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article

Theological Motives for Condemning "Origenism"

Teologiczne motywy potępienia „orygenizmu"

Wojciech Słomski
VIZJA University in Warsaw, Poland

0000-0003-1532-0341
w.slomski@vizja.pl

Abstract: The article examines the controversial issues of the orthodoxy of Origen's theology and the condemnation of "Origenism". It is taken in quotation marks, since it significantly differs from the teaching of Origen itself. The purpose of this article is to establish the theological motives for the condemnation of "Origenism". Disputes between Origen's epigones and his opponents touched on a wide variety of theological issues. Accusations against Origen and his followers are quite contradictory from the standpoint of theology. The condemnation of Origen was directly initiated by the monks of the Eastern monasteries, disagreeing rather with the spiritual practices of the so-called "Origenists", and in fact – the followers of Evagrius Ponticus. In many ways, it was the works and activities of Evagrius Ponticus that provoked the condemnation of Origenism to a greater extent than the theology of Origen himself. At the same time, the accusations of heresy against Origen promoted by Emperor Justinian I in 543 differed from the accusations contained in the 15 rules of the Fifth Ecumenical Council against Origenism (553). It is concluded that the main reason for the condemnation was Origen's free-thinking, which encouraged his followers to independently study Christian theology. The Alexandrian theologian presented his views in the form of "exercises" and not as dogmas; he proposed ideas and did not prescribe thinking in a certain way. This clearly contradicted the tendencies of dogmatization of the Christian doctrines and the growing influence of the imperial power on the Church.

Streszczenie: Artykuł analizuje kontrowersyjne kwestie ortodoksyjności teologii Orygenesa i potępienia „orygenizmu". Celem tego artykułu jest ustalenie teologicznych motywów potępienia „orygenizmu". Spory między epigonami Orygenesa a jego przeciwnikami dotyczyły wielu różnych kwestii teologicznych. Oskarżenia przeciwko Orygenesowi i jego zwolennikom są dość sprzeczne z punktu widzenia teologii. Potępienie Orygenesa zostało bezpośrednio zainicjowane przez mnichów ze wschodnich klasztorów, nie zgadzających się raczej z duchowymi praktykami tak zwanych „orygenistów", a w rzeczywistości – zwolenników Ewagriusza Pontyjskiego. Pod wieloma względami to właśnie dzieła i działalność Ewagriusza Pontyjskiego sprowokowały potępienie orygenizmu w większym stopniu niż teologia samego Orygenesa. Jednocześnie oskarżenia o herezję przeciwko Orygenesowi promowane przez cesarza Justyniana I w 543 r. różniły się od oskarżeń zawartych w 15 zasadach V Soboru Ekumenicznego przeciwko Orygenizmowi (553). Stwierdzono, że głównym powodem potępienia była wolnomyślicielska postawa Orygenesa, który zachęcał swoich zwolenników do niezależnego studiowania teologii chrześcijańskiej. Aleksandryjski teolog przedstawiał swoje poglądy w formie „ćwiczeń", a nie dogmatów; proponował idee i nie nakazywał myślenia w określony sposób. Było to wyraźnie sprzeczne z tendencjami dogmatyzacji doktryn chrześcijańskich i rosnącym wpływem władzy cesarskiej na Kościół.

Keywords: Alexandrian School, heresy, Origen, Origenism, orthodoxy, Fifth Ecumenical Council

Słowa kluczowe: Szkoła aleksandryjska, herezja, Orygenes, orygenizm, Piąty Sobór Powszechny

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Introduction

The rich philosophical and theological legacy left by Origen exerted a huge influence on all areas of the Christian thought and largely predetermined the development of Christian exegesis and apologetics and laid the foundations of dogmatic theology. Origen finally "Christianized" ancient Greek philosophy. Based on the synthesis of Hellenistic philosophy and Christian doctrine inherent in the Alexandrian theological school, his works built a harmonious system of Christian theology, within the framework of which all the subsequent theological concepts and doctrines were supposedly built into the majestic building erected by Origen. Moreover, many of his theological ideas, in all likelihood, were misinterpreted and reduced. In this reduced form, they have reached our days and significantly influence our perception of the so-called "Origenism". Here and below, the term "Origenism" is put in quotation marks precisely because of the discrepancy between the condemned teachings attributed to Origen and the actual views of this great Alexandrian theologian, apologist and exegete.

It should be taken into account that Origen was the author of a large number of theological, philosophical, biblical and exegetical literature, of which, according to scholars, only a third has survived at best. According to St. Jerome, Origen "wrote so much that others are unable to read it." (Hieronymus, *Epistola LXVI. Ad Pammachium*). Epiphanius of Salamis calculated that the theologian composed, including small "scholia" and "homilies", up to 6,000 works (Epiphanius, *Narins'ye contra haereses*, 64–65), and the famous Lutheran theologian Adolf von Harnack considered this number close to reality (Harnack, 1958, 333). The total volume of his works exceeds the volume of all extant Christian literature from the first to third centuries A.D.

