishops around the world, he tried to show that the act was completely improper when the high novices and eminent bishops of Caesarea and Jerusalem appointed Origen as priest, recognizing him as worthy of the highest of honors. 5. As Origen became glorious and acquired a great name and glory of virtue and wisdom, Demetrius did not find any other accusation to lay upon him and thus **endeavored to vilify in a terrible way the act that was committed upon Origen when he was a child** daring to include in his accusations those that had proclaimed him (Origen) as priest. 6. This is what, thus, took place a short while after; Origen, however, was at the time, performing the work of the heavenly teaching incautiously to all those that came to him night and day, engaging himself tirelessly and exclusively with the heavenly courses and those who studied under him".⁹*

This is where we first acquire the information that Origen perceived in a more simplistic and juvenile manner the saying: *"There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven"* (Matthew 19,12). Urged by this saying, notes Eusebius, *"he was urged to perform the lifesaving saying in practice"*.

The above-mentioned phrase was considered by many in ancient times, and is even considered nowadays by all researchers and theologians, as affirming Origen's self-castration. If, however, we pay close attention and take notice of the wording of the phrase, we realize and verify that this is not in fact what it explicitly says. Eusebius actually cites vaguely a certain event without clearly revealing it.

We will explore this issue extensively and on a greater scale in an upcoming chapter, where we will expand on the event that Eusebius implies in concealment and would later be considered as self-castration. For the time being, nevertheless, we will refer to this event as "**event X**" for the purpose of convenience.

We now proceed to Origen's ordination to the clergy. As we noted earlier, when Origen passed through Caesarea Palestine for the second time, his two friends - the bishops Theoctistus and Alexander, consecrated him. The relevant problems relating to that event - common and other - will be examined in section 6. In the current chapter we will remain solely with the wrath expressed by Demetrius, who, through his letters, lashed out against Origen, as well as the two bishops asserting that this act of consecration was completely undue and improper. In order to prove his harsh accusations, Demetrius recalled an old, forgotten story, which he brought again to surface:

Eusebius writes in the pre-mentioned work word for word: "*as Demetrius did not find any other accusation to lay upon him (Origen), **he endeavored to vilify in a terrible way the act that was committed on Origen when he was a child...***". At this point, the majority of researchers believe that what he implies is the self-castration of Origen, which Demetrius had praised with admiration during earlier time. This is not the case however.

From the particular phrasing used, we deduce that an act "*committed upon him*" is implied; in other words an act performed on him, and at his own expense, from third parties and particularly "*when he was a child*"; meaning when he was going through childhood. **It is not, thus, an act he performed upon himself but rather an act that was performed by others against him while he was a child.** Subsequently, it is not possible that the (alleged) self-castration is implied, nor however that event X is either, an event which took place in a more mature age. After all, no true event could be used as a basis for "*severe defamation*", since every defamation encloses the element of slander and the falsification of reality.

What was this "*committed act*" we shall see in the following pages. However, in order to facilitate and accommodate the readers who do not have precise and accurate knowledge around the particular area, we summarize our views and stance by using two key phrases coming from Eusebius:

- The commonly prevailed perception that by the phrase "*he was urged to accomplish the lifesaving saying in practice*" Origen's self-castration is meant to be implied. The exact same event, on the other hand, is being associated and identified with the "*act that was committed upon him when he was a child*".
- On the contrary, our view is that by the first phrase self-castration is not implied (which in fact never took place), but rather it is the event X that it relates to. Moreover, by the second phrase it is the attempted shameful act that was performed upon Origen that is being implied, which is recounted in detail by Epiphanius.

These events are being investigated and explored in the coming sections.

4. The shameful act

a. The incident

Epiphanius, the bishop of Salamina Cyprus (315-403), wrote among others the work "*Panarion*", which contains the refutation of 80 religious sects. Among the latter, Origen is also

included. Epiphanius, on the one hand, praises and admires him but, on the other, accuses him of lapsing his Christian faith. Epiphanius' work, despite its many discrepancies and contradictions, contains the fullest and most thorough saved description of the key event of interest.¹¹

When he was just a child at the age of 12-13 years approximately, during a certain ritual, pagans gave Origen palm fronds to distribute to those who came to worship before the Serapion. Origen however refused to do so and without hesitation cried: "*Come and receive not the bough of the idol but the bough of Christ*".

The confluence of a large number of people reveals that there was some sort of festival taking place at the time. We also ascertain that there was no initial intention to abuse Origen and it does not appear to have been a period of official persecution. While being involved with issues concerning their festivities, the pagans randomly reached to Origen, perhaps along with other children attending to the people and guests, and had them distribute the palm-trees to the ascending worshipers without having harm in mind. Origen's refusal and his declaration of faith in Christ exacerbated them and so they grabbed the child, cut his hair and made him throw incense to the fire on the altar, as was the custom of worshipers as an indication of their faith.

Origen, of course, refused to throw incense on the altar, but furious as the pagans were, they presented to him a male Ethiopian and threatened him with physical abuse if he did not make the sacrifice to the idols. The child, terrified in view of such a possibility, said that he would likely rather make the sacrifice. Even so though, he did not do so willingly but because he affirmed to the sacrifice they forcibly dragged him to the altar, placed some incense in his hand and then held his hand and opened it violently over the altar so that the incense fell in the open fire. Thus, young Origen was in this way considered as sacrificing to the idols.

b. The subsequent common belief about the incident

Epiphanius writes: "*However, he did not do this willingly as many say...*"

Therefore, not only were most people aware of the incident of the "sacrifice", but they also believed that Origen sacrificed with his own free will. It was mainly the slander and aspersion of Demetrius that contributed to the dispersion of this belief and this particular version of the truth but also the so-called Origenist controversies that broke out from time to time between the Monks of Palestine. We will speak of the latter, however, in another Chapter. It is to his honor and due to his impartial character, that Epiphanius, although classifying Origen between the heretics, he does not hesitate to stress that he (Origen) did not resort willingly to the action in question.

On the contrary, **Nemesius** the bishop of Emesa, who lived around the end of the fourth (4th) to beginning of the fifth (5th) century, acknowledges that Origen was consciously sacrificed, confirming this way the expression used by Epiphanius: "*as many say*". He, in fact, considers that with this action of his, Origen was derogated from any kind of respect, recognition or appreciation within the church¹².

Origen's conscious and voluntary sacrifice to the idols is also implied in the work "*Speech*" by **Justinian**, which he personally sent to the patriarch Mennas the year 543. In this

work, Origen is accused as the worst of all heretics and the source of all heresy. An extensive reference to the "*Speech*" will be made in Chapter 5¹⁴.

In contemporary ages, the incident of the "sacrifice" to the idols has been forgotten and very few refer to it in brief. In fact, many believe it to be an imaginary narration of Epiphanius and do not even accept it as an official historical fact. Nevertheless, we believe that it constitutes the beginning of all misunderstandings that have been accumulated throughout the years around the personality and character of the great son of the Church - Origen. This is the reason why we attempted to clarify in detail all facts and events, so that the truth can be thus restored.

5. The rumor around the self-castration

a. The general stance on the subject

We have, thus far, already mentioned that Origen's reputable self-castration consists of a tragic misunderstanding. In the present section we will display all proof and evidence that coincide and advocate in favor of that view.

Eusebius' critical phrase "*he was urged to accomplish the lifesaving saying in practice*" is presented for the first time as the self-castration in the *Chronicon* of John Zonaras, who lived during the 12th century (see continuation). Until that time, the belief and rumor was quite unclear and perplexed and was overlaid by the belief of the sacrifice to the idols, to which people attributed the adverse and unfavorable characterizations to Origen.

Later, the "sacrifice" was, on the one hand, forgotten while, on the other, the self-castration prevailed as the correct interpretation of the above-mentioned phrase. Nowadays, all researchers and scholars accept it with the extenuation of Origen's juvenile enthusiasm towards the work of the indoctrination.

The only Greek (and perhaps the only one existent in the worldwide bibliography) who supported that this interpretation did not correspond to the greater historical truth was the archbishop **Nikiforos Kalogeras** in his thesis "*About the first Alexandrian Christian Theological School*" published the year 1867.

In this work (pages 79-86), Nikiforos Kalogeras strongly defends the Alexandrian Theologist with incontrovertible arguments of the latter's faulty accusation of such an act. Reading this book convinced the writer of the current work and of its absolute justness and, through further research on the matter, some supplementary evidence was found on the case in question.

b. The external criteria

These consisted, on the one hand, of the testimonies of Eusebius and other writers of the time, and on the other, of the applicable prohibitions of political and Ecclesiastical legislation.

The story begins with the evangelical saying wherein the three kinds of castration are cited: "*For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the*

sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" (Matthew 19, 12).

It is, thus, assumed that Origen read and interpreted the last part of the above-mentioned quote in a literal manner and thus castrated himself in order to win the kingdom of Heavens! This conviction is based on Eusebius' phrase "*he was urged to accomplish the lifesaving saying in practice*", which we have already noted, as well as to a phrase from Origen's text to be discussed further below in the Chapter.

Following the citation of Eusebius' text in the previous section, we formulated our first remarks on the view that the particular phrase, if literally taken, does not reflect an act of self-castration but secretly implies something completely different, which we temporarily named "event X".

Eusebius writes that Origen resorted to this action in order to avert any vile inkling and suspicion coming from the side of the non-believers due to his teaching the sacred word to women. He then adds that he (Origen) ensured that he kept this a secret even from the people he knew. This, however, consists of a logical contradiction because should this have been the real and true objective behind the self-castration, then Origen should naturally be declaring his actions publicly as they aimed to preclude the unethical suspicions.

It is also a known fact that no other writer, contemporary or subsequent of Origen, speaks explicitly of any self-castration.

Besides the absolute silence from the side of the historical writers, as well as the fanatical anti-Origenists, on such action, there were also the ecclesiastical and political sectors that banned and forbade it. It was thus impossible for someone to commit self-castration without suffering the consequences when his action became known.

The 22nd apostolic canon says: "*He who has mutilated himself is not to become a priest for he is a self-murderer and thus an enemy of the creation of God*".

If the alleged self-castration had indeed taken place, then the two bishops (of Jerusalem and Caesarea) would not dare to act in contrast and against the explicit provision of the 22nd apostolic canon, nor would they defend boldly themselves and justify Origen when Demetrius had unleashed his accusations. Secondly, in the Council that was summoned and structured to depose Origen of the hieratic degree, it was mandatory to set as primary to all resolutions the canon specifying that: "*He who mutilated himself is not to become a priest*". This canon, however, not only was not set as primary, but was not mentioned whatsoever.

Moreover, the prohibition of castration was also imposed by political sectors.^{16,17} Therefore, the alleged self-castration would consist of a very serious illegal act on behalf of Origen, one we believe he would never attempt being the lawful individual he was.

c. The internal criteria

These criteria emerge from what Origen himself has written, particularly in his explanation of the controversial paragraph of Mathew 19, 12. With regards, thus, to the three categories of eunuchs, he begins his explanation by saying that until that time all researchers

claimed that the first two castrations referred to the physical side of the act - the bodily act. As far as the third one, nevertheless, there existed two views: Others said that the third castration was also physical, and was actually performed, while others asserted that it had a metaphorical meaning.

Origen not only accuses those who supported the first view but also pities those who performed the act of physical castration, stressing that they subjected themselves to shameful and other evil acts. Naturally, Origen would not use such strong verbal expressions if he were indeed a part of that particular category of people.

Subsequently, applying his endearing method of allegoric interpretation of the Scriptures, he rejects the view that both castrations have a physical meaning. In other words, that they refer to the removal of genitalia. He then goes on to cite other examples from the New Testament where names of objects and expressions of a material content have a purely spiritual meaning.

After this analysis, Origen proceeds to the complete allegorical interpretation of the Matthew 19, 12 essay, saying that: "*Castrates are called allegorically those who abstain from the venereal acts and do not take to lechery and impure acts or to similar acts*".

The true meaning of the third castration is "*to excise through word the passive part of one's soul*". This means that man removes from his inner self his desires and passions by using solely the sword of word. Man is led to this decision through faith that this act is not only necessary for his ethical development as an entity, but also contributes decisively to the achievement of his ultimate goal, which is to reach and gain the kingdom of heavens.

The first two castrations, metaphorically taken, also do not have a physical meaning. Especially the first one, to be born, that is, without genitalia, is a rather unlikely case on its own. Hence, Origen's version prevails, which claims that those born eunuchs are those who naturally have an incapability to use their genitals or by nature do not have any venereal impulses.

The second category, that is those castrated by man, has a physical meaning and was implemented at some time in special cases. Nevertheless, following the other two versions, this one is also interpreted allegorically and suggests those who were convinced by several human theories against performing sexual acts.

We are, thus, left with the third castration, which suggests the removal of man's inner desire and passion through the decisive imposition of word and the strong willingness to follow the proper ethical stance towards life itself. This is exactly the "castration" that Origen performed without explicitly admitting to it but rather implying his clear preference towards this version as opposed to the other two.

Throughout this whole analysis, the possibility that Origen refers to his own self-castration is by far non-existent for the mere reason that there was then no such issue considered as a real fact and nor as a rumored case.

From all that has been mentioned above, a crystal clear conclusion arises that there is not even the slightest possibility that Origen performed the alleged self-castration. An act like

that cannot be in any way matched to his general demeanor and actions. In the case that the self-castration were true, by accusing the eunuchs he would firstly accuse himself and would rather be subjected to the consequences of his juvenile error instead of preaching like the greatest of hypocrites and reaching the point of accepting his nomination as elder of the church.

It is, therefore, vital and imperative that this completely groundless accusation be ceased as it blemishes unjustifiably the character of this highly prominent teacher of the Church.

d. What Origen actually did

Following the previous analysis, we consider that it was satisfactorily proven that by Eusebius' phrase "*he was urged to accomplish the lifesaving saying in practice*" the self-castration on the part of Origen is not by any means implied.

What did Origen actually do however? The clarification of his act which we referred to as "**event X**" is induced once again by the words of **Epiphanius** which contain the "key" to the complete solution of this thorny problem. The full and complete text is as follows:

*"They say that this man Origen has invented something having to do with his physical organ. Others claim that he excised a certain nerve so as to not be irritated by physical pleasures nor be excited by bodily motions. Others, however, say that he invented a certain medication that he applied to his genitals and he, in this manner, parched them. Others still, dare to mention more about him, that he even came up with a medical herb that enhances memory. Although we did not quite believe all exaggerations said about him, we did not nevertheless fail to cite the relative rumors."*²¹

We begin the examination and commentary from the latter point: Finding a medical herb that enhances memory seems quite feasible. Origen indeed had a strong memory but this is irrelevant to our topic and research.

With regards to the issue being examined, three versions existed and were in fact being discussed at the time. The last one, namely the "more things" some dared to mention against Origen are most probably deduced from the rumors about the alleged self-castration which had started spreading since then, at least a century following his death.

As a second plausible scenario, Epiphanius considers the belief that Origen had indeed invented some sort of medication which he placed on his genitals and this way parched it. Something of the sort would avoid the physical castration but would not coincide with Origen's general and overall mentality. In addition, an act such as this – the parching of the genitals – would not justify Eusebius' words that it contained "*a great sense of faith and prudence*".