Nevertheless, many Christian theologians, recognizing Origen's enormous contribution to the development of theology, considered his teaching dangerous for Christian orthodoxy. Despite the subsequent criticism and condemnation of "Origenism", in fact, individual concepts of Origen and his views on secondary issues not related to the main dogmatic theology were condemned. The question of the orthodoxy and heresy of Origen's theological views remains controversial to this day.

Modern Catholic theologians, except for the most conservative ones, are inclined to apologetics for Origen and question his condemnation. These include: Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Ulrich Berner, Henri Crouzel. In modern Orthodox theology, on the contrary, Origenism is predominantly assessed as one of the most dangerous heresies. This is how the legacy of Origen is viewed by the Russian professor, specialist in the church history Alexei Sidorov (Sidorov, 2013) and the Georgian archimandrite Raphael (Karelin, 2013). At the same time, Orthodox authors recognize the significant difference between the teachings of Origen himself and "Origenism" but believe that the heresy was already embedded in the works of the Alexandrian theologian. Many modern authors generally bypass the question of Origen's orthodoxy, considering him a philosopher, exegete and hermeneutician, but not a theologian.

Thus, the problem of the conformity of Origen's theology with the Christian dogma and the condemnation of "Origenism" remains unresolved. The purpose of this article is to establish the motives for

the condemnation of "Origenism", which will contribute to a better understanding of what exactly and why was condemned in Origen's theological heritage and, in general, to what extent his teaching can be considered heresy.

The ambiguity in the definition of "Origenism"

In view of the substantial number of historical and theological studies devoted to Origen and Origenism, it is necessary to initially narrow the subject field of the issues under consideration. Firstly, it is necessary to exclude the discussion of the connection between Origen's theology and Arianism. Suspicions and accusations of Arianism are meaningless, since they are based on retrospective speculation, anti-historical in its essence, according to the principle, "If there had been no Origen, Arianism would not have appeared". To appear "after" does not mean to appear "as a result of". Secondly, there is no point in considering the disagreements between the Alexandrian and Antiochian theological schools as a significant factor in the condemnation of "Origenism", to which a considerable number of historical and historical-theological works are also devoted. The criticism of Origen by the authoritative theologian and champion of orthodoxy, Saint Eustathius of Antioch, was not caused by the aforementioned disagreements, but by his personal struggle with Arianism and similar heresies that originated from the Alexandrian theology. Thirdly, there is no need to pay attention to any accusations of subordinationism brought against Origen (Crouzel, 1989, 191–192). His exegetical works reveal a pattern of dividing the Deity into an unknowable (Father) and a knowable part (Son and the Holy Spirit). But this division, which follows from the teaching on Logos of the Alexandrian theologians (Philo and Clement of Alexandria), does not indicate a hierarchy of the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity and does not provide grounds for agreeing that this teaching of Origen differs from the theology of the orthodox Church Fathers of the fourth century. Quite the contrary, it was precisely Origen's orthodoxy in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity that was highly valued by the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus), whose contribution to the Christian triadology is beyond doubt.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to identify aspects of Origen's theology that are problematic from the standpoint of the subsequent orthodox Christian theology, regardless of the motives for condemning "Origenism" and without analyzing specific accusations, many of which seem unsubstantiated. The very concept of "Origenism" is quite ambiguous. Some authors interpret it quite broadly as an expression of the "rationalistic principle" in theological thought (Dmitrievskiy, 1884, 136), which after Origen gradually gave way to the "Christian principle", that is, including mystical and apophatic theology. The opponents of "Origenism", as of well as Alexandrinism in general, saw its danger for Christian thought in the rationalistic speculations inherent in the Hellenistic philosophy and Gnostic schools.

Despite these concerns, mystical theology and personal mystical experience of knowledge of God were of significant importance to Origen. The problem is that these aspects of "Origenism" are little known to modern theologians. In the concept of "Origenism", Hans Urs von Balthasar distinguishes three components:

1. Origen's private religious and philosophical opinions;
2. the church doctrines he expounded;
3. "the deeply personal, secret and inimitable" in his mystical theology (Balthasar, 1984, 6–10).

The subsequent theological tradition accepted and studied in detail only the second component. The first component was rejected and subsequently greatly distorted in the criticism of "Origenism", and the third "was overlooked even by its most diligent followers" (Balthasar, 1984, 10). Obviously, such a division is extremely schematic and conditional to a certain extent, since it breaks up into incompatible parts not only Origen's teaching, but also his personality. Nevertheless, this conditional scheme makes us think about how adequately we perceive the rich legacy of the Alexandrian theologian.

There have also been attempts to distinguish between the "right Origenism", which formed the basis for the Nicene theology, and the "left Origenism", which gave rise to Arianism. However, the ideas that distinguished the Orthodox and the Arians were opposite, so combining them under such a specific name as "Origenism" is incorrect, just as it is pointless to derive Arianism from Origen's theology.

German Protestant theologian Wolfgang Bienert believes that the very concept of "Origenism" for the Alexandrian school since the time of Pope Heraclas is extremely dubious. Bienert is the author of one of the few conceptual works on this issue (Bienert, 1978). He notes that Origen's first students in Alexandria were as much "Origenists" as they were "anti-Origenists". The ideas that distinguish Origen from the orthodox tradition were almost completely rejected by them; what was perceived, cannot be called specifically "Origenist".

There is no need to prove that Origen's influence on his contemporaries was enormous. This applies above all to the field of exegesis, in which Origen's influence was the most authoritative and lasting. His commentary on the Gospel of John, for example, "became a model of biblical exposition for the entire Greek Church; it was copied, imitated, and retained its value over the centuries, while Origen's dogmatics had long since been condemned" (Lietzmann, 1936).

At the same time, soon after Origen's death, his teaching acquired such prominent opponents as Methodius of Olympus (of Patara), Peter Abselamus (Peter of Atroa), and Eustathius of Antioch. Origen was defended by authors of less significance to the history of the Christian theological thought: the martyr St. Pamphilus of Caesarea (d. 309), who wrote virtually nothing, the historian Eusebius of Caesarea, and groups of anonymous "Origenists" whose various teachings, as completely heretical, only discredited him. St. Epiphanius of Salamis (Epiphanius, *Panarionsive Contra haereses*, 63.1; 64.3), wrote with indignation about such sects; St. Augustine of Hippo also mentioned them (Augustinus, *De haereses*, 42).

In addition to the pre-existence of souls and the doctrine of *apocatastasis*, Origen's opponents accused him of an incorrect conception of the resurrection, as well as of the creation of the world. It should be noted here that the Alexandrian school itself, after Origen, departed from these concepts. However, the main reason for the later accusations of unorthodoxy of the great exegete – excessive allegorization of the text of the Holy Scripture – did not arouse criticism in the third and fourth centuries.

Criticism of Origen and attempts to condemn "Origenism" were made during Origen's lifetime. In 228, Origen was summoned to Greece to address some church issues and was ordained a presbyter in Caesarea while passing through Palestine. The Alexandrian bishop Demetrius perceived this ordination as a gross violation of the subordination to the church. At two local councils in Egypt, he condemned Origen and deprived him of his priestly rank in 231. Having communicated this sentence through an encyclical letter to the other churches, he received the consent of all except for the Palestinian, Phoenician, Arabian, Achaian and Pontic communities (Bigg, 2010). The acts of the Egyptian councils that condemned Origen have not survived.

It remains unclear whether the condemnation was solely due to the personal jealousy of Demetrius (Trevijano, 1975, 476–477), who, according to Eusebius, "succumbed to human weakness" (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI. 8, 4), or whether Origen was already suspected of the unorthodoxy of his views and ideas. He was forced to write "letters to Fabian, the Bishop of Rome, and to many other bishops, about his Orthodoxy" (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI. 36). These letters were later included in Book VI of Apology written by Pamphilus.

The problem of Origenism in the third century had already gone beyond the possible personal and disciplinary-canonical conflicts. It is hardly possible to see in this the "ousting" from the Church of cultured Christians who came from the educated strata of society, as Hermann Langerbeck thinks (Langerbeck, 1957, 68). More likely was the rejection of some specific ideas of Origen by the Egyptian Christian orthodoxy.

The successor of Demetrius in the episcopal see, Pope Heraclas, handed over the management of the catechetical school to Dionysius, later called "the Great", also a prominent representative of the Alexandrian Christian scholarship (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI. 29, 4). He subjected Origen's teaching to significant adjustments. At that, due to his dependence on Origen, many modern researchers consider Dionysius to be the founder of the "ecclesiastical Origenism" (Bienert, 1978, 4). At the same time, Binert does not agree with the assertion that in the school of St. Dionysius "the characteristic tendencies of Clement and Origen continued" (Altaner & Stuiber, 1978, 189). In this regard, the question of the very concept of "Origenism" is raised. From the point of view of the German researcher, Origen's individual contribution to the Alexandrian Christian philosophy was not accepted by his students. "The more fully the phenomenon of Origenism is considered from the spiritual and theological-historical point of view, the more difficult it is to find its prerequisite in the teaching of Origen" (Bienert, 1978, 8). It is equally impossible to call all the authors cited in the anonymous collections compiled against Origen "anti-Origenists" (Bienert, 1978, 17). Many of them attacked individual points of his system, finding in them a brilliant expression of the most dangerous errors.