We now come to the first scenario, that is the physical excision of a special nerve so that Origen would not be affected and irritated in essence from any sexual stimulation nor be excited by bodily motions. On this exact point, we believe that our research and examination should focus on, in order to verify what Origen truly and actually did. This "nerve" is the key word for the solution to this problem.

To which nerve is this referring, where is this located physically and how can its removal be accomplished? There has been no evidence saved from ancient tradition on these queries. (In the Greek fully published edition of the book, the writer develops a relevant interpretation).

e. The subsequent common belief

As we already discussed, the first individual to refer to the self-castration explicitly was John Zonaras (12th century). He writes:

*"As Eusebius recounts, that due to a love for prudence, Origen removed his own genitals. Others, however, say he did not remove them but he instead placed on them some sort of herb which caused it such numbness that they looked as dead".*²²

In this text, we notice that Zonaras attributes his opinion to Eusebius, whose word he of course misinterprets.

The next historian who cites the same point is Nikiforos Kallistos Xanthopoulos (14th century).²³

Since then, the scenario on the self-castration prevailed among historians and theologians. Everyone refers to it as a true event accredited to Origen's adolescent enthusiasm. Some, however, prefer to suppress and conceal this scenario (without doubting it) out of respect to the work of the great Origen - perhaps due to an inner impetus signaling that "something is wrong" with that story.

6. The Ordination

a. The preceding events

As we already know, Bishop Demetrius sent Origen to Greece in the year 231 to manage some ecclesiastical matters. Passing through Caesarea Palestine, Origen was ordained as a priest by his two friends and Bishops, Theoktistus of Caesarea and Alexander of Jerusalem. This caused the wrath of Demetrius, who initiated the necessary procedures for the deposition of Origen and his removal from Alexandria.

Thus there are two main points that our theological research is concerned with: Firstly, if Origen's ordination was implemented according to the rules of the Church and secondly, if the attempted deposition by Demetrius was valid and applicable.

b. The normalcy of the ordination

First and foremost, it is a safe consideration that Origen did not solicit his ordination, as due to his strong ethics he did not seek any human axioms. He was, thus, ordained under pressure to do so.

The most likely reason for this action was that Origen would be able to speak freely and openly in the Church without his laic capacity hindering the latter as happened at a previous occasion. Most of the younger and more contemporary scholars are in favor of the normalcy of the ordination.

c. The reaction of Demetrius

When Bishop Demetrius learned about the ordination he moved in two directions: Firstly against the two Bishops, who he accused using strong words and characterizations and secondly against Origen himself aiming at his deposition and exclusion from Alexandria. We

will examine separately each direction Demetrius took in order to thoroughly clarify what exactly took place.

The sole accusation that Demetrius was able to direct towards Origen was the "*act that was committed upon him when he was a child*". It is generally believed that the self-castration is implied by this phrase. However, we proved thoroughly that this was not the case and, in effect self-castration did not take place.

The act implied, as we have already explained, was the "sacrifice" to the idols. This action Demetrius "*endeavored to vilify in a terrible way*" since he did not accept the facts and events as we described them, but claimed that Origen had willingly sacrificed to the idols even if under the threat of the Ethiopian. On account of that, he believed that Origen may have been in position to teach, as he had sincerely and truly repented, but should, nevertheless, not become a priest. Hence, the exact meaning of the word used: "*slander*" is fully justified, as the latter could not have any place and meaning in the case of the self-castration.

Demetrius did not, however, stop at that, and considering that he was justified, he called for a **local council** with two main topics: Firstly, the **deposition of Origen** and secondly his **permanent removal from Alexandria**.³³

The council consented to the first proposal (the removal of Origen from Alexandria) perhaps in order to calm and settle down the situation and prevent more serious disputes from taking place. The second proposal (the deposition of Origen), however, was rejected.

d. The proceeding events

Demetrius then publicized these decisions to all churches. Seemingly, his proposals, in most cases, were accepted with a lack of interest in terms of response.

Returning after his work in Greece, Origen remained in Alexandria for a while. When he realized the situation and, since he could no longer do anything about it, he settled his matters and left again.

The same year that Origen left Alexandria (232), Demetrius passed away and, in his place, Heraklas, who in the meantime had taken charge of the management of the catechetical school, was elected.

With his final settlement in Caesarea and his duties and responsibilities in the new school, Origen began a new period in his life. Alexandria now seemed as a mesh of both pleasant and unpleasant memories.

CHAPTER 2

ORIGEN'S ADMIRERS AND ACCUSERS

1. General

The second chapter of this work could bear the title "The impact of the Origenistic ideas". However, this title would naturally create the need and obligation for a greater and more thorough analysis based on the whole work of each of the fathers and ecclesiastical writers and would demand and require an extended space. For that reason, we suffice in pointing out the admirers as well as accusers of Origen, presenting mainly their stance towards the latter and his work, until the time of the assembly of the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

As the first systematic Christian Theologist, Origen, played the most crucial part in the development of the theological thought - not only during the subsequent centuries but till the present day without the risk of exhausting the extraction of beneficial conclusions from his work.

From an initial assessment, we are able to distinguish the fathers according to their positioning in three different groups. These are:

- a) The so-called "Origenists" - that is the strongest defenders of Origen and devotees of his theology, who openly expressed their admiration for him. The most important ones were: **Pierius, Pamphilus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, Evagrius Ponticus, Rufinus, John of Jerusalem, Synesius of Ptolemais, Palladius of Elenopolis** and the historian **Socrates**.
- b) On the other side, there were the anti-Origenists, the fanatical enemies of Origen and his theological positioning, who usually badmouthed the latter. Amongst them were: **Peter of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus, Eustathius of Antioch, Pachomius, Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Apollinaris of Laodikea, Epiphanius of Salamina Cyprus, Anastasius of Rome, Theophilus of Alexandria, Cyrillus of Alexandria and Antipater of Bostra**.
- c) The third group classifies the modest fathers of the church, who admire Origen for his deep theological thinking, study and use his works and writings extensively, but consistently avoid expressing praise for him or even mentioning his name. It is in this category that the great fathers and teachers of the church belong, such as: **St. Athanasius, St. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Ambrosius of Mediolanum, Vincent of Lerins** and others. None of the above-mentioned men, ever accused Origen of misbelief or anti-Christian teachings, while they accepted to a large extent the established by him allegorical interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. All this reflects that, in essence, they did agree with Origen's thinking and general stances, while the non-mentioning of his name was due to their intention to avoid any unnecessary friction and dispute.

In what follows, we will evaluate in chronological order the most important of the above-mentioned men, as well as those who were involved in the story of Origenism.

2. The successors, Dionysius, Theognostus, and Pierius

The Alexandrian catechetical school continued to function normally after the expulsion of Origen. The fundamental principles of Origen's theological system continued to be taught in the school.

This undisputed event has a critical meaning, as it proves that Origen's theoretical positions were not contrary to the provided Christian teaching, regardless of the fact that the wider audience of believers did not know some of its points.

The first headmasters of the school followed the basic principles of Origen's theology. However, they were never accused as long as they lived of misbelief or anti-Christian or heretical teachings. On the contrary, they were greatly honored by their contemporary counterparts, who considered they revived the spirit of the great Alexandrian Theologist. In their word and work lived Origen who still possessed the reins of the theological science.

3. Peter of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus, Eustathius of Antioch

During the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century, the first important attacks against Origen's theories occurred. Peter of Alexandria (+311), Methodius of Olympus (+310/311), and Eustathius of Antioch (+337) were the main anti-Origenists. They often used diminishing expressions, urged by fanaticism. However, the relevant discussions and disputes do not yet seem to have taken a hostile turn.

Peter of Alexandria was the head of the catechetical school and in the year 300 came to the Episcopal throne. In one of his writings, he rejects the view on the preexistence of souls and certainly those views surrounding the sins of the souls prior to their entrance into the human bodies.

Methodius, Bishop of Olympus of Lycia, passed more consistent criticism against Origen. In his dialogue-structured work "*Aglaofon or about Resurrection*", which was saved in extracts, he rejects the following of Origen's perceptions:

- a) The preexistence of souls.
- b) The perception that the souls sinned prior to their entrance in the material bodies.
- c) The perception that there is no resurrection of the material bodies, but the bodies of the souls are spiritual during the resurrection.
- d) The perception that paradise was not located on Earth but in the heavens.

According to Eusebius, Methodius was initially an admirer of Origen but later changed his views in an effort to oversee and rectify those he believed as faulty in Origen's system.

Eustathius, the Bishop of Antioch, took part in the First Ecumenical Council and had composed several writings. Of those writings, only one was saved in full length titled "*Against Origen diagnostic on the ventriloquist theorem*" in which he makes a verbal attack against the interpretation of the 28th chapter of the Old Testament of Kings A'.

Those initial main anti-Origenists reveal an increasing pattern of opposition against the Origen, who until then undoubtedly prevailed in the field of theological thought. This pattern became evident approximately half a century after his death was not far reaching, as it was not possible to easily vanquish the great Origen. Besides, during the same period there were many attempts to write apologies in favor of Origen defending him and his work from the slander and criticism. Among these apologies, it was solely the first book of the one written by Pamphilus and Eusebius, which was saved. At the same time, all the consequent great fathers of the Church indulged in the teachings of Origen.

4. Pamphilus and Eusebius

These two men were the most important defenders of Origen during the period when the first patterns of strong reactions were manifested. They have been mentioned repeatedly so far and several facts from their activities will be complemented in this chapter.

Pamphilus (+309) was trained in the Alexandrian school and had Pierius as his teacher. He then settled in Caesarea Palestine, where he was ordained as a priest and founded a theological school, following the tradition of Origen.

The year 307, Pamphilus was arrested along with many other Christians and was imprisoned. During his time in prison, he wrote his "*Apology in favor Origen*" defending him against the accusations passed on to him by Methodius and Peter. In writing his work, he worked closely with Eusebius who visited him often. In fact, after the martyr death of Pamphilus, Eusebius wrote on his own the 6th book of the *Apology*.

Unfortunately, the loss of this work deprived us of much detailed information on the life and work of Origen, as Eusebius avoids repeating the same issues in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, was born around the year 265 and passed away in Caesarea Palestine around the year 340. Besides the composition of his work *Apology*, much important information about Origen is indicated in the 6th book of the *Ecclesiastical History*. The brevity, however, and the vagueness of some of his crucial expressions have generated multiple problems, which were attempted to be resolved in the 1st chapter.

5. St. Athanasius the Great

St. Athanasius the Great was born in the year 295 in Alexandria. He took part in the 1st Ecumenical Council of Nice (325) as a deacon and emerged as the most critical opponent of Arianism. In 328, Athanasius the Great was proclaimed as Bishop of Alexandria at the age of 33 years.

This strong proponent of the truth, the "pillar of orthodoxy", according to the distinct verses of his ecclesiastical chant, was never expressed in a negative manner against Origen. In fact, throughout his entire saved work, he only mentions Origen's name twice.^{11, 12}

Of these two cases and brief references to the name of Origen, we draw the conclusion that St. Athanasius the Great had been his admirer, researcher of his work and of course a

follower of his teachings. Should he have discovered facts and information contrary and opposed to the Christian teaching, he would have impugned them with the same zeal with which he fought and stood opposed to Arianism. Since there were no such reactions from his part, we can assume that deep down he fully accepted Origen's word and preaching, even if he avoided elaborating on them in apparent ways.

6. Pachomius

During the 4th century, a strong movement fleeing to the deserts and caves, was manifested within the church. Initially, the ascetics lived in the desert individually. Later, however, they formed the communal system. Father and founder of the "retreating way of life", was Anthony the Great, while founder of the "communal way of life" was the monk Pachomius.

The general positioning of St. Anthony towards Origen is not known. If, however, we take into consideration the great appreciation he had towards St. Athanasius the Great and his praiseful biography, we could solidly assume that he was not opposed against Origen.¹⁴

On the contrary, Pachomius was strongly hostile towards Origen. Several of his works, named "Vioi" (Lives), have been saved, in which he repeatedly emphasizes his hatred towards Origen.

Pachomius had a major effect on the shaping and structuring of the communal monasticism, considering it as his duty to defend Christianity from the common "misbeliefs" of Origen. This influence originated from several anti-Origenist Bishops and found fertile grounds for cultivation through Pachomius in the ranks of Monks. This way, it is not, thus, strange that in the next immediate centuries the most intense anti-Origenistic movements started from the monks of Egypt and Palestine.

7. Didymus the Blind

The names of Didymus the Blind and Evagrius Ponticus were linked in tradition because they were accused along with Origen during the 5th Ecumenical Council as acceptant of the preexistence of souls and the restoration of all things (On the second of the pre-mentioned two points you can visit chapter 10).

Didymus (313-398) is called Blind as he was blinded at the age of four or five years. He was appointed under St. Athanasius the Great at the Catechetical School of Alexandria and later took charge of its head management. He was considered an expert authority on the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and enjoyed a great reputation even within Egypt. It is estimated that he was active in the School, for more than 50 years.

Didymus wrote many books, memoranda and more. In all his writings he consistently follows the theological line of Origen without mentioning him in name. In wishing, however, at some point to defend him against his slanderers, he wrote an interpretation on the *On*

Principles on account of which the dissident party began a pursuit against him, which led to his conviction.

The historical Socrates the Scholastic (380-439) praises him unquestionably.²² It is a certainty, however, that **of the contemporary scholars he is considered as an orthodox in absolute terms without ever being accused of being an heretic as long as he was alive.**

Besides, his sojourn in the position of the teacher or head manager of the Catechetical School for fifty years proves that his orthodox spirit was never questioned.

8. St. Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus

These two Fathers of the Church were closely linked with Origen's name because they composed a compilation of his work to which they gave the name "**Filokalia**". The composition of Filokalia took place around the years 358-360 when the two fathers were located at the hermitage of Pontus. While there, they studied systematically and in depth the writings of the Alexandrian interpreter, i.e. Origen, which consisted of the first spiritual and theological spiritual intake they would receive. Because of the admiration towards this work, they structured Filokalia in order to provide to others the possibility of plunging into the profound meanings of the Origenistic thinking and theology.

Filokalia was the first literary work of the two fathers, which stood as a preface and predisposed the great literary activity that would follow. All of their following work bears, either directly or indirectly, the imprint of Origen.

9. Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), brother of St. Basil the Great, is the one of the Fathers of the Church who expresses in the strongest way among them all the Origenist theology not in an obvious and blunt manner, but through skillful literary formulation and phrasal images.

However, Gregory only mentions Origen in name twice in order not to cause any strong reactions. Besides avoiding mentioning Origen's name and the suppressed expressions, Gregory presents his own ideas as mental practice and personal convictions rather than dogmatic teachings.

From the ancient times to date, these actions have been the source of a major headache to the Dogmatics because they could not relate and compromise Gregory's ideas with the established dogmas, mostly after the 5th Ecumenical Council. Prior to that, Gregory did not risk being accused of being an Origenist as he was a leading and recognised personality of the Christian world and quite beloved by the religious believers.

Today's Theologists certainly do not accept the case of corruption of Gregory's works but still perceive that the problem persists.

10. Evagrius Ponticus

Evagrius was born in Ichora of Black Sea (Pontus) around the year 345. He was ordained as a reader under St. Basil in Caesarea. Later, he pursued an ascetic life and was closely connected to the most prominent monks of his age.

The education and virtue of Evagrius, his teaching skills and his rich and strong literary activity were factors contributing to his name becoming well-known and well-respected within wide circles of people of faith. He had many admirers but also many accusers, especially following the inclusion of his name and involvement in the Origenistic controversies.