Dionysius the Great, in his treatise *On Nature* (Περιφύσεως), directed against the atomistic theories of the origin of the world of Democritus and Epicurus (Schölten, 1995, 38, 32), rejects the idea of the eternal world-creation, as well as of the eternal existence of matter in general. This treatise has been preserved only partially in the exposition of Eusebius (Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, XIV. 23–27). Dionysius asserts that there is no endless series of ages-eons, no beginning lessness

and repetition of the world. There is a limited period during which everything must take place and nothing can be claimed to be new.

Origen taught the opposite: he interpreted the concept of the "end of the ages" in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 9:26) as the "end of the year", that is, the world cycle of eons. This point of correction of Origenism is important because it represents the orthodox concept of time. From the point of view of the orthodox theology, the existence of the world is like a ray: it has no end, but it has a beginning. The teaching of Dionysius the Great represents a kind of a summary of that period when imprecise expressions of the Christian faith were widely used, which had a purely polemical orientation and, in essence, revealed the orthodox teaching, but in terms that were later rejected by the Council of Nicaea.

After Dionysius the Great, the glory of the Alexandrian Catechetical school began to fade. It continued to exist as an educational institution and a center of polemical literary activity, but not as a source of new philosophical ideas. The tendency to dogmatize Christian theological thought against the background of the triadological and Christological disputes in itself contributed to the criticism not so much of Origen's ideas as of his approaches to theology, his free way of thinking and reasoning.

The developments of "Origenism" after Origen

The last major admirer of Origen in Alexandria was Didymus the Blind, who headed the Alexandrian Catechetical school longer than anyone else (340–395). He was born in 308 and for his erudition he acquired the nickname "miraculum omnibus" (surprising everyone, marvelous) (Lehmann, 2024, 63). Didymus wrote a book in defense of Origen's "De principiis" (Hieronymus, *Contra Rufinum*, I.). According to Socrates Scholasticus, "he interpreted Origen's books on principles and made notes on them, in which he acknowledged these books as excellent, saying that the learned argue in vain, trying to accuse this man and discredit his writings – they cannot even understand the wisdom of this man" (Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV. 25). Didymus, as a disciple of Athanasius the Great, belongs to the Neo-Alexandrian school, which is characterized by a deep and thorough knowledge of the Scripture, subtle dialectic without the extreme conclusions of rationalism, a clear understanding of dogmas and strict logical consistency. But at the same time, he adhered to almost all of the specific ideas of Origen, except his doctrine of the Trinity, and "belonged to those few theologians of the ancient church who accepted Origen's system in its entirety" (Bienert, 1972, 163).

St. Jerome of Stridon, calling Didymus the Blind his teacher, rejected the "Origenistic" doctrines that he defended. Nevertheless, the activity of Didymus provoked the Origenistic controversies. Thus, at the end of the fourth century, Origenists and anti-Origenists sharply diverged from each other, so that there was no doubt about the importance of the attitude towards Origen. In 399, Theophilus of Alexandria, an admirer of many of Origen's interpretations (Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV. 17) decisively condemned him at the Council under pressure from the monks of the Nitrian desert. In the resolution adopted by the Council, Origen, among other things, was accused of mixing "bitter"

with "sweet" (Bienert, 1978, 48). Thus, the fathers of the Council understood that there was a lot of truth in Origen's teaching but could not forgive him on this basis for everything that led to disputes and schisms in many monasteries.

Methodius of Olympus or Methodius of Patara (260–312), was a fierce opponent and critic of Origen; some historians of the early church call him "an extremely educated man and a remarkable theologian" (Quasten, 1953, 129). St. Methodius came out against the teaching on the eternal creation of the world with the treatise "On Creation" (*Περίγενητών*). The work "Symposium, or on Chastity" (*Συμπόσιον ή περιάγνείας*), which seems to be an imitation of the dialogue "Symposium" by Plato, is a mystical allegory telling how souls who have chosen Christ renounce all the temptations of the world.

In his study of the Alexandrian School, Fritz Lehmann asks why the school had such outstanding opponents, seemingly close to it in spirit, as Methodius of Olympus (Lehmann, 2024, 107). The reason is seen in the fact that the birth of Alexandrinism occurred in contradictions. The systems of Clement and Origen represented the "Christianly modified Platonism", in which the main difference from the teachings of Valentinus and Plotinus regarded the idea of moral freedom. However, the merits in the fight against Gnosticism and pagan philosophy were not enough to prevent the transmission of individual teachings alien to Christianity from sources belonging to the same area. The concept of eternal creation was, in its own way, an alternative version of Gnostic dualism (Lehmann, 2024, 112). In this threat of introducing Gnosticism into the Christian theology, some saw the harm of the Alexandrian School for Christianity. Apparently, this was St. Methodius, who, in opposition to Platonism, introduced some Aristotelian elements into the doctrine of the cosmos, as did St. Basil the Great later. He should not have rejected allegory only because its greatest theorist was Origen. Moreover, in his dialogue *Ξένος* he spoke respectfully of Origen (Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI. 13). But he could not ignore Origen's ideas, which were incompatible with orthodoxy.