The story, hence, repeats itself for the third person in the legendary "heretic" triad. Just like **Origen** and **Didymus the Blind**, so was **Evagrius** a highly learned man, a writer of much literary work, most distinguished for his virtue and appreciated by all. He openly expressed his Origenistic views, since he was profoundly influenced directly by Origen **without ever being accused, while in life, for potential heretic teachings.**

11. Epiphanius of Cyprus and Theophilus of Alexandria

Around the end of the 4th century, the Origenist controversies were revived on account of a matter, which divided the monks of Egypt and Palestine. The matter in question was whether God had a human form or not. The most educated ones, of course, who had been nurtured with the meanings of the Origenistic theological thinking, knew that God was bodiless, invisible and unknown as a dispersed and diffused energy. The illiterate section and simple monks, however, who consisted of the majority, were unable to conceive this transcending notion of God and believed that He had a normal human form and figure. Thus, they were named "Anthropomorphic".

Between the two factions there came to be a very intense conflict, which reached as far as Constantinople and Rome.³⁸

It is obvious that this issue on its own is not that important nor does it justify the brought-upon friction within the whole Christian world. But let us follow the historical evolution of the facts narrowing it down to the two main protagonists, Epiphanius and Theophilus.

In his work "*Agriotos*", **Epiphanius**, the Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, accuses Origen of many misbeliefs, such as the one citing that paradise of the first created was not found on Earth.³⁹

In his second work, the "*Panarion*", he classifies Origen among the heretics in the report of the 64th heresies. Despite the lack of critical processing from Epiphanius' side, the historical information that he presents was proven to be invaluable for clearing up many dark angles of Origen's biography as we examined in the 1st chapter.

Theophilus was the third heir of St. Athanasius the Great in the episcopal throne of Alexandria (385-412). He is featured as an outstanding and prominent figure of the Church, highly learned, vigorous, with a zeal for Christianity, but also ambitious, money loving, violent and impulsive in his manifestations.

Initially, Theophilus was a supporter of Origen, or rather a researcher of his work because, as it seems, he never quite understood the core of his teachings. He did not accept the Anthropomorphism, that is.

In the year 398, Theophilus had failed in promoting to the throne of Constantinople his senior Isidorus instead of John the Chrysostom. It is since then that the ardent hatred against Chrysostom was dated. This hatred affected significantly the evolution of events.

When Isidorus was in Constantinople, a certain rich widow gave him one thousand gold currencies in order to provide for the poor and less fortunate women of Alexandria. This would take place without Theophilus finding out, as he would spend it on structural building of houses. Isidorus indeed consumed these funds for the purpose for which they were given but Theophilus learned about it, was infuriated and slandered against him before the Clergy for committing a sodomist crime 18 years before. In order to avoid an ambush planned against his life, he then fled to the desert of Nitria to be amongst the monks.

In Nitria, there were extended communities of Origenistic Monks. The most known ones were the **Four Tall Brothers** (Dioscorus, Ammonius, Eusebius and Euthymius) who were named so due to their long and tall stature. Theophilus, Bishop of Ermoupolis, had ordained Dioskorus. It is to these brothers that Isidorus resorted for help, while Theophilus sent letters to the Bishops of the nearby areas advising them to remove all monks to the interior of the desert.

The Tall Brothers, along with many others, fled to Alexandria to find out the cause behind their persecution. Theophilus treated them with a complete lack of courtesy, as Palladius states.⁴¹

For Palladius, therefore, the basic cause for the persecution of the Tall Brothers was in fact Isidorus. In order to mortally wound the Tall Brothers, he incited the anthropomorphist monks up against them and, subsequently attacked the monks of Nitria with military forces and a swarm of ministers and commoners.⁴²

Bishop Dioskorus was arrested and abused. The other three Tall Brothers, being informed of the events that had occurred, managed to flee in due time and hide within a water well. As Theophilus' supporters could not track them, they burned their books and completely destroyed and looted the monks' premises. After this destruction, all Monks dispersed and scattered across the areas.

The Tall Brothers initially fled to Palestine and after much wandering reached Constantinople where they requested their vindication from John the Chrysostom. The latter took them in and set them up in the temple of Resurrection (Anastasis).

Theophilus was called upon to go to Constantinople in order to be tried in front of an Assembly for his attacks against the Monks of Nitria. He did not accept the housing and hospitality of John, but stayed in the mansion of the Plakidians where he organized his defense with a planned attack against John the Chrysostom.

After a few days, Theophilus, with the Bishops that had gathered with him, moved to the suburb Drys (Oak), where the temple of the Apostle Peter and Paul was also located. Chrysostom did not wish to call for a regular council but instead tried to solve the matter peacefully and amicably. Theophilus, benefiting from the modest stance of John, but also from the dissatisfaction of the many bishops towards the rigid ecclesiastical activities, managed to overthrow the situation: He led the forefront in the council assembly where Chrysostom was called as liable and under custody!

This so-called "**The Council of the Oak**" (403), one that was illegally and arbitrarily formed, ended up in the prosecution and exile of Chrysostom.

After the exile of John Chrysostom, the people of Constantinople rioted against Theophilus, who immediately left the city along with the Bishops from Egypt. When he returned to Alexandria, he started studying the works of Origen once again! When he was asked how come he embraces again the books he had previously disclaimed, he answered:

*"The books of Origen resemble a meadow full of flowers of all kinds. If I, therefore, discover in them something good and positive, I collect it, if something seems thorny or problematic, then I thus dispose of it as if it was a thorn."*⁴⁵

Theophilus continued his campaign against Chrysostom with great rigor, cruelty and implacable hatred, without getting involved in the matters concerning Origen. After his death (412), this matter ceased to occupy the ecclesiastical circles for a very long period of time.

12. Jerome and Rufinus

Jerome was born in Stridon of Dalmatia around the year 348. He studied in Rome and his co-student was Rufinus with whom he later came in conflict.

Initially, Jerome was a supporter of Origen. He also translated many of his works in Latin. However, he did not fully accept all of Origen's views, but rather to a certain degree it was his admiration towards him, which prevailed. When the conflict between the Origenists and anti-Origenists became more intense, he easily sided with the latter, consuming this way all his fighting spirit and combativeness against his former friends.

Rufinus was born of Christian parents around the year 345 in Akilia. In 378 he went to Jerusalem and around the year 390 he was ordained as a priest by Bishop John with whom he had a close connection towards the common admiration cultivated for Origen.

Jerome came to Bethlehem in 386 and became close friends with the two aforementioned men. After the year 390, nevertheless, he gradually began to alter his beliefs until in 394 he appears as a severe anti-Origenist.

He then came to a state of keen contrast and hostility towards the two Origenist friends of his, John of Jerusalem and Rufinus, denying in fact that he ever was an Origenist himself.

The third of the Latin fathers of that time, **Augustinus**, did not take part in the Origenist conflict, although it is a known fact stemming from his work that he did not accept most of the controversial Origenistic concepts. He, nevertheless, recommended modesty and willingness to compromise on the particular issues.

13. John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom is undoubtedly the greatest of the Fathers of Christianity and one of the most significant personalities in worldwide history.

We will not refer to his multifarious work, but solely to his stance towards the issue concerned- that is Origen and his teachings. This research has necessarily an indirect nature, since throughout the impressive volume of his work - consisting of mainly lectures and speeches, Origen's name is not even mentioned once!

To what is this complete and utter silence of Chrysostom about the Alexandrian Theologist owed? He certainly had studied his work. Why, therefore, did he not express openly and directly his view - for or against his teaching- particularly on the issues which generated so much conflict within the Church?

Our view is that he essentially accepted most of Origen's beliefs and standpoints, which he implicated artfully in his word and speeches without presenting them in absolute dogmatic form.

In addition, he followed, in most cases, the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures established from Origen. The fact that Origen's name was avoided being mentioned is rather self-explanatory: it was done to prevent any provocative reactions.

When Chrysostom was implicated in the Origenist controversies due to the hostility of Theophilus against the Tall Brothers, he held a modest and tolerant stance without getting officially involved and without responding to the accusations of his opponents that he was himself an Origenist.

In the assembled "couped" Council of the Oak, Chrysostom was deposed and was moved to Bithynia. Before the final exile location was decided upon, "*a certain 'breakage' took place in the bedroom*" of Queen Eudoxia.⁴⁷ This concerned a severe and abnormal breakage of a particular item, like an explosion, which was purely a metaphysical phenomenon. The courtiers were terrified of this phenomenon and called back for John who returned after a few days, while Theophilus departed hastily as the crowds were threatening to throw him into sea!

John aimed to be restored to a council greater than the one that deposed him, but the people, excited by his rapid return, were demanding his immediate reinstatement to the archiepiscopal throne, which was actually realized.

Through a letter, Eudoxia expressed her pleasure and joy on the return of the Archbishop. Their mild and smooth relations, however, did not last for long. Chrysostom began speaking in a strict manner, especially after the installation of a silver statue of Eudoxia. Eudoxia, influenced by her advisors, was looking for a reason to rid herself finally of his presence. She wrote to Theophilus and he replied that a council could remove John with the justification that he is condemned without having been restored from another council!

This indeed took place, but Chrysostom refused to abandon the church. On the eve of Easter of 404 a military force arrested him and around Pentecost he was again exiled. On the

way to exile he passed away on September 14th, 407. His last words were: "**Thank God for the sake of all**".

After his death, John Chrysostom's name was written in the Diptychs of the Churches of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. But this does not suffice. Only a major council is imperative and necessary to cancel the decision of the Council of the Oak (Drys), as John would also wish.

14. Palladius, Synesius, Socrates, Vincent

These four men are among the admirers of Origen without being actively involved in the Origenist controversies of that time.

Palladius wrote a piece called "*Historia Lausaica*", which consists of a valuable source for the history of the ancient monachism.

Besides the latter, he wrote the "*Dialogue on the life of Chrysostom*". Neither in the *Dialogue* nor in *Historia Lausiaca* is Origen referenced or mentioned. It is a known fact though, that Palladius was a pupil of Evagrius Ponticus and had likely been taught about Origen from him.

Synesius, is a particular case of a man who embraced Christianity without abandoning completely his pagan perceptions.

Theophilus agreed to ordain him Bishop of Ptolemais on the condition that he did not teach his views in public, like the preexistence of souls, the eternal life of the world, and the non-resurrection of the material body.

Socrates (380-439), the so-called **Scholastic**, during his writing of the *Ecclesiastical History*, used an array of ancient sources and was extremely cautious and objective in his research of them. His position towards Origen and the thereafter events can be characterized as historically objective. In some expressions he used, a certain admiration for the Alexandrian Theologist is evident.⁴⁹

Lastly, the Latin monk **Vincent of Lerins** (+450) in his writing on Origen quotes: "*Who was ever a happier man than Origen? Of his school came numerous teachers, incalculable priests, confessors and martyrs. But how great is the shown and expressed admiration of him, how great his glory and grace - who can describe all this?... I would likely repeat the saying: It is preferable to wander along with Origen or with others to speak the truth*".

15. Cyrillus, Isidore, Antipatrus, Theodore

Contrary to the previous men, these four men mentioned in the title above, consist of the main representatives of anti-Origenism from a theoretical side. That is, they do not rail directly against Origen, but rather attempt to prove the erroneous or heretic to them points in his teaching without ever reaching a level of religious acuity.

Cyrillus of Alexandria (375-444) was the nephew of Theophilus and heir to the Alexandrian throne (412).

In Justinian's *Speech against Origen* there have been saved some pieces of a letter to the Monks, where the misbeliefs of Origen on the preexistence of souls and the non-resurrection of the human bodies are impugned.⁵¹

Isidore of Pelusium, (Pilousiotis) in a letter of his (IV 163) entitled *Against Origen*, denies the preexistence of souls but shows some skepticism stemming from ignorance on the subject. At the end of the letter he writes that, regardless which view is accurate and real, the prominent role in the life of man must be held by virtue.

Antipatrus, Bishop of Bostra in Arabia lived during the second half of the 5th century. He wrote a work against the *Apology for Origen* by Eusebius of Caesarea.

Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia of Cilicia (350-428) had written many works against Origen. According to information by others, he rejected only the allegorical method in Origen's interpretation of the Holy Scripture. It was in the lost study of his "*On the difference between theory and allegory*" that he lashed out against Origen.

16. Recapitulation

It is commonly known that all the great men of History create several strong likes and dislikes surrounding their names, with incentives which are sometimes irrelevant to the truth or non truth of their ideological directions. They are, nevertheless, essentially pandered by undefined feelings or personal passions.

During his lifetime, Origen brought upon himself the wrath of Bishop of Alexandria Demetrius, whose actions aimed at the two other Bishops, Theoktistus of Caesarea and Alexander of Jerusalem, who he seemingly mortally disliked. But Origen's imposing and compelling personality within the Church, and his undamaged ethics, overcame these reactions and there was never any important move caused against him. As long as he lived, he was appreciated and respected by all as the major defender and warrior of the Orthodox faith.

After Origen's death, the allegoric interpretation of the Scriptures as well as several views, which are not expressed clearly in the Holy texts, generated reactions from those who were unable to comprehend them. Those, however, who could understand the confidential teachings, received that Origen was correct on most points and for this reason never turned against him. Thus, the so-called Origenist controversies made their appearance from time to time, mainly when the opposition of the anti-Origenists took larger extents. On the contrary, the supporters of the Alexandrian Theologist always maintained a low profile, which extended to the total and complete avoidance of even mentioning his name.

The first phase of the Origenist controversies is evident and placed around the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century, limited to rather theoretical discussions. The second phase, a century later, expanded from 395-410 with its main culpable party behind it, Theophilus of Alexandria, but without Origen being the main cause of the disputes. The reason

was the expressed hostility of Theophilus, on the one hand towards his senior Isidorus and the Tall Brothers, and on the other, John Chrysostom. From then on, the conflicts recede until the half of the 6th century when the reviving of the Origenist controversies (3rd phase) ends up in the events of the 5th Ecumenical Council. During this phase as well, Origen appears as the secondary and not the primary issue.

The main characteristic of this glorious period of Christianity (4th and 5th centuries), is that the great Fathers of Church make a minimal reference to Origen, which fact seems odd at first glance in relation to his work and theological stature. The explanation of this paradox, as we have previously stressed, is that the great fathers accepted most of the Origenistic concepts because they knew that they were in agreement with the confidential teaching of Christianity. They consistently avoid mentioning his name, firstly so as not to provoke any reactions and conflicts within the church, and secondly so as to not provide detailed explanations on these issues to the crowds of common believers who did not possess the knowledge base to grasp them. It is solely in 2-3 cases that they express a different view from Origen on secondary matters, but these are not enough to characterize their stance as negative towards him. Besides, it is known that everyone studied systematically and used his works widely.

The great Fathers of the Church did not develop the Origenist perceptions evidently and extensively. This, however, does not mean that they rejected them or considered them as common "misbeliefs", as it is often thought nowadays. On the contrary, we can say with certainty that they were all Origenists as their general stance towards the Alexandrian Theologist proves.

CHAPTER 3

ORIGEN'S «MISBELIEFS»

1. Which were Origen's "misbeliefs" ·

From the time of the Origenistic controversies, efforts were made to define all those points in Origen's theology that were considered as opposing the Christian teachings.