The dispute over the dogma of resurrection was particularly important for the religious consciousness of Christians. However, in this matter, Methodius of Olympus either did not understand Origen, or did not read him, or argued not with Origen, but with the Origenists. But St. Methodius, in any case, mentions Origen by name and sets forth his teaching quite accurately. Methodius did not believe that Origen denied the resurrection of the body in general. He imputed to him only that, according to Origen, the soul "resurrects" in "another spiritual body", similar in form, but not in composition, immediately after death (Methodius, *De resurrectione*, XIII). This is precisely Origen's teaching on the resurrection, since Origen considered corporeality a necessary condition for any spiritual creation. The union of the soul with the elements of the earth, after the abolition of everything earthly, makes no sense to him.

The school in Caesarea played a vital role in preserving Origen's theological legacy. Apparently, Origen laid the foundation for the Christian library in Caesarea, which was later collected by Pamphilus. Eusebius used this library when writing his "Historia Ecclesiastica" (Ecclesiastical History). Most likely, Origen's works were stored in this library for a long time. Details of Pamphilus' biography are unknown. He was a friend of Eusebius of Caesarea, who, after Pamphilus' death, adopted his name and became known for his writings as Eusebius Pamphilus.

The contents of "The Apology of Origen", which was written by Pamphilus and continued by Eusebius after his death, are known only very approximately. Most likely, it rejected many of Origen's accusations of heresy, and his doctrine was presented approximately as set out in the dogmatic part of the Introduction to Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History. In general, Caesarean Origenism can best be judged by Eusebius, who was perhaps not the most authoritative, but a faithful representative. Some modern researchers believe that Eusebius himself was something like Origen for his era (Frend, 1984, 479). Be that as it may, with a vague and more than flexible dogmatic position, he represented more of a type of a church politician than a theologian or a philosopher. The Creed he proposed at the First Ecumenical Council embodied the impasse of that freedom of theological thought that Origen preached in the first book of his treatise "De principis". Unable to reconcile extreme positions, this thought was forced to seek a solution in formulas that would satisfy both sides, essentially not resolving the issue at all.

If the greatest ecclesiastical minds of the fourth century more or less correctly interpreted the great legacy of the Alexandrian thinker, it should be noted that Eusebius of Caesarea could rightfully consider his semi-Arian teaching on God as a clarification and specification of Origen's terminology. Probably, Origenism seemed to him the best platform for compromise in the confrontation between Arianism and the Nicene Fathers. At the same time, one cannot deny a certain independence of the first church historian. Although it was believed that Eusebius as an exegete was completely dependent on Origen, in "Eclogae Propheticae" he gives not a purely allegorical, like Origen, interpretation of the Old Testament prophetic texts, but primarily a historical-typological one (Simonetti, 1994, 57–59).

The struggle against Arianism in the fourth century sharply exacerbated the disputes between the supporters and opponents of Origen and inevitably affected the Caesarean school. According to Jacques-François Denis, "almost all the fundamental positions of Arius have an equal correspondence in certain risky positions of the Alexandrian teacher (Origen)" (Denis, 1884, 421). The same French researcher notes that Arius borrowed Origen's Christology, but in its anthropological and angelological aspects. "Arianism was, in truth, nothing other than a moderate and degenerate Origenism, reduced to such an understanding of the Son, which for Origen was only a position on the future soul of Christ" (Denis, 1884, 423). It must be recognized that the theory of the pre-existence of souls made an unambiguous solution to the question of the personality of Christ completely unthinkable in Origen's teaching. From this theory one could deduce not only Arianism, but also any of the Christological heresies of the first centuries.

From the report of Socrates Scholasticus, it can be seen that some Arians were followers of Origen (Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII. 6). Some Origenists were also considered Arians: Eusebius Pamphilus was accused of this by Athanasius the Great, Epiphanius of Salamis, Jerome of Stridon, and Hilary of Poitiers (Gieseler, 1844, 79). However, Origen's guilt in this conflict was not directly recognized by the supporters of orthodoxy. On the contrary, "with the deepest insight, Athanasius could discern, behind the inaccuracies of the countless questions discussed by Origen, the main direction of his thought" (Gieseler, 1844, 424). And this direction in the doctrine of the Logos was nevertheless such that it was impossible to doubt the pre-eternal being of the Word and His personal existence

in the bosom of the Father, when reading Origen. The struggle against Origenism was, in the end, not caused by Arius, but by the mystical sentiments of some Egyptian and Palestinian monks of the second half of the fourth century: they were represented above all by Evagrius Ponticus, the author of "Kephalaia Gnostica" and of other works of the learned asceticism.