Various anti-Origenists sparingly note several misbeliefs without attempting a systematic recording of them. As we have previously noted, the great fathers of the church do not refer to any misbelief whatsoever that is an anti-christian teaching of Origen, except for a few observations, which are of secondary importance.

Lastly, Fifteen Rules seem to have been issued by the 5th Ecumenical Council, including the following misbeliefs[·]:

1. Souls preexist and at some point restoration of all will occur.
2. The creation of sensible beings incurred from immaterial and bodiless minds, who being replete of the holy theory, turned to the worst and received corresponding material bodies, some finer and others coarser, so that the different classes of entities appear.
3. The sun, the moon and the stars are inspirit creatures, which fell as the previous ones from the same category of sensible beings.
4. The sensible beings, which were clothed with the coarser material bodies, are human beings while the ones that reached the extremes of evil are the demons and were dressed in cold and grim bodies.
5. From the angelic status arose the psychic status that developed to the status of human and of demons as well. From the latter status, in turn, the heavenly forces will once again emerge.
6. The breed of demons is twofold, comprising of human souls and of higher forfeit spirits. Only one mind remained solid within the spirit of holy love, Jesus Christ, who brought the world into light based on preexisting elements.
7. Jesus Christ united with the Divine Word and became man; he put on several earthly bodies, according to the kinds of sensible beings, and was thus "become all things to all".
8. The incarnated Jesus Christ is different than the Divine Word, the consubstantial to the Father and the Holy Ghost.
9. It was the so-called "main Jesus Christ" that descended to Hades and ascended to the Heavens and not the incarnated Divine Word.

* This word should always be considered as written in quotation marks since, as it is later proven, most of those viewed as Origen's "misbeliefs" were compatible with the confidential teaching of Christianity, while some of them were not the true views of the Alexandrian Theologist because they were infiltrated via distortion of his works.

** These rules were definitely not voted by the plenary of the Council because there were many voiced disputes and objections, as we explain in detail in chapter 5.

10. The body of Christ out-of-resurrection was ethereal and spheroidal as will be the bodies of men, while the material bodies will cease to exist.
11. The future judgment means the complete annulment of the bodies and of the matter while the minds will be naked.
12. All the heavenly forces as well as the men and the demons will be united together with the Divine Word.
13. Christ will bear no difference from the rest of sensible beings but all will stand to the right side of God.
14. All substances of sensible beings will be annulled so that they comprise of one entity as they were in their initial state.
15. The conduct of the minds will be the same as the one applicable before their forfeiture (that is they will receive their initial positions).

From the prior brief presentation, it becomes evident that the objections against the Origenistic theological thinking mainly arose from the issue of the level of entities and ended up to that of the level of Christ. We will not expand further on the second level but will remain on the first level and in the coming chapters will develop further the following topics:

- The preexistence of souls
- Reincarnation
- The true location of paradise
- The catholic participation in the original sin
- The material and spiritual bodies
- About the devil and demons
- The eternal hell
- The restoration of all

These issues, as noted in each chapter, are those for which Origen became widely known.

During the first centuries, the Christian teaching was split into two main sectors: the common one and the confidential one. The first one was gradually becoming known to the new entrants to Christianity (as Catechumens) and consisted of the content of the educational writings and preaching which took place in the churches. The second sector, however, was becoming known only to the most advanced of believers and always through oral transmission. Even if there were some parts of it written, during the apostolic years, these were kept secret. At some point these ceased to be copied and eventually disappeared.

The existence of the confidential, non-written teaching is attested by all the great Fathers of the Church, who were quite familiar with it as was Origen. In this manner, the fact that they did not express a single reproach against him can be explained. On the contrary they secretly and silently admired him using his allegorical interpretative methods extensively.

Thus before we continue the examination of the alleged misbeliefs of Origen, we present the most important testimonies and evidence of the existence of the confidential teaching. The latter consists of the cohesive, covert background of the content of the writing of all great Fathers of the church.

2. The Confidential Teaching

Jesus Christ taught through parables so that his teaching could be understandable to all. To his Disciples though, he explained the deeper meanings behind his teaching: "*With many such parables, he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples, he explained everything*" (Mark. 4, 33-34).

Consequently, there was a deeper and more revelational teaching, which was never disclosed to the wider audience because the simple people could not comprehend it.

The Disciples of Christ followed the same tactic according to their apostolic work. Hence, there were two main movements in the Christian teaching: the one included the known or catechetical teaching and the other the secret or confidential teaching.

Clement of Alexandria also cites clearly and verifies the existence of the unwritten confidential teaching in his work "*Miscellanies*" (Stromata), which was written in the beginning of the 3rd century.^{3, 4}

In his works, Origen speaks several times of the confidential teaching and the secret meanings hidden behind the descriptive images of the Holy Scriptures. We, hereby, cite some critical extracts:

"Of what is quoted in the scriptures, some parts are more confidential and secret while others are more directly useful to the readers...".⁵

"Because of the main and most divine mysteries of God, some were recorded in written form while of others not even a human voice or tongue could describe with the usual and common meanings of words".⁶

The great Fathers of the church followed the same method, being directed by the unwritten, confidential teaching but not revealing it publicly. Within the unwritten tradition, lay the essence of Christian dogma, which as St. Basil notes, the Fathers kept in silence without curiosity and much versatility.

Let's take the example of the controversial issue of **reincarnation**. We claim that this consisted of a fundamental dogma of the Christian religion during the first centuries. It, however, belonged to the secret and confidential part of it and this was not taught in obvious ways but pure silence was kept around it.

Origen has clearly proclaimed the meaning of reincarnation without analyzing it in detail. Afterall, this is cited in the work *About Principles*, which was not designated for common use. The subsequent great Fathers knew it relied on the secret dogmas and fully accepted it but went on to hold it in silence along with the other confidential dogmas. Very distinct, in this case, is the phrase used by St. Basil: "***The dogma remains in silence, while the sermons get published***".⁹

In this manner, two points can be explained: Firstly, the fact that reincarnation was never rejected as a theory nor was any reference to it made, except for a few minor allusions where

it becomes evident that they indeed accept it. Secondly, the fact that they never voiced the slightest accusation against the relevant teaching by Origen. This stance of theirs cannot be interpreted in any other manner. If we accept the assumption that they did not accept the notion of reincarnation, then their total silence around these subjects is considered completely inexplicable.

This particular silence on the side of the Fathers around many such essential and vital dogmas of the Christian religion preserved a relevant peaceful atmosphere within the church. Later, however, following the gradual disappearance of the confidential teaching, it had as a result the appearance of significant gaps in the phrasing of the dogmas. These gaps were later filled by mainly erroneous assumptions, which do not exactly match in meaning the current "frame" of the known written teaching.

It is due to this fact that the many arguments between Theologists and the Clergy occurred, as far as the phrasing of dogmas, as well as the interpretation of the many passages.

We, therefore, believe that the time is due for the pure, original Christian teaching providing all full answers to mankind's problems to be revealed.

Within the realm of the confidential teaching, practically all those considered as misbeliefs of Origen cease to be considered as such and are validated as agreeable to the true teaching of Christianity.

3. The preexistence of souls

The preexistence of souls was maintained throughout tradition as the most significant dogmatic misbelief of Origen, whereas the sense and meaning of all the rest, more or less faded away. To this, reincarnation was added recently - we would elaborate on this in the coming section.

All souls, according to Origen, were created under God as clear and pure minds:

"...Preceding all centuries in time, all were pure minds, including demons, souls and angels, who were serving God and complying with his orders. One of them, however - the devil - who was given the free will and power, wished to stand up against God and thus God removed him. With him, all other forces revolted. Those who bore many sins became demons, those who bore less sins became angels while those who sinned the least of all became archangels. And thus, each spirit was distinguished according to its sin. Those remaining were the souls who had not sinned so much as to become demons, nor had they so sinned slightly as to become angels. Hence, God structured the existing world and linked the soul to the human body for atonement".¹¹

In this extract, the Origenistic theory on Creation is presented briefly. The mind-souls were created as perfect entities, but through misconduct were forfeited and assumed positions according to their degree of participation in the so-called original sin. This particular point of the total participation of all souls in the original sin is extremely interesting and crucial for the revelation of the true perceptions of the Fathers. This is why it will be examined extensively further below in section 6.

If souls do not preexist, then with every new birth of a human being a new soul should be created. This is what today's Dogma holds. The great Fathers, however, **have never supported the co-creation of soul and body** without expanding into details on account of the imposed secrecy of the confidential dogmas. In truth, they agree with Origen on this matter accepting the primeval notion of the creation of all souls together before the creation of the material world. We will cite a few excerpts, which advocate towards this view.

Gregory of Nyssa, who reflects more strongly the Origenistic belief and tradition is more revealing:

"All sensible structure was distinguished between the bodiless and embodied nature. The bodiless nature was the angelic one, while the other kind was us, human beings. The first one is virtual and invisible... the other, due to its relation to the body with the terrene factor, as a kind of residuum of dirt, had to be appointed the earthly life".¹⁸

The sensible structure, that is initially the created minds, were divided into two natures, the angelic and the human one, just as Origen holds. (The nature of demons is not mentioned here). Therefore, from the ontological point of view, men or humans are of the same nature as that of the angels, with the sole difference that they domicile through the body on the earthly scene. Consequently, the creation of the human souls coincides with the creation of angels since they all consist of the sensible structure, the total and cohesive group of the created sensible beings. In this manner, the often quoted from the fathers: that perfected human beings are classified among the angels, is clearly justified. In other words, they regain and recover their initial nature.

John the Chrysostom, also never refers to the creation of souls. Nevertheless, he often, repeats that here on Earth we appear as strangers and sojourns while our true home lies in the Heavens (see Hebr.11, 13):

"Think of this now, that you are a stranger and temporary immigrant on this earth and do not thus be bothered by anything on this foreign land; as you also have a home whose architect and creator is God. The dwelling on earth is short and brief."²¹

In teaching philanthropy and the reciprocity of all received towards the needy, he states:

"For all you deposit into the hands of the poor and impoverished, you deposit to a safe fund, into the hand of God. This will ensure that you receive your deposit in full and safely store it, and when you return to your familiar home, together with the proceeds of the fund, He will proclaim you and crown you and restore you with every comfort".²²

The key phrase here is "**when you return to your familiar home**". The familiar and true home of ours is the Heavens. The fact that we return to it after our earthly death means that we left from it in the first place in order to be incarnated on Earth. Consequently, the verb "return" consists of an evident confirmation of the preexistence of the soul in the heavenly world prior to its descent on Earth.

We could present many more similar extracts on the matter, but we rather not expand further as we believe that the issue in question has been sufficiently proven.

4. Reincarnation

To begin with, we must specify the two basic concepts we use in the present section:

Reincarnation means the rebirth of human souls once again into a human body excluding completely their entrance into bodies and forms of animals or plants.

Metempsychosis or transmigration of the soul means the ability of the human souls to enter into bodies of animals or plants during their rebirth in the material world.

The ancient writers and philosophers were highly involved and dealt heavily with these two concepts. Pythagoras, Hippocrates and Aristotle accepted reincarnation, while Empedocles and Plato ended up siding with metempsychosis.

Today, we know that the only correct theory refers to reincarnation. Plato's mistake, therefore, due to his philosophical stature and authority, created a major confusion during the ancient times, which in fact still exists in our times. Neoplatonic philosophers (Plotinus, Proklus, Iamblichus) rejected metempsychosis in an attempt to rectify this mistake, but their voice and views did not have a considerable impact.

The Fathers of church, based on the confidential teaching, **reject metempsychosis and solely accept reincarnation**. They do not, however, elaborate on these issues because, as we have stressed, they consisted of aspects of the secret dogmas which were religiously kept in silence as their publication would bring about confusion in the minds of the common believers and intense reactions from the side of the fanatics.

Some recent researchers, based on the very few passages of the Fathers where metempsychosis is rejected, claim that they also rejected reincarnation without in fact distinguishing between the two concepts.

In a semi-finished Greek excerpt from the work of Origen *About Principles*, the following appears:

*"For if the soul which has been distracted from the higher theory due to evil, after it tries the bodily life once, **becomes human again**, while the life of the flesh is recognized as more impassioned than the eternal and bodiless one, it is of absolute necessity that it (the soul) during this life in which there exist more reasons to cling towards sin..."*

This is the version that Origen accepts, that the human soul "**becomes human again**" since for animals and plants the meaning of virtue and passion does not exist as it does for men. Consequently, within the latter the respective progress towards good or evil does not apply. What is held, on the other hand, about the inhabitation of the human souls in bodies of animals or plants, Origen explains metaphorically. That is, depending on the degree of evil within him, man is degraded and brutalized and adopts a behavior similar to that of animals.

The fact that Origen accepted reincarnation and emphatically rejected metempsychosis stems also from excerpts included in other works of his.^{31, 31a, 32}

The Fathers of church, besides Gregory of Nyssa, hold absolute silence on this issue as well, except for very few indirect references.

Gregory of Nyssa, when saying that we willingly connected with the evil spirit and were transformed towards it, adds:

*"On account of this, man is dissolved again into dust, as a certain ceramic vessel, so that the dirt that remained within him is removed and he then reshapes to his former, initial shape via resurrection".*³⁹

Further below, he explains his rationale: If during the structure of a certain object foreign particles which cannot be removed are attached to it, the owner of the object breaks it into pieces, melts it, removes the foreign particles and restructures it into its initial shape. Similarly, the entity, which leaves the Earth maintaining its passions and sins, which consist of the filth of the soul, returns to Earth once again until it is completely cleansed and purified of it. These contaminants of the soul cannot be easily "cleansed out" or removed in the Heavenly world as they are in some way "solidified" in the soul. Therefore, the expression "**man is dissolved again into dust**" consists of a concealed periphrastic phrasing referring to reincarnation.

The following passage has the exact same meaning:

*"The entire sensible nature was divided into this dual life; the bodiless life received the heavenly blissfulness, while the embodied life is returned to Earth through the flesh (the material body) towards its natural familiarity".*⁴⁰

We again encounter the viewpoint of the initial unity of all sensible beings and the subsequent division into two main classes: the angelic one, which remained in heavenly bliss, and the human one, which "**is returned to Earth through the flesh**".

The past participle used in the above expression indicates that human souls after death are evaluated in the heavenly world and if they are not found sufficiently pure and cleansed, then they are not accepted there and "return" to the earthly world. Their return takes place "through the flesh", in other words via a new material body. Hence, the human souls continuously return to Earth, that is are reincarnated, until their complete expurgation, which then leads them to the first class of angelic entities without the need for them to ever return again to earth.

All these testimonies prove, as we have emphasized before, that the great Fathers reject metempsychosis but have never rejected reincarnation. In conjunction with the fact that they consistently avoid elaborating on this issue or even mention explicitly if it is valid or not, they confirm our views that they **accepted reincarnation as the fundamental dogma of the Christian teaching**.

Therefore, in the initial Christian belief and tradition held until the 5th century, reincarnation was utterly accepted, given no less that there is not a single genuine work of the great Fathers, which annuls it.

5. Where heavenly paradise lay

As we have noted, the primeval creation of all souls together is symbolized in the Old Testament through Adam and Eve. The first created entities thus, do not represent two specific

human beings, man and woman, but the whole of the infinite souls, which were created in pure spiritual status and are divided in two different "categories" or "qualities". These do not possess the typical traits or characteristics of their respective "gender" but have differences, entity-wise, which are of an unknown nature.