The beginning of the persecution of Origenists from the end of the fourth century is associated with the name of St. Epiphanius of Salamis, Bishop of Salamis and Cyprus. He considered Origen among the heretics and wrote about him in his "Panarionsive contra haereses". The immediate reason for the beginning of Epiphanius' anti-Origen campaign was the activities of the monk Atarbius, who in 393 travelled around the monasteries of Palestine, collecting signatures for the condemnation of Origen. It is also known about the condemnation of Origen by Eustathius of Antioch and Pope Anastasius I of Rome in his Easter letter.

All the main points of the accusation were collected by Epiphanius of Salamis (Epiphanius, *Panarionsive contra haereses*, 64) and made up sixty-nine chapters: the doctrine of incarnation, extreme spiritualism in the doctrine of the resurrection, ideas about *apocatastasis* and other accusations. The bishop was supported by Jerome of Stridon, who had previously defended Origen; this caused his polemic with Rufinus of Aquileia. According to modern researchers of Origen, not all of the accusations can be considered justified, since the accusers themselves clearly rushed to their conclusions, "What Origen wrote in the form of an exercise (γυμναστικώς), they understood as said in the form of a teaching (δογματιχώς)" (Crouzel, 1992, 623). However, it should be taken into account that at that time, the assertion about the "gymnastic" purpose of Origen's theological studies could hardly have any weight for the Origenists, who aggravated his peculiar ideas not only in theoretical, but also in practical, monastic and church life. It was precisely practical, "monastic Origenism" that caused criticism and rejection in the church, since it led to disputes and schisms in the monastic environment and aroused suspicions of Gnosticism.

The famous theologian and ascetic monk Evagrius Ponticus (346–399) played a leading role in the spread of "monastic Origenism". He was a disciple of two Egyptian Macariuses, one of whom, Macarius the Great, lived in the desert west of the Delta, and the other, Macarius of Alexandria, lived in the *Kellii* in the Nitrian Desert (Griggs, 1991, 153). It is known that for a certain period, he closely communicated with Basil the Great. In his youth, Evagrius spent a lot of time in Constantinople, where he was actively engaged in refuting various heresies. Some of Evagrius' works have survived to this day in Greek and Syrian. The Origenism of this highly learned monk is subject to varying assessments. According to Henri Crouzel, "Evagrius «scholasticized» Origen's thought, suppressing its internal tension and omitting a significant part of his doctrine, and reducing the rest to a system; and this was the surest way to make it heretical" (Crouzel, 1992, 623). A few months after his death, Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria initiated a persecution of the Origenist monks, which changed the balance of the supporters and opponents of Origen in Eastern monasticism in favor of the latter.

Even after its condemnation and extirpation from most monasteries, the Origenism of Evagrius Ponticus spread a century later among some of the *Kelliotes*, especially in the monasteries of St. Sabbas the Sanctified: the Great Lavra and the New Lavra. Their teaching was expressed mainly in *The Book*

of St. Hierotheus, a work by the Syrian monk Stephen bar Sudael, who "deepened Evagrius' Origenism to the point of radical pantheism". By the time of Nonnius' death in 547, expelled from the monastery by Agapitus, abbot of the New Lavra, in 514, the Palestinian Origenists had been divided into two groups: *the Isochrists* (ἰσοχριστοί), who claimed that all the spiritual beings were originally identical with Christ, and that His only advantage lay in the absence of sin. On the contrary, *the Protoctists* (πρωτοκτιστοί) attributed to Christ superiority over other minds: their opponents called them *Tetradites* because by introducing the Man Jesus into the Holy Trinity, they transformed the triad into a tetrad. These currents of the so-called "Origenists" significantly departed from the theology of Origen and in many ways provoked his conciliar condemnation.

The Council's condemnation of "Origenism"

In 543, the Emperor Justinian the First issued an edict, the necessity of which was caused by the actions of the monks of Palestine against the "Origenists". The edict was issued with the help of the papal apocrisiarius Pelagius and approved by the synclitus, and then, as is assumed, signed by Pope Vigilius and the first archbishops. This is the "Book against Origen", or letter to Mina, Patriarch of Constantinople, accompanied by ten anathemas and fragments from the treatise "De principiis" (*Liber adversus Origenem*, 945–994).

The Emperor Justinian wrote to the bishops of the church:

> We have learned that there are certain monks in Jerusalem who teach and follow the impious errors of Pythagoras, Plato, and Origen the Adamant. They say (we will mention a few of the many) that the intelligent powers were without any number or name, since all rational beings are one by the identity of nature and activity and by the power in God the Word, which comes from union and knowledge; for they, having received the same adornment of Divine love and contemplation, through their change for the worse were clothed in more gross or more subtle bodies, and received names, and thus the heavenly and ministering powers came into being; that even the sun, moon, and stars, belonging to the same unity of rational beings, through a turn for the worse became what they now are; that those rational beings in whom the greater divine degree of love has cooled (ἀποψυχέντα) are called souls (ψυχάς) and are enclosed in grosser bodies, such as ours; that beings who have reached the limit of the extreme degree of evil, have clothed themselves in cold (ψυχροῖς) and dark bodies, and have become and are called demons, and that from the angelic state there is a transition to the soulish state, from the soulish to the demonic and human; that of the whole unity of rational beings only one mind has remained unshaken and unchangeable in Divine love and contemplation, which has become Christ the King, God and man. [They also assert] that there will be a complete destruction of bodies, that first the Lord will leave His body, and then all others; and that again all will return to unity and become minds, as was the case in pre-existence; From this it is clear that the devil himself and other demons, as well as wicked and godless people, together with divine God-bearing men and heavenly powers, will be restored to the same unity; that they will have the same unity with God that Christ has, and which they had in pre-existence, that therefore Christ does not differ at all from other rational beings either in essence, or in knowledge, or in power, or in action (*Liber adversus Origenem*, 546).

The accusations against Origen are set out in more detail and systematically in the fifteen rules of the Fifth Ecumenical Council against Origenism:

1. If anyone advocates the mythical pre-existence of souls and the monstrous restoration (ἀποκατάστασιν) that follows from this, let him be anathema.
2. If anyone says that the origin of all rational beings was incorporeal and material minds without any number or name, with the result that there was a henad of them all through identity of substance, power and operation and through their union with and knowledge of God the Word, but that they reached satiety with Divine contemplation and turned to what is worse, according to what the drive to this in each one corresponded to, and that they took more subtle or denser bodies and were allotted names such that the powers above have different names just as they have different bodies, as a result of which they became and were named some cherubim, some seraphim, and others principalities, powers, dominations, thrones, angels, and whatever heavenly orders there are, let him be anathema.
3. If anyone says that the sun, the moon and the stars, belonging themselves to the same henad of rational beings, became what they are through turning to what is worse, let him be anathema.
4. If anyone says that the rational beings who grew cold in Divine love were bound to our more dense bodies and were named human beings, while those who had reached the acme of evil were bound to cold and dark bodies and are and are called demons and spirits of wickedness, let him be anathema.
5. If anyone says that from the state of the angels and archangels originates that of the soul, and from that of the soul that of demons and human beings, and from that of human beings angels and demons originate again, and that each order of the heavenly powers is constituted either entirely from those below or those above or from both those above and those below, let him be anathema.
6. If anyone says that the genus of demons had a double origin, being compounded both from human souls and from more powerful spirits that descend to this, but that from the whole henad of rational beings one mind alone remained constant in Divine love and contemplation, and that it became Christ and king of all rational beings and created the whole of corporeal nature, both heaven and earth, and what is intermediate, and that the universe came into being containing real elements that are older than its own existence, that is, the dry, the liquid, the heat and the cold, and also the form according to which it was fashioned, and that the all-holy and consubstantial Trinity did not fashion the universe as the cause of its creation but that mind, as they assert, existing before the universe as the creator, gave being to the universe itself and made it created, let him be anathema.
7. If anyone says that Christ, described as existing in the form of God, united to God the Word even before all the ages, and as having emptied Himself in the last days into what is human, took pity, as they assert, upon the multifarious fall of the beings in the same henad and, wishing to restore them, passed through everything and took on various bodies and received various names, becoming all things to all, among angels an angel, among powers a power, and among the other orders or genera of rational beings took on appropriately the form of each, and then like us partook of flesh and blood and became for human beings a human being, [if anyone says this] and does not profess that God the Word emptied Himself and became a human being, let him be anathema.
8. If anyone says that God the Word, consubstantial with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Who was incarnate and became man, one of the Holy Trinity, is not truly Christ but only catachrestically, on account of the mind which, as they assert, emptied itself, because it is united to God the Word and is truly called Christ, while the Word is called Christ because of this mind and this mind is called God because of the Word, let him be anathema.
9. If anyone says that it was not the Word of God, incarnate in flesh ensouled by a rational and intelligent soul, Who descended into hell and the same ascended back to heaven, but rather the mind they mention, Whom impiously they assert to have truly been made Christ through knowledge of the monad, let him be anathema.

10. If anyone says that the Lord's body after the resurrection was ethereal and spherical in form, and that the same will be true of the other bodies after the resurrection, and that, with firstly the Lord himself shedding His own body and [then] all likewise, the nature of bodies will pass into non--existence, let him be anathema.
11. If anyone says that the coming judgment means the total destruction of bodies and that the end of the story will be an immaterial nature, and that thereafter nothing that is material will exist but only pure mind, let him be anathema.
12. If anyone says that the heavenly powers, all human beings, the devil, and the spirits of wickedness will be united to God the Word in just the same way as the mind they call Christ, which is in the form of God and emptied itself, as they assert, and that the Kingdom of Christ will have an end, let him be anathema.
13. If anyone says that there will not be a single difference at all between Christ and other rational beings, neither in substance nor in knowledge nor in power over everything nor in operation, but that all will be at the right hand of God as Christ beside them will be, as indeed they were also in their mythical pre-existence, let him be anathema.
14. If anyone says that there will be one henad of all rational beings, when the hypostases and numbers are annihilated together with bodies, and that knowledge about rational beings will be accompanied by the destruction of the universes, the shedding of bodies, and the abolition of names, and there will be identity of knowledge as of hypostases, and that in this mythical restoration there will be only pure spirits, as there were in their nonsensical notion of pre-existence, let him be anathema.
15. If anyone says that the mode of life of the minds will be identical to that earlier one when they had not yet descended or fallen, with the result that the beginning is identical to the end and the end is the measure of the beginning, let him be anathema *(A History of the Councils of the Church: from the Original Documents*, 1895, 296–298).

The eleventh resolution of the eighth session of the Fifth Ecumenical Council contains anathema on Origen:

- If anyone does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinarius, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, as well as their heretical books, and also all other heretics who have already been condemned and anathematized by the holy, Catholic and apostolic church and by the four holy synods which have already been mentioned, and also all those who have thought or now think in the same way as the aforesaid heretics and who persist in their error even to death: let him be anathema.

It should be noted that the inclusion of Origen in the anathema of the eleventh decree of the Council can be considered a later insertion, since Origen is mentioned last, which clearly violates the chronological order of the listed heresiarchs. However, the anathema on Origen was repeated at the Sixth (Act 18) and Seventh (Act 7) Ecumenical Councils. There is no doubt that the sixth-century controversy over Origenism was caused primarily by the teachings and activities of Evagrius Ponticus.

Despite the condemnation, the interest in Origen's theological legacy has been evident in the Christian world for many centuries and has survived to the present day. This interest has noticeably increased during the Renaissance. Count Pico della Mirandola, a famous Italian Platonist, dedicated a work to the Alexandrian theologian, in which he proved a completely scholastically formulated thesis: "It is more reasonable to believe that Origen was saved than that Origen was condemned". Mirandola subjected the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils to rationalistic criticism and led his readers to the

conclusion that if the Church Fathers really condemned Origen, they were mistaken. The indignation in church circles was strong, but the Pope stood up for the Count, and his initiative remained without consequences.

Another ardent admirer of Origen was Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was captivated by his allegorical writings, seeing in them the future of biblical interpretation in view of the difficulties created by the new critical approach to the Holy Scriptures. In a letter to Johann Maier von Eck on May 15, 1518, Erasmus wrote that he found more Christian philosophy on one page of Origen than on ten pages of St. Augustine. The first printed editions of Origen's works appeared in the sixteenth century. Martin Luther, with his assertion that "in all of Origen there is not a word about Christ" (*In toto Origene non est verbum unum de Christo*) (Molland, 1938, 170) represented the opposite of Erasmus. However, the representatives of the Reformation, especially Melanchthon and his supporters, liked to refer to Origen and allegorical writings in their dispute with Catholics over the transubstantiation of the Holy Gifts.

The positive perception of Origen's spirituality in the West began when the theology of Catholic and Protestant schools was influenced by rationalism and freethinking. Western theology showed a desire to "return to the roots" and comprehend the patristic tradition. Origen, with his freedom of theological thought, was presented as the standard of a thinking Christian. Origen's allegorical approaches attract thinkers of the Roman Catholic Church also because, under the influence of the development of the humanities, the modern perception of the Bible has moved far away from biblical fundamentalism and literalism.

In the conservative circles of the modern Orthodox churches, a critical attitude towards Origen's theology is largely fueled by the growing interest in him in the West. Origenism is identified with Western neoliberalism, extreme rationalism, and is called "Luciferianism". For example, Archimandrite Raphael (Karelin) of the Georgian Orthodox Church notes:

> For a long time, the teachings of Origen, expelled from the Church, were poisonous underground waters that fed various heresies and occult sects. And now they have come close to the walls of the Church and threaten to poison the pure sources of Orthodoxy (Karelin, 2013).

Conclusion

Obviously, Origenism is a unique phenomenon of the life and transformation of a philosophical and theological system over many centuries after the death of its author. Disputes and conflicts within the church regarding Origen's teachings arose long after his death, and his followers deviated in many ways from the meaning and spirit of his theology and philosophy. Most of the accusations against Origen, put forward by Emperor Justinian and by the participants of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, relate more to the later teachings of the "Origenists" than to the Alexandrian theologian himself. At the same time, the immediate cause