All these souls were placed in heavenly paradise under God. The material world had not yet been created. Hence, heavenly paradise was a spiritual place and not a certain area on Earth, as is commonly believed today.

The heavenly position of paradise consists of one more piece, which complements the Origenistic theological system. We shall prove that all the great Fathers accept it without stressing on it too much for the same reasons they kept in silence the confidential teaching.

In his saved work, Origen refers to this subject according to the allegorical interpretation of Genesis: "*For if paradise is some divine place...*".⁴²

All the related concepts, such as the tree of good and evil, the rivers, the serpent etc. are interpreted symbolically based on the spiritual status which prevails within this space.

The Fathers of the church, as we mentioned, emphatically avoid claiming that true paradise was heavenly. Knowing, nevertheless, this true fact they often say that man was deducted from the Heavens to Earth.

The relevant passages from their work basically include the same typecast expression with similar phrasing of the sinful man who was evicted from paradise "**to this world**" – apparently the earthly world – the "*world around and about earth*" according to Origen. All the above-mentioned apply provided that paradise, where the firstly created existed, was a heavenly place.

6. The universal involvement in the original sin

We have noted that all sensible beings were created under God as mind-souls and were then set within the heavenly paradise where they lived in complete happiness and bliss. Within the heavenly paradise the so-called "**original sin**" took place, which consisted of the disobedience of the larger part of the souls to comply with the orders of God for further self-cultivation.

The beginning of the sin was the fact that the souls or spirits "were saturated with the heavenly theory and they turned away to the worst" according to the phrasing used in the Origenistic misbeliefs (see section 1). This means that they essentially "had enough" of constantly seeing the heavenly scene and were in lack of something different. However, as they found themselves within heavenly perfection, any difference from that scene and situation would be naturally worst.

It was then when Lucifer appeared and promised to fulfill their desire for something "different" which was the material world. Therefore, the "apple" of the first created was essentially Earth. They watched the scenes of the earthly life as in a film and their stimulated

desire to encounter the new world is symbolized in the Scriptures through the "bite" of the apple. And so they became indifferent towards their heavenly duties in search of new experiences.

This indifference of theirs is due to the sloth of their spirits. The degree of their indifference and neglect to perform their duties is equivalent to the degree to which they sinned. Thus, as Origen states (see section 3) those souls who sinned to a large degree became demons, those who had few sins became angels or archangels, while those who sinned to a medium degree became men starting the process of their expurgation through their consecutive reincarnations.

Consequently, the participation in the original sin was universal as a result of the free will of the entities, without the Creator being personally involved for or against one or another.

The great Fathers never speak of the hereditary transmission of the original sin! They confirm, nevertheless, that they have all personally sinned. Consequently, the hereditary transmission of the original sin is nothing but an artificial fallacy, which was adopted in order to bridge the gap after the denial of the preexistence of souls.

The Apostle Paul writes: "Since a l l h a v e s i n n e d and fall short of the glory of God..." (Rom. 3, 23).

This phrase indicates emphatically that all have sinned. In the same letter he goes on to say: "*Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned...*" (Rom. 5, 12).

Adam is not considered an ordinary man but the personification of the whole of the souls, which sinned in heavenly paradise prior to their descent on Earth. This is clearly deduced from the expression "*because all men sinned*" that is all men sinned in the face of Adam.

Apostle Paul analyzes the salvatory work of Christ starting with the phrase: "*But the free gift is not like the trespass...*" (Rom. 5, 15)

Therefore, the trespass and the gift have an essential difference between them. The gift was indeed given "by one man" through the sacrifice of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Even if the trespass, that is the performed sin, had also been disseminated in the world "by one man" (i.e. Adam who is perceived as a particular man) then an absolute analogy would occur between the trespass and the gift. Paul, therefore, aims to stress the fact that even though the trespass was considered as catholic and to that effect we all were deprived of the heavenly glory at our own free will, the gift of salvation was given to humanity through one man only, Jesus Christ.

The great Fathers of church knew all this but they could not develop these matters in a full and clear manner. They continuously stress, however, that the original sin is a personal sin borne by all human beings and that we have self-willingly committed it disobeying the divine orders given.

7. The material and the spiritual bodies

According to Origen, the body is the prison of the soul where it is dispatched in order to discharge itself of its sins. On account of this, the body does not consist of an organic part of the entity but rather of the proper "garment" for it to live comfortably within the material world, which is of a different nature than its own. When the entity is in the heavenly world it does not need the material body-garment but a different body, well adjusted to the conditions of the new environment.

There are thus two different types of bodies – the material and the spiritual – which souls use to "dress with" depending on the world they are in. The material bodies are known in morphology, while the spiritual bodies, which are of a completely different nature, remain more or less unknown to human knowledge except for certain general characteristics.

Material bodies are not all perfect but rather they bear some malformations, disabilities, injuries, illnesses etc. The same applies to the spiritual bodies, which in some cases reflect various imperfections in respect to their nature and due to the drawbacks of their psycho-spiritual entities. Hence, there exists the respective physical development and evolution, which coincides with the amelioration and progress of the entity.

In the case of the spiritual body, sins and passions are reflected in the form of dark, asymmetrical or abnormal radiation, which in some way depict the bad practices and flaws of the entity. Based on the latter, the entity is evaluated in the heavens without needing its material body again.

The point that has caused major dogmatic confusion, are the words of the Fathers about indestructibility, alteration, transmutation etc. of the human body. All this has led to the conclusion that the material body does not change in composition but rather it becomes the indestructible body of the soul bearing the indestructibility of its matter.

This misunderstanding can be resolved based on the phenomenon of the transformation of matter into energy, as it has been validated by the contemporary science of physics. The Christian fathers were aware of this phenomenon and describe it as the transmutation of matter without giving elaborate explanation. In other words, the essence of spiritual bodies is comprised of matter transformed into bright and luminous energy.

Therefore, **the underlying essence of the material body (matter) is not lost but transforms into light, which comprises the underlying essence of the spiritual body.**

This is the true meaning of the resurrection of bodies and not the one referring to the transformation and indestructibility of the material bodies before final judgment.

8. About the devil and demons

As the Scriptures note, Satan was the best of all angels of God. Hence, as far as his entity was concerned, he was of the same nature as the rest of the sensible beings. He was not

created by God as an evil spirit nor was he created to become such one, but rather he was deducted of the holy blissfulness as all souls self-willingly committed the original sin.

Origen stresses that: "***we proved that the devil was not created as such but succumbed to this nature as a result of his own evilness***".⁶⁶

He goes on to repeat that should the devil had been created of another essence, different from the one of the pure and virtuous beings, and then he would not be responsible for his bad actions.⁶⁷

As his helpers and associates, the devil has the demons who are the most sinful of all sensible beings. Apart from the latter, there are many human beings who, following their death, are classified in the devil's orders as they had committed great sins when on Earth. Consequently:

"The breed of demons is formed in two ways, comprised of human souls and of higher spirits forfeited into it".⁶⁸

Why does God allow them, however, to act in such a destructive manner and for what reason? Origen examined this issue in depth and ended up with the conclusion that they were in fact left free to a certain degree according to the divine economy. This happened either to restore and lead them down the righteous path, or to exercise their logic. They do not, nonetheless, have the ability to act as they please, since they are prevented by the stronger divine forces.⁶⁹

9. Is hell eternal?

It is a known fact that the people who have sinned are punished for it in Hades. The place of punishment is called Hell (Kolasis – from the verb "kolazo" in Greek = punish, impose penalty or punishment) and is considered as the opposite of the blissful place of the pure and virtuous - namely Paradise.

The essential misinterpretation on this subject matter is the words of the Fathers, who indeed use expressions on several occasions where the hell of the sinned appears as endless and interminable. It is especially John Chrysostom who is extremely harsh in his descriptions of the punishments after death. But all this did not have a dogmatic character. He (John Chrysostom) was merely stating it in order to convince the common people through fear to become wise and prudent by attending to his preaching. After all, the metaphysical topics would fall under the confidential teaching - the un-written and un-communicated one - while those preaching of ethical content and nature allowed for more freedom in expression and some deliberate exaggerations, in order to succeed in their purpose.

The Chrysostom stresses the fact that God himself followed the same tactics so that through the frightful and terrible threats coming from the mouths of prophets he would force the Jews into the righteous path.⁷⁵

All these expressions of the Fathers, which were given for purely pedagogical purposes, were taken literally by the subsequent Theologists and thus the latter ended up at the dogma of the interminable hell.

Origen emphatically rejects the eternal (= endless, interminable) hell: "*resurrection of the dead takes place and punishment in hell as well, but not eternal; because through the punished and damned body, it is the soul that gets purified and thus is restored in the ancient class of things...*".⁷⁶

The heavenly punishment, therefore, is not considered an end in itself, nor does it contain a sense of revenge but rather it aims for the purification and catharsis of the soul. Hence, an endless punishment would mean that it would not be possible for those classified under it to be purified for their evil. This case would reflect the weakness of the divine plan to complete the salvation of all people. A case such as this, however, is contrary to the omnipotence of the divine word. For this reason Origen believes that the word will finally prevail completely, cleansing, in this manner, every soul.⁷⁷

10. The universal restoration (Apokatastasis)

The universal restoration is a concept wider and more general than the termination of hell: It means the return of all, even the evil spirits, to the primeval heavenly bliss so that all together will comprise of the new heavenly state in total exultation.

We saw that, according to Origen, all sensible beings were created as equal. As created creatures, however, they were fluid and variable due to the free will and the autonomy of their given energy. Via their disobedience to the divine order came their distinction to angels, humans and demons, depending on the degree of their removal and distance from good.

The material world was created for the purification of the fallen through the continuous reincarnations. Since, however, according to Origen, the end of the world has to be similar to the beginning of it, all are intended to return to be near God himself, since at some earlier point all was in total harmony towards God. This ultimate objective is the so-called **universal restoration**.

Origen formulates his view in the following categorical manner: "*...all respectful people's and even demons' hell has an end. And the disrespectful and the demons will be restored to their previous state*".⁸⁷

The great Fathers stress that **evil cannot be forever since it was not from the outset nor does it derive from God**. They also say that anything evil will be eliminated, that in the scriptures there exist myriads of testimonies about the final deposition of the enemy (the devil) that nothing will remain outside the boundaries of good and more. In fact, John the Chrysostom sees as blasphemous the view that evil will not be destroyed and that as endless and perpetual it will be equivalent to God.

CHAPTER 4

THE "THREE CHAPTERS"

1. "A sign that is spoken against"

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, the old man Simeon said to his mother:

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against... that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2. 34).

None could then imagine the frightening verification that would come with these prophetic words during the forthcoming centuries.

Jesus Christ was undoubtedly an exceptionally unique personality. This is why following the wider dissemination of his teaching, in the form of a new religion, an imperative need was established: this called for a clear determination of his nature as an entity and for the validation that the man appearing with his name was in reality an incarnated god and as such was completely different from all worshipped gods of other religions.

The development of a special sector of the Christian written work soon emerged called Christology. Subsequently, several views started to formulate which were considered as non-correct, that is heretic. Thus, in the face of Jesus Christ a *"a sign that is spoken against"* was reflected which caused very strong dispute, contradiction and conflict, and shook the church to its core for many centuries negatively affecting the expansion of Christianity and the maintenance of its high ideals.

Nowadays, Jesus Christ remains *"a sign that is spoken against"* but from different perspectives. Many question his divine mission and others his divine nature. Others see him as a precursor of the proletariat struggles, while others as a defender of the civil plutocratic class because he taught the subordination of slave to their masters. Many, on the other hand, perceive him as a psychologically perverse individual (as with Socrates) while others as a simple reformer as many before him. Some also consider him an experienced magician, a fraud, an impostor etc. Lastly, there are many who deny or doubt even his historical existence.

2. The so-called "Three Chapters"

Through the term *"Three Chapters"* the uniform handling of three cases, which have as common grounds the accusation of the support of Nestorius were established in ecclesiastical history. The persons who were accused of practicing nestorianism are:

- a) **Theodore**, Bishop of the city of Mopsuestia of Cilicy (392-428), who after death was considered as teacher of Nestorius.
- b) **Theodoret**, Bishop of the city of Cyrus of Efratisia (428-457) who was opposed to the conviction of Nestorius during the 3rd Ecumenical Council and

- c) **Ibas**, the Bishop of Edessa of Osroynis (436-457), near the river Efratis, who in his letter bearing his name, he accuses Cyril of Alexandria (prime mover in the conviction of Nestorius) and praises Theodore of Mopsuestia.

The "Three Chapters" are neither directly related to Origen and his theological system nor with the Origenistic controversies. Dedicating this chapter to them is due to the fact that they consisted of the main reason for the assembly of the 5th Ecumenical council, which, according to tradition, convicted Origen. We, therefore, aim to prove through the historical development of facts and events that the sole reason behind the assembly of the 5th Ecumenical Council was the Three Chapters without the matter of Origen being the least involved in the latter beforehand.

3. Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore was born in Antioch around the year 350 and came from a distinguished and wealthy family. The year 402 he was elected as Bishop of Mopsuestia.

In his writings, he followed the interpretative and theological principles of the school of Antioch. He died the year 428, **without ever being accused as a heretic during his lifetime.**

It was after his death that the involvement of his name in the sect of Nestorius began.³ From that time on, a strong dispute took place on whether Theodore was Orthodox or not. Many things were written and said on behalf of the opposing sides. However, the Robber Council and in turn the 4th Ecumenical Council did not deal with Theodore at all as he had then passed away.

4. Theodoret of Cyrus

Theodoret was elected bishop of the city of Cyrus of Antioch the year 423. He was a close friend of Nestorius and supported him during the time that the discourse had broken out.

In the Robber Council of Ephesus (449), in which his participation was forbidden, Theodoret was convicted along with some of Nestorius' old friends. He attended the 4th Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451). During the 8th assembly of the latter following much pressure from the side of the Bishops he anathematized Nestorius. Since then, he became admitted as Orthodox and was reinstated in his province, receiving great appreciation by all for his significant contribution to the theological literature and his charitable work.

5. Ibas of Edessa

Ibas flourished during the first half of the 5th century and his activity evolved in the city of Edessa of Syria. Initially, he was the director of the theological school there and later became Bishop.

His letter to his student Marin is the only text of Ibas saved in the Greek language. It contains some sharp comments against Cyril of Alexandria who led in the conviction of

Nestorius, while at the same time, Theodore of Mopsuestia is praised and called "*the preacher of truth and teacher of the church*".

In the Robber council, Ibas was deposed. His case was revisited in the 4th Ecumenical Council. The decision concerning his deposition was cancelled because he did not attend to provide his testimony and the necessary incriminating evidence against him was not collected. He was forced, however, to anathematize Nestorius as he indeed did. Hence, his position was restored.

6. The "Robber" council

In the 3rd Ecumenical Council of Efessos (431), with its president the Patriarch of Alexandria, Cyril, Nestorius was convicted and deposed. However, after nestorianism subsided, it was the theory of monophysitism, which started to develop. Its main representative was the monk of Constantinople Eutyches. The emperor Theodosius summoned a new council in Efessos the year 449 with president the Patriarch of Alexandria Dioskoros who was a supporter of Eutyches.

Before the realization of the council, many sad deflating events took place carried out by fanatic monophysitic monks. The council acquitted Eutyches while the Bishops Ibas of Edessa, Theodoret of Cyrus and others were deposed without apologizing as they were deemed as Nestorianists.

Theodosius the Second validated the decisions of the council but Pope Leo of Rome rejected them naming it as "Robber". It is with this name that the council remained in history.

The next year, the emperor fell off his horse and was killed. Governance and sovereignty was taken on by his sister Poulheria, who along with her husband Markianos, went ahead with the assembly of the 4th Ecumenical Council.

7. The Fourth Ecumenical Council

In the 4th Ecumenical Council (451) approximately 600 Bishops attended and those accused were Eutyches and Dioskoros of Alexandria. The council cancelled the decisions of the Robber council, namely the acquittal of Eutyches, validating once again his conviction from the council of year 448 in Constantinople. It also deposed Dioskoros of Alexandria and the president of the Robber council. The emperor exiled both.

The deposed parties from the Robber council, Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrus, were restored to their episcopal positions after they were forced to anathematize Nestorius.

However, this council also failed to set the ecclesiastical situation on a proper course. During its decision-making the monophysites of Egypt and Syria reacted negatively and so the problems and disputes continued to disrupt the Christian communities.

8. The development of the issue until the Fifth Ecumenical Council

After the 4th Ecumenical Council, several events and many efforts to resolve the problem of monophysitism followed.

The emperor Zinon (476), son in law of Leon the First, in his attempt to conciliate the opposing parties, issued the work "**Enotikon**" (482) through which Nestorius and Eutyches were accused and convicted and in it some dogmatic wording and formulations were defined.
¹²

The "Enotikon" was accepted and embraced by all churches of the East. Those monophysites who did not accept it broke away gradually from their Bishops and were named "**Headless**".

In the meantime, in Palestine the new phase of Origenistic controversies had began. Through a new decree (543), Justinian condemned all Origen's misbeliefs (see the next chapter). Since, however, the controversies would continue and Justinian was planning to take new measures, Theodore Ascidas, an Origenist, being in the close environment of the emperor, thought to lead him in another direction, and specifically towards the effort of uniting the headless monophysites.

The dogmatic arguments and disputes of the "Headless" had been sufficiently resolved after the first provision. What remained was for the second category to be removed, which pertained to the restoration of the nestorianist writers. Thus did the third decree (544) emerge, through which the Three Chapters were condemned, namely: a) Theodore of Mopsuestia and his writings, b) the writings and work of Theodoret of Cyrus against Cyril of Alexandria, and c) the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Marin.

This decree caused the resurgence of a problem, which had faded by itself. It was considered that it was offending the validity and stature of the 4th Ecumenical Council because, through this decree, those who had been restored by the council were convicted, namely Theodoret and Ibas. This is why the signature and consent of the Patriarchs was requested. Those of the East did provide their consent and signature, although not without resistance, while Rome Vigilius refused to sign.

After many negotiations, Justinian assembled the 5th Ecumenical Council (533) in Constantinople with a sole mission to condemn the Three Chapters. In this council Bishops of the West did not attend while Vigilius refused to participate.

The events, which are of direct interest to us, namely those spanning from 543 onward, are expanded in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE FIFTH (5th) ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

1. The general problem

The 5th Ecumenical Council was held in May of year 553, based on a decree by Justinian, with the sole purpose to examine the issue of the Three Chapters.

However, this Council has been closely linked to the conviction of Origen and the Origenists Didymos the Blind and Evagrius Pontikus. In fact, it is on several occasions mentioned in the reports of subsequent scholars that the conviction of Origen completely overshadows the condemnation of the Three Chapters.

The original Greek text of the transcripts of the Council has been lost. The Latin translation is the only one saved wherein it is solely the condemnation of the Three Chapters that is being considered and mentioned throughout the discussions.

The problem, therefore, is **whether this Council ever considered and dealt with the issue of Origen and the Origenists and when that actually occurred.** The historical research has not yet concluded to a commonly accepted answer and the issue essentially continues to exist.

The only evidence that exists on the matter is a document found in the library of Vienna titled: "*Fifteen rules of the 165 Holy Fathers of the holy fifth council of Constantinople*" This document does not bear any date nor signatures and the degree to which it is truly related to the 5th Ecumenical Council is questioned, since there is no reference to such text in the minutes.

For the purpose of resolution of this problem, several views have been expressed and formulated at times. These can be summarized in the following versions:

- a) The 5th Ecumenical Council never dealt with Origen.
- b) Origen was convicted by the endemic Council by Patriarch Mennas in 543 based on the *Speech* that Justinian sent to Mennas that year.
- c) Origen was actually condemned by the 5th Ecumenical Council but the section of the minutes containing the relevant discussions was either lost or not translated.
- d) In order to remove all the difficulties associated with these matters, F. Diekamp in 1899 presented the theory that Origen was convicted prior to the Council - that is 1-2 months before the commencement of the 5th Ecumenical Council by the Bishops who were already in Constantinople. The above theory is considered the most prominent to date.
- e) In the current analysis, a fifth view is suggested which we believe reflects thoroughly the true historical facts. In summary it is the following:

The purpose of the convergence of the Fifth Ecumenical Council was solely the condemnation of the Three Chapters as is shown from the relevant transcripts. Origenism existed as a problem from the beginning of the sixth century and had already been the subject of concern of Justinian. However, the formal inciting of

the issue took place directly after the resolution of the regular works of the Council with the known Letter that the emperor sent to the Bishops to handle the matter. It was then that the Bishops took to new sessions, which ended up in the conviction of Origen and the publication of the 15 anathematisms. That is, Origen was not convicted prior to the council, as Diekamp suggested, but following the council.

As we will later prove, this theory is in full agreement with the existing historical testimonials and evidence.

Prior to the development of the theory, we briefly present the preceding events as well as a preview of the proceedings of the regular council based on the translation of the Latin texts of the transcripts.

2. Justinian's "Speech against Origen" (543)

From the beginnings of the 6th century, Origenism started to revive in Palestine. The first strong appearance of the new movement took place around the year 507 when 60 of the most educated and prominent monks of the Great Laura disputed with the Reverend of the convent, Sabbas the Holy. They went ahead and founded the **New Laura** which became the center of Origenism. The leaders of the movement were **Nonnos the Palestinian** and **Leontius of Byzantium**.

With a great deal of zeal, the origenist monks managed to disseminate their ideas to nearly all the monasteries in Palestine. Two of them, **Dometianus** and the Superior of the New Laura **Theodore Ascidas** went to Constantinople, acquired and imposed influence on the royal palaces and the year 537 were ordained the former as the first Bishop of Ankara and the latter as the second Bishop of Caesarea. They both remained in Constantinople, however, in order to support and reinforce the Origenists of Palestine in every way.

At the same time, the anti-Origenists became active and spread a "libel" against Origen requesting that the emperor condemn him. The emperor indeed issued a decree (*Speech*) in 543 in which the "misbeliefs" associated with Origen were presented after the introductory preface. He then sent it to the Patriarch Mennas. Special emphasis is given to the arguments against the preexistence of souls and the view that they were enclosed in the physical bodies due to their previous sins.

The most likely scenario is that Mennas sufficed in occasionally informing the Bishops and Abbots, requesting of them to accept the decree via their signatures. We know that the Origenists Dometianus and Theodore Ascidas signed the decree - perhaps in order not to cause any unnecessary reactions. Some, however, refused to sign the decree.

Since the disputes were continuing on, however, Justinian planned to take new measures against the Origenists through the issuance of a second decree. Theodore Ascidas then took action...

3. Raising again the issue of the Three Chapters

After the decree of 543 against Origen, Justinian seemed to be planning to continue his actions against the Origenists. It was then that Theodore Ascidas intervened and in order to move him away from his dangerous plans against the Origenists, he turned his interest in another direction: He pointed him towards the condemnation of the Three Chapters as a continuation and complementation of the first decree (533) so that the accusations of the monophysites against the 4th Ecumenical Council be lifted and the union of the "Headless" be achieved.

This decree was the start of a ten-year upheaval in the church, especially in the relations between East and West. The Patriarch of Constantinople Mennas was initially hesitant to sign in fear that the decree might offend the council of Chalcedon. Through the latter, that is, Theodoret and Ibas would be condemned, although the council had already restored them. He later signed, however, after he was promised by the emperor that he would be allowed to withdraw his signature if the pope Vigilius was not agreeable.

Vigilius reached Constantinople on January 25th of 547 where he was welcomed and received in a victorious manner. His objections, nevertheless, had not yet subsided.

In April of 548, Vigilius issued the **Judicatum** (=Decision) condemning the Three Chapters and emphasizing at the same time that he did not aspire nor aim for a reduction of the validity of the 4th Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon.

After several negative reactions, however, it was decided around the midst of the year 550 that the Judicatum be cancelled and thus the convergence of the Ecumenical Council.

4. What preceded the Council

As mentioned, the convergence of the council was decided upon in mid-550. In August of 552 the patriarch Mennas suddenly passed away and Eutychius of Constantinople received the throne and took on the initiative of further organizing and finalizing the council.

In October of 552 the Patriarch of Jerusalem Peter also passed away. A few days before that the new abbot of the Great Laura, Konon, had arrived in Constantinople from Palestine in order to inform the emperor regarding the actions of Origenists against him. Following the death of Peter, the Origenists of the New Laura declared Makarius as the successor to his position. Through actions taken by Konon, nevertheless, the emperor placed Eustohius as Patriarch of Jerusalem.

After many negotiations, Vigilius refused to take part in the council and Justinian ordered the commencement of the latter without the pope.

5. The three first sessions

The council began its work on May 5th of 553 and 152 Bishops attended it. The same list of attendees with small variations applied for all meetings. Pope Vigilius and 14 more Bishops of the East, who were in Constantinople at the time, refused to participate in the council.

Patriarch Eutychius was the president of the council without special responsibilities but as the superior in order among the 3 Patriarchs present.

With the commencement of the council, the Silentiarios (i.e. superior officer of the nation) Theodore conveyed the "**royal document**" of the emperor to the council. This document initially presented the work of previous councils and then elaborated on the history of the issue in question - the Three Chapters. Finally the order was given for it to be examined by the council.

After the three preliminary sessions, the examination of the subject of the Three Chapters began.

6. The condemnation of the Three Chapters

On the fourth session (May 13th), the council began its main work. Around 71 extracts from various works of Theodore of Mopsuestia were read as well as the "*fake Symbol*". The reading was interrupted once by discouraging vociferations towards Theodore and his teaching, which were repeated again at the end of the session.

Since the members of the session deprecated and anathematized Theodore and his followers through exclamations, the president of the council announced that the decision of conviction would not be taken right away but rather the examination would go on and proceed to the next session.

During the fifth session (May 17th) several texts were read relating to the evidence included in the examined issues.

The sixth session (May 19th) began with the reading of the crucial letter of Ibas of Edessa. Finally, the letter was condemned with disapproving vociferations. The board of the Council declared that during the next session the final decisions on the Three Chapters would be taken.

The seventh session (May 26th) was hastily convened by the announcement of several documents pertaining to pope Vigilius. We shall deal with the latter in the next section. Thus, the final decisions against the Three Chapters were taken on the eighth session (June 2nd) with the issuing of the **Council Vote** and the **14 dogmatic rules**.

The **Council Vote** includes the recapitulation of the matter and ends up in the following decision: Theodore of Mopsuestia is deprecated and personally anathematized along with his

disrespectful writings. Similarly, the writings of Theodoret against the 12 chapters of Cyrillus and in favor of Theodore and Nestorius were also deprecated and anathematized as well as the letter of Ibas. The two latter, however, were not personally anathematized.

The **14 dogmatic rules** consist of equally numbered anathemas with which the decision of the council is completed.

At this point, the works of the council concluded and were finalized.

7. The development of the relations with Vigilius

On the eve of the seventh session, when the council was about to issue its final decision, Pope Vigilius called four of the superior governmental employees and three Bishops in order to give them his answer regarding the Three Chapters, as he had promised before the opening of the council. The above parties refused to receive the answer without the order of the emperor.

The next day, with the opening of the seventh session (May 26th) the Quaestor Constantine sent from the emperor appeared and narrated the events that took place the previous day, pointing out and stressing the tergiversation of the Pope. He submitted seven documents, which were read before the members of the council, and a "**Document about the name of Vigilius**" (Sacra forma) to no longer be mentioned and not to be written and shown in the holy diptychs of the church because he defended the impiety of the Three Chapters.

Vigilius along with his escorts were moved to Proikonisos of Propontida until they would accept and embrace the decisions of the council!

Indeed, old, feeble and exiled Vigilius was forced to comply and surrender to the defined decision. With a letter of his to the Patriarch Eutychios (December 8th, 553), he announced that he condemned the Three Chapters according to the decisions of the council.

Vigilius was now free. Having the final texts of the transcripts of the Council he set out for his country. However, he was not destined to see it again. He passed away in Sicily on June 7th, 555.

Pelagios was proclaimed as his successor who, under unknown circumstances, officially recognized the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

8. The date of the "sacra forma"

On all that has been mentioned and cited in the previous section, there is a problem that must be noted and which needs particular investigating. This has to do with the date of the "sacra forma". In other words, while the seventh session took place on May 26th, the document presented there by the quaestor Constantine (about deletion of the name of Vigilius) bears the date of July 14th 553, that is 49 days later.

It is obvious that this document was later added to the transcripts of the seventh session due to its relevant content. There was no reason to change its date, as all knew then the timing of the events.

With the proof of accuracy of the date, a significant conclusion is drawn: At least one and half months following the regular termination of their works, the members of the council are still in the capital city, discussing and convening! This can be confirmed by the fact that the formulation of the list of signees of the transcripts of the eight sessions of the main council was delayed for a significantly long time. The 16 additional names apparently belong to Bishops who arrived at the city after the regular termination of the council and took part only in the post-council sessions.

We do not directly know the post-council period of intense consultations. We believe, however, that in one of those post-council meetings the conviction of Origen and the Origenists took place, as we shall later prove.

9. The citation of Origen in the transcripts

In the saved transcripts of the council, the name of Origen is mentioned twice: Once during the fifth session and once in rule number 11 (of the 14) which were issued at the end of all related works of the council.

The first time in the fifth session, the proponents cite several cases of conviction after death as well as texts from works of the Fathers of the church, which prove that such a conviction is allowed. Their purpose was to substantiate the decision of the council on the post-death conviction of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

The oldest conviction of Origen by Theophilus of Alexandria took place on account of known events, which were exposed in chapter 2, section 11. Moreover, it is said that he was recently convicted by Patriarch Eutychius and by Pope Vigilius.

Besides the two above-mentioned parties, the other members of the council present are not mentioned at all. Based on this fact, we can safely conclude with certainty that up until that point in time, the council had not dealt with the issue of Origen.

The second time that there is reference to his name, is in the 11th of the 14 rules that were published at the end of the 8th (last) session. The rules were saved in the original Greek text.

Several contemporary scholars expressed the view that the name of Origen had been inserted subsequently. This is the view we also embrace because Origen is the single one of the 7 named heretics who had not been convicted from a previous Ecumenical council.

Regardless, nevertheless, whether there was an addition or not, the 11th rule has Origen perceived as convicted from the church in the past without having any correlation whatsoever with the conducted council. Consequently, the fundamental point of our theory is thus

confirmed: that until its ending works, the Fifth Ecumenical Council did not deal with the matter of Origen.

10. How Evagrius lays the facts

Until now we have attempted to provide a summarized narration of the case of the Three Chapters and the identification of the most substantial facts revealing that the council, until its day of completion (June 2nd 553), had not dealt with the issue of Origen and Origenism at all.

There is also a very important historical script, which lays the events, and facts, which are of interest to us with clarity in their accurate chronological order. This is an extract from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius the Scholastic. In the relevant chapter about the Fifth Ecumenical Council he goes on as follows:

*"Justinian asked the assembled council what they believed of Theodore and of what Theodoret spoke against the twelve chapters of Cyril and of the so-called letter of Ibas to Marin the Persian. After many sayings of Theodore and Theodoret were read... they anathematize Theodore for all of them (the sayings) and what was said by Theodoret against the twelve chapters of Cyril, of the correct faith and the letter of Ibas to Marin the Persian saying the following:... And after a while, they presented fourteen chapters on the correct and immaculate faith. **And so the events progressed. From libel, which was served** (to Justinian) by the Monks Evlogius, Konon, Kyriakus and Pagratius against the dogmas of Origen, also called Adamantius, and those following the disrespect and fallacy, **Justinian informs the assembled council about those, submitting a copy of the libel as well as the sent documents on the latter to Vigilius"**.¹⁵*

Evagrius sets forth, briefly but accurately, the entire sequence of events. Subsequently, there are two key phrases for which a clear distinction in terms of timing is made between the two phases in the progression of events. That is, between the condemnation of the Three Chapters and the conviction of Origen.

The first phrase is the following:
And so the events progressed.

In other words, all previous events advanced in such a way till their end and the case of the Three Chapters terminated with the issuance of the convicting decision.

The second phrase is the one directly following the first:
"From libel, which was served by the monks Evlogius, Konon, Kyriakus and Pagratius against the dogmas of Origen, also called Adamantius, and those following the disrespect and fallacy, Justinian informs the assembled council about those, submitting a copy of the libel...".

Therefore, the event mentioned here – that is the informing of the council by Justinian on the matter of Origen – took place **after the issuance of the decision against the Three Chapters.**

Justinian had received the libel from the anti-Origenist Monks around December of the previous year 552. It did not, however, proceed to the advancement of the matter, as he was preoccupied with multiple problems of the planned council against the Three Chapters. When the latter was completed, he took on a new initiative against Origenism, driven perhaps once again by the monks who continued to stay in Constantinople due to the council.

The decision of the council regarding the Three Chapters was completely agreeable with Justinian's views and, on the one hand pleased him very much, on the other it provided to him freely the opportunity to get involved towards the resolution of the Origenist issue through the decision of the council.

As Evagrius writes, Justinian thus sent a letter to the council wherein he informed them of the new matter and submitted an exact copy of the received libel. These two pieces of evidence, the letter and the libel, will be our main subjects for the next two sections.

11. Justinian's Letter

The council's update regarding the issue of Origenism was provided by Justinian with a Letter which is saved in the "*Chronicon*" of George Monachus who lived during the 9th century. After a brief presentation of the "misbeliefs" of Origen, this letter concludes as follows:

"...Pythagoras thus and Plato and Plotinus, and those of the group who admitted that the souls are immortal, said that the latter preexisted the bodies and there is a state of the souls. Those souls that sin fall into physical bodies, as I stated, and the cruel and cunning into leopards, the predacious into wolves, the deceitful into foxes and the feminine-driven into horses. The church, on the other hand, following the holy word, states that the soul is created simultaneously with the body and not one prior to the other, according to the insanity of Origen.

For these evil and disastrous dogmas, or rather nonsense, we urge you blessed and holy men gathered all together to study diligently, the attached presentation to condemn and anathematize each and every chapter of these together with the disrespectful Origen and all those who accept the relevant issues or intend to accept them in the future".¹⁷

Justinian firstly stresses the fact that he aims at protecting the catholic and apostolic church from the flourishing opposing dogmas. He also states some of the misbeliefs of Origen without systematically and regularly recording them and without registering any excerpts from these works.

In any case, what is of main interest to us is particularly the last phrase of the text through which Justinian addresses the council and defines the new context of its works. Here, the emperor leaves all pretences behind giving the explicit order to condemn and anathematize all "chapters" - meaning the exposed misbeliefs of Origen. He perceived the council as an executive institution validating his own decisions without leaving any room for expressing different opinion. But the most crucial consequences stemming from this point will be discussed in what follows.

12. The libel against Origen

The served libel by the anti-Origenist monks to the emperor is not known. A document named "*Libel on the origenist fallacies*" which was composed during the same period under **Theodore, Bishop of Skythopolis**, is saved and we believe it bears great similarity to the initial one.

Theodore lived during the first half of the sixth century. Initially, he was a monk in Palestine and a strong Origenist. With the support of Theodore Ascidas, he managed to obtain the episcopal throne of Skythopolis. After his escalation to the axiom, he renounced Origenism for unknown reasons and wrote an essay (libel) severe in content, which he addressed, to Justinian and the 4 Patriarchs of the East.¹⁸

In the case that the libel served by the monks does not relate to the one mentioned above, we believe that it would not bear significant differences to it because all anti-Origenist texts would move along the same lines with similar topics. We thus have, if not the accurate text, at least a reliable enough version of its content.

13. What truly happened during the Council

The mission and aim of the emperor's Letter, along with the libel attached proves that the council did actually consider and deal with the subject of origenism, since it could not do otherwise.

Of course, during these sessions, transcripts would have been kept. However, these transcripts are today completely unknown. The absence of any information relevant to the transcripts has somewhat complicated the problem which resulted, as we saw in the beginning of the chapter, in formulating the most contradictory theories.

Personally, we believe that two post-council sessions took place against Origen and the Origenists and relevant transcripts were held which were not given for public record. What did happen to the latter though?

The most credible historical evidence is noted in the continuation of the chapter from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius the Scholastic.¹⁹

Evagrius does not describe in detail what actually happened during the council, except for the conclusion that Origen filled and "polluted" the Christian teaching with Greek and Manichaeian "pests". The only specific element taken of the whole process of the meeting is that "*negative verbal outbursts against Origen*" took place, similar to those saved and recorded as made against the Three Chapters. Lastly the usual report of the session to Justinian was given.

The story does not end there however. Evagrius goes on to say that: "*Along with all this, there is a fifth chapter with blasphemies of different parties of the so-called New Laura...*", that is of the Origenists in charge of whom was Theodore Ascidas.

The term "**Fifth Chapter**" is described and explained following the previous cases with which the council dealt. After the known to all "**Three Chapters**", the conviction of Origen followed as the "**Fourth Chapter**" and the conviction of the Origenists Didymus the Blind, Evagrius Pontikus and Theodore Ascidas as the "**Fifth Chapter**".

Although, we do not know the details, we can reasonably understand what must have happened. The Origenists, deeply convinced of the righteousness of their perceptions, not only did they not passively obey Justinian's order, but they, strongly opposed to it, made efforts to not have the convicting decision issued. They set out to also establish Origen's teaching as well-accepted by the church. Theodore Ascidas may have signed the decree of 543 for reasons of regular policy, but now that the direct danger of the council's decision was evident, he discarded all pretences and openly and strongly supported his views.

The majority of the bishops who participated in the council did not, however, accept them. In addition, there was a clear and explicit emperor's order not to issue a convicting decision. Hence, the council, by majority vote and with intense argument and dispute, proceeded to the voting of the decision and the 15 rules-anathemas, informing the emperor through the relevant report.

Justinian was certainly displeased with the events and, as per his usual habit, gave an order for the punishment of those expressing their disagreement with the same penalty.

The first of those in disagreement was Theodore Ascidas together with the Origenist monks of the New Laura. In Evagrius' text he is initially referred to as the "Fifth Chapter" as the emperor directly targeted him. The new order must have been given through another letter, which is to date not known.

Theodore Ascidas, overdefending his origenistic views, called upon several excerpts from the works of the two leading Origenists of the past - Didymus the Blind and Evagrius Pontikus.

Thus, the case was closed with the conviction of Theodore Ascidas, the once favored party of Justinian, and in turn of those who he revoked as theoretical advocates of his views and standpoints, Didymus and Evagrius.

14. The extent that Origenism reached

In order for the facts and events that we described as taking place during the council to be rightfully comprehended, it is imperative to examine the saved testimonials regarding the extent to which Origenism reached at that time.

The fact that there were still Origenists amongst the members of the council stems from all we have presented thus far, but also from an **anonymous chronicle** relevant to the council. This notes that, some of the Fathers of the council admitted the defined dogmas of the Origenist teaching.²⁰

However the most impressive document, as far as the subject is concerned, comes from a contemporary scholar of the time, the senior **Eustratius**²³, who writes that the Origenists were:

- a) "*the prominent officers surrounding the king*", that is the most superior and significant of the officers in the surrounding environment of the emperor.
- b) "*the officials of the ones who served as priests*", that is the most distinguished, educated and theologically qualified among the priests.
- c) "*Masters of famous churches*" that is the Bishops in some of the prominent Churches, without excluding the possibility that some of the Patriarchs fall into this category. In favor of this view stands the absolute concealment of the conviction of Origenism from the works of the 5th Ecumenical Council.

The fact of the matter is that Eustratius, with the above-mentioned phrase used, reveals the great spread of Origenism among the top officers and members of the Church and the State.

All these parties would not openly reveal their views but had no reason to fight those who did not embrace them. In this way, a fairly tranquil climate would be maintained within the church. When the issue of the conviction emerged, nevertheless, with the known *Letter* of Justinian, then the Origenists were forced to openly defend their views and strongly oppose the demand of the emperor.

As always happens with theological disputes and controversies, the conflict between the Origenists and anti-Origenists within the council seemed to be fierce. The anti-Origenists, however, persevered having the order and support of the emperor, and this is the result that burdens the Christian religion till this day.

15. The fifteen (15) rules against the Origenist teaching

The issuance of the rules by the council stems directly from the testimony of Evagrius. All rules anathematize those who support the origenist misbeliefs with a solid theme "*If someone states so... let it be anathema*".

The transcripts of the sessions about Origen and the Origenists, have not been saved. Someone, however, copied only the text of the 15 rules because these were the ones that were of main interest to those concerned with these matters. One of the consecutive copies is the one saved today in the library of Vienna.

In the title of the document, the 165 Fathers of the 5th Ecumenical Council who signed the final transcripts against the Three Chapters are mentioned in arithmetical order. (The initial number of participants was 152). Nevertheless, we consider it a certainty that several of them did not vote in favor of the rules. Theodore Ascidas was obviously the first one, an act that attracted the rage of Justinian against him. Along with him, stood all or at least most of the origenist bishops. Even if they previously were cautious and afraid of the emperor's power, now having Theodore as a safe cover, they would not hesitate to deny or renounce their beliefs.

Of course, we do not know how many in number were those who opposed this. But regardless of their number, the most important point is that there were many who disagreed with the decisions of the council and this raises a major argument regarding their validity, as we will examine at the end of the chapter. (The text containing the rules is briefly presented in Chapter 3, section 1).

16. The events that followed

The subject of Origenism was of much interest to the troubled and turbulent area of Palestine. That is why Justinian sent the transcripts to the Patriarch of Jerusalem Eustohius who, according to Cyril of Skythopolis, expelled the Origenist monks from the New Laura.²⁷

This was the conclusion of the third phase of the Origenist controversies, which was limited to the city of Palestine and for a while Constantinople. The Origenist monks did not refer to any source by now, as they were constantly persecuted, were eventually eliminated and disappeared. One of the leading protagonists of the story, Bishop Theodore Ascidas, passed away in Constantinople the year 558.

17. Were the decisions taken valid?

After the narration of the events which ended up in the regarding the conviction of decisions about Origen and the Origenist teachings, a compelling question arises: if and to what extent were these decisions valid and binding for the Christian Orthodox church.

The first indisputable evidence of the entire case is that these cannot be considered as decisions of the 5th Ecumenical Council. As we note in the beginning of the current chapter, the 5th Ecumenical Council convened exclusively for the examination of the subject of the Three Chapters. When its decision was issued, on June 2nd, 553, the council was terminated. Every act following that, even if taken by all participant members as a whole, is cast outside and beyond the regular works of the Ecumenical council and is thus considered as an act of an endemic council.

Endemic was the name the council that convened in Constantinople and was comprised of Bishops who were occasionally found in the capital city for other reasons. Consequently, the post-council sessions of the members of the 5th Ecumenical Council do not legally consist of a continuation of the latter, but rather sessions of an endemic council.

In this manner, the common belief and known tradition regarding the conviction of Origen takes its first major hit to its credibility as it is proved that it did not stem from an Ecumenical council but rather from a council of minor importance.

We now move to the assessment of the rest of the details and aspects of the problem. Usually, the fact that Justinian with his *Letter* to the council gave an explicit order for a decision to convict towards all Origenist "misbeliefs", is overlooked. We believe that this detail on its own could provide a reason to cancel all decisions as it clearly means that the latter were taken under the pressure of the fierce emperor's power. The unprejudiced coercion that he

(Justinian) exercised in the Council as a judicial body proves that the background pressures were much greater, reaching to the extent of intimidation and threat as well as moral blackmail, as is evident from the behavior of Justinian towards Vigilius in the case of the Three Chapters.

Finding themselves within a state such as this, it was quite difficult for the Bishops to decide and move freely. However, as we have proved already, at least some Origenist Bishops stepped up and opposed the decisions with Theodore Ascidas leading the opposition.

Apart from the above-mentioned procedural evidence against the validity of the decisions, there is also the actual, objective evidence of the case. Justinian set the subject of Origen and his teaching forth abruptly and unexpectedly during the council and thus there was no given time in order for the members of the council to study the issue before they decided.

The fact that Origen and the others had never been accused of heretic teachings during their lives, nor later by the great Fathers of the theological heyday of the fourth and fifth centuries, was also ignored. From the high episcopal axiom many Bishops passed along, such as St. Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and many others who not only never accused him but also matured and prepared theologically the doctrines of his teachings so as to admire him as Father of Theology regardless if he is not mentioned by name for not causing unnecessary reactions.

Generally, thus, as per our view, the decisions against Origen and his teaching as well as those against Didymus, Evagrius and the rest of Origenists are completely groundless. The emperor's coercion, the lack of sufficient time for investigation of the matter, the existence of serious disputes from a significant portion of the council members and the evident opposition of the decisions towards the Truth, suggest the main quartet of arguments that establish the view that the decisions are not valid.

Nevertheless, some support that these decisions are valid since they were taken by a Council and consequently mandatory to the church. From a strict and conventional point of view they may be correct, but not from a substantive one. And the essence of the current matter is that the Origenist "misbeliefs" were wrongly and unjustly condemned since they were agreeable with the Christian teaching.

When this becomes a common belief and in true conscience of the ecclesiastical leading members then they will have to acknowledge and decide to rectify their mistake. According to the ancient Canon Law, when a judgment of a provincial council is disputed, a "major council" could convene to examine the issue once again. In the case of Origen, this institution could be applied perfectly. Because an Ecumenical council has not taken the decisions, hence, theoretically, there is no council greater than the latter. An Endemic council took them; therefore, the convention of a major council is possible in order to rectify the mistakes that were committed during the summer of 553.

Along with Origen, another two convicted parties must be restored: Didymus the Blind and Evagrius Pontikus as well as the silent hero Theodore Ascidas. Other scholars who have made similar recommendations, especially in the countries of Western Europe where the

recognition of Origen as a prominent theologian during earlier times first began, have recognized this need.

We made a similar recommendation also for John the Chrysostom, as conventionally his deposition by the "Council of the Oak" (403) under Theophilus continues to stand as valid. Those responsible and designated may examine the simultaneous restoration of the great misjudged and unfairly treated Fathers of the church through a cohesive and uniform major council.

18. The positive side of the events

A common saying that goes for all cases and state of things, says: "nothing evil comes without containing something good". Similarly, in our case there is a positive outcome emerging from this story, which is **the establishment of a single official dogmatic direction.**

Until then, there was no coherent and uniform dogmatic teaching acceptable by all within the church. There were two opposite movements evident – Origenism and anti-Origenism – whose theories presented several variations between them. It is noteworthy, that anti-Origenism was clear and evident while Origenism was spreading its way secretly among the more proficient and qualified of the faithful.

This vague and unclear situation could not be maintained for long. The church had to be oriented and directed either towards the one side or the other. This, however, could not happen within the same church as it included both movements and trends. The imposition of one of the two would inevitably lead to conflict provoking a new phase of Origenist controversies.

The intervention of a powerful exterior force was, hence, necessary in order to resolve the problem. The fierce and decisive influence and intervention of Justinian played this exact role and cleared up the ambiguity, even if it was in an incorrect manner. It, thus, contributed to the interior stability and homogeneity of the church with the establishment, as mentioned, of a single dogmatic direction after the anti-Origenist views prevailed.

Since then, this direction has been followed and maintained steadily to the present day, as we shall ascertain in the next chapter. We believe, however, that the circumstances, but also the minds of the faithful, have matured in such a way that allows for these issues to be examined once again based on the pure and authentic teaching of the great Fathers of the church, as we ourselves have attempted to do in the current study.

CHAPTER 6

THE GENERAL APPROACH TOWARDS ORIGEN FROM 553 TO DATE

1. The general picture

The general approach towards or treatment of Origen from the year 553 to date presents two opposite sides: a negative and a positive side.

As per the previous centuries, before the 5th Ecumenical Council, the Origenist theories followed a deteriorating path within the Christian world, which was equivalent to the gradual disappearance of the confidential Christian teaching. The convicting decision of 553, which was considered as a decision of the 5th Ecumenical Council, gave the final blow, in a way, to all those theories. Since then, the thought that they were contrary to the Christian teaching prevailed.

Thus, after the year 553 and throughout the Byzantine era the negative portrayal of Origen is dominant within the ecclesiastical traditions as well as in the minds and views of various writers. The decision had such a drastic impact that almost no one had a good word to say about the great Father of Theology. In fact, in several cases there is the impression that everyone repeats the accusations against Origen out of replication or simply mimicking what was held about him previously, just because the common belief and traditions imposed, but without having studied his works to validate them.

Following the period of the Turkish occupation (1453-1821) this picture is reversed. Having studied Origen's writings in depth, researchers and theologians realized their great value and stopped accusing him without sparing the expressions of praise words and expressions to describe Origen and his contribution to the church. Even those views considered as misbeliefs, such as the preexistence of souls and reincarnation, have passed to a secondary order of evaluation or rather it is preferable that they be partly overlooked in view of Origen's manifold interpretative and apologetic work.

The recognition of the fundamental importance of his work and its diverse influence on the great Fathers of the church has led to the general reassessment of Origen's teaching. The judgmental mindset and stance of most scholars towards the latter becomes all the more positive through time.

At this point, we must make a very important observation. As we determined in the previous chapter, the 5th Ecumenical Council was held exclusively and solely for the case of the Three Chapters. Following its completion, it dealt with the issue of Origen and the Origenists. Initially these two subjects were allegedly decisions of the 5th Ecumenical Council. As the first subject (of the Three Chapters) was not of interest to many people, it gradually was forsaken within tradition after a long period of confusion and turmoil. Finally it prevailed in most people's perception that the council dealt solely with the conviction of Origen! This interesting turn of events was noted in the sequence of Byzantine texts.

2. The following Ecumenical Councils

The term of the 6th Ecumenical Council (681) includes the merging of the two subjects - the Three Chapters and Origenism.

The Penthekti (691) Ecumenical Council is also mentioned in the decisions of the 5th Ecumenical Council. Here the order of names is the same but there are some additions made.

In the 7th Ecumenical Council (787), during the review of the decisions taken by previous councils, reference to the Three Chapters is completely absent and only the condemnation of the teachings of Origen, Didymus and Evagrius are referred to. This is another indication that no one was interested anymore, from a dogmatic point of view, in the subject of the Three Chapters and only the teachings of Origen captured people's attention and interest.

In today's official tradition of the church, Origen is not alleged as personally anathematized since his name is not mentioned among the names of other heretics. His teachings, however, are considered still as misbeliefs.

3. Byzantine writers

After his conviction, Origen was considered as officially and utterly evicted from the church. In their brief referencing of his name, subsequent writers accuse him of forming heretic teachings contrary to the Christian tradition and belief. Those who admired him did no longer dare to freely express their views about him and so Origenism gradually passed into anonymity and oblivion.

The treatment that Origen received by the Byzantine writers after the year 553 was, in its most part, negative. The writers do not, however, attempt deeper and more extensive analyses of Origen's views on the issues in question but rather suffice in mere references of one or more of his theological stances, which they always accompany with apophatic wording. This negative climate remained throughout the entire Byzantine Empire era.

Looking beyond the apparent and evident situation, which prevailed, there is the possibility that several writers, such as Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas, had studied many of Origen's writings and were influenced by them even if they rejected some 'misbeliefs' like the preexistence of souls. They do not, however, mention him by name on account of his existing conviction.

All the Byzantine writers accept by tradition that Origen was a heretic and convicted by the church. Those among them who also mention his misbeliefs, are limited to a few points, which essentially were transmitted verbally or were copied by preceding writers.

Our personal belief is that none of the byzantine Theologists after the 7th century systematically and thoroughly studied Origen's works, besides Gregory Palamas who most probably knew some of them.

We believe that the Byzantine writers cannot be held significantly responsible for their stance towards Origen, as the latter was being dictated to them through the passed-on tradition without them having further examined the situation. They considered that this issue belonged to the past and its further investigation did not concern them.

The negative climate was also maintained throughout the dark ages of the Turkish occupation. A very distinct example is the distinguished scholar and Bishop of Athens, Meletios (1703-1714), who in his "Ecclesiastic History" published in Vienna on 1783, writes that Origen was being admired for his intelligence and erudition but eventually was drawn into the disputes and heresies.

Nevertheless, as of the 19th century, interest in Origen resurged, which gave way to a new, completely different, situation.

4. Contemporary Greek Writers

Following the fall of Constantinople the year 1453, but also prior to it, many Byzantine scholars fled to the West. They took with them the complete acquired classical education, Greek and Christian, and represent the commencement of the Regeneration through conveying the philosophical, theological and scientific knowledge as well as the artistic creation.

In the centuries that followed, the decay of the Greek region took place, while in the European region, knowledge and education, the arts and sciences of all fields gradually developed and flourished. This new cultural bloom offered the opportunity for everything to be studied under a new light - a fact that had both positive and negative sides. The positive sides of this new European spirit that emerged included the systemization, the intensive work and detailed investigation which followed, while the negative ones included the scholasticism, lack of depth and standardization of everything concerned.

In the case of Origen, we saw that the Byzantine scholars steadily maintained the negative tradition, which had been established for many centuries. This tradition would also burden the more contemporary Greek scholars for whom it was not that easy to follow a different direction since this was considered as the official position of the church. The parties in the West, however, started to systematically study Origen's works as well as all the saved writings of Christian and classical writers. They realized the great theological value of his work and in their own books they would praise him unconditionally without being influenced by the existing convicting decision against him.

The Greeks who studied in the European universities finally accepted the positive criticism about Origen. Of course, at this point it is not possible to define the details of the development and progress on the matter but we consider it a certainty that the reverse climate began by the Western scholars and through much fermentation was finally adopted by the Greek Theologists who also began studying regularly Origen's biography and works.

And so, after the liberalization of Greece (1828), a completely different approach towards Origen than the one held during the Byzantine period, is evident. Now a new period of increasing interest and an incredibly positive approach towards the works of the founder of the theological science is being unfolded. Writers do not spare the praising word to outline and

describe the personality of this great son of the Greek Alexandria. The issue of the conviction and misbeliefs has passed to having secondary importance while those critics who continue to criticize Origen are now very few in number.

CONCLUSIONS

From all this process of providing adequate evidence in support of our argument in previous chapters, we believe that the following conclusions can be drawn:

- a) Origen was the greatest of the Theologists of his time and Father of theological science. Throughout his life he was a loyal member of the church and his teaching was always within the context and framework of the orthodox tradition. He never succumbed to any improper or irregular activity, while the rumors about his self-castration consist of faulty propagations arising out of pure misconception.
- b) The great Fathers of the church would continuously indulge extensively in his writings out of which they drew many moral lessons and they never accused him of any heretic teaching. Their few observations refer to insignificant issues and never were of the nature of controlling "misbeliefs". Similarly, they have never rejected the points of his teaching, which are seen today as opposite to the Christian teaching. We can safely conclude from this fact that they accepted them, even if they did not declare them openly to all.
- c) The expressed reactions during the time of the Origenist controversies were mainly derived from fanaticism or ignorance of the confidential teaching. Therefore, Origen's supporters were always more numerous and more advanced spiritually than his accusers.
- d) Origen's conviction during the 5th Ecumenical Council is for the most part due to the fierce intervention of Justinian, who despite his good intentions towards preserving the unity of the church and the purity of the Christian teaching, he succumbed to serious mistakes which burden the dogmatic traditions to the present day. We proved that the conviction in question should not be considered as taken by the 5th Ecumenical Council but from the Endemic council and, in fact, with much dissent.
- e) During the long period of Byzantium, Origen was considered as an heretic convicted by the church and his works were no longer studied. But in recent years, there was a decisive reversal in the approach Origen received which started off from Europe and was finally adopted by all Greek scholars who recognize his great value and contribution to Christianity, regardless of some reservations that they expressed.
- f) The completion of our conclusions based on all previous ones made, lies in the need to officially restore Origen as well as those convicted with him – Didymus the Blind and Evagrius Pontikus. This should take place via a major council, which would cancel the already perforated decision of the Endemic council of 553. At the same time, we suggested the cancellation of the decision of the "Council of the Oak", which deposed John the Chrysostom. It is only through this way that the church will be able to purge the two dark blemishes of its historic past, the unjust convictions of its great sons.
- g) After the restoration of Origen, a compelling question emerges of whether the church accepts his teaching or not - partly or wholly.

Firstly, the acceptance of his main views is considered as given, as is the preexistence of souls, the heavenly position of Paradise, the personal participation of men in the original sin

and reincarnation. Nevertheless, this entails as its consequence the general reconstruction of the Christian Dogmatic, mainly in the fields of Ontology and Anthropology.

It is also safe to say that in Origen's writings there are elements, which are not accurate. Therefore, the full answer to the posed question above will be reached and given following a thorough and meticulous study by the future scholars and researchers of the confidential Christian teaching.

EPILOGUE

The epilogue of this story has yet to be written.

It will be noted when Origen enjoys once again the honor he received in the ancient church, so that his ending fairly matches his beginning.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER 1

1. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History VI 2, 8-9.
4. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History VI 3, 1-3.
5. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History VI 19, 19.
6. St. Jerome, De Viris Illustribus 61.
9. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History VI 8, 1-6.
11. Epiphanius, Panarion 64, 1-2· PG 41, 1069.
12. Nemesius of Emesa, About the nature of man XXX.
14. Speech ... against Origen, PG 86 A, 973..
18. Origen's, The Gospel of Mathew, Vol. XIII, PG 13, 1253-1265.
21. Epiphanius, Panarion 64, 3· PG 41, 1076.
22. John Zonaras, Chronicle XII 11· PG 134, 1032.
23. Nikiforos Kallistos, Ecclesiastical History V 8· PG 145, 1081.
32. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History VI 23, 4.
33. Photius, "Bibliotheca" 118· PG 103, 396.

CHAPTER 2

9. Peter of Alexandria, Fragments.
11. St. Athanasius, About the Council of Nicaea 27, 1.
12. St. Athanasius, Letter to Sarapion 9.
14. St. Athanasius, The life of St. Antonius.
22. Socrates, Ecclesiastical History IV 25· PG 67, 525.
27. St. Basil, About the Holy Spirit XXIX 73.
29. Gregory of Nyssa, In Canticum Cantorum 13.
30. Gregory of Nyssa, The life of Gregory the Thaumaturgus· PG 46, 907.
33. Gregory of Nyssa, About soul and resurrection· PG 46, 125.
38. Socrates, Ecclesiastical History VI 7· PG 67, 684.
39. Epiphanius, Agyrotos 54.
41. Palladius, Dialogue about the life of John Chrysostom VI· PG 47, 23.
42. Socrates, Ecclesiastical History VI 7· PG 67, 684.
45. Socrates, Ecclesiastical History VI 17· PG 67, 716.
47. Palladius, Dialogue about the life of John Chrysostom IX· PG 47, 30.
49. Socrates, Ecclesiastical History VI 13· PG 67, 701.
51. Cyrillus of Alexandria, Letter 81· PG 77, 373· and PG 86A, 967-969.

CHAPTER 3

3. Clement of Alexandria, Stromata VI 8.
4. Clement of Alexandria, Stromata I 2.
5. Origen, In Ieremiam XII 7.
6. Origen, In Evangelium Ioannis XIII 5.
9. St. Basil, About the Holy Spirit XXVII 66.
11. Origen, On Principles I 8.
18. Gregory of Nyssa, On Prayer IV.
21. John Chrysostom, In Evangelium Ioannis LXXIX 3· PG 59, 430.
22. John Chrysostom, On Genesis XX· PG 53, 174.
29. Origen, On Principles I 8.
31. Origen, Contra Celsum VIII 30.
32. Origen, Contra Celsum IV 17.
39. Gregory of Nyssa, Oratio Catechetica 8, 2.
40. Gregory of Nyssa, On Prayer IV.
42. Origen, Selecta in Genesim· PG 12, 101 B.
65. Origen, Contra Celsum V 18.
75. John Chrysostom, PG 56, 151.
76. Origen, On Principles II 10.
77. Origen, Contra Celsum VIII 72.
87. Origen, On Principles II 10.
91. Origen, Contra Celsum IV 68.

CHAPTER 4

3. Leontius Byzantius, Sholia IV· PG 86, 1221.
7. P. Christou, Greek Patrology, Vol. IV, p. 448. (In Greek).
12. V. Stefanides, Ecclesiastical History, p. 228. (In Greek).

CHAPTER 5

3. Kyrillos von Skythopolis, ed. Ed. Schwartz, p. 191–2.
15. Evagrius Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History IV 38· PG 86 B, 2776.
17. George Monachus, Chronicon IV 218· PG 110, 780–4.
18. Theodore of Skythopolis, Libel· PG 86 A, 231–236.
19. Evagrius Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History IV 38· PG 86 B, 2777.
20. Proceedings of the Holy Ecumenical Synods, Vol. II, p. 394.
23. Eustratius, Life of Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople, PG 86 B, 2313–2316.
27. Kyrillos von Skythopolis, ed. Ed. Schwartz, p. 199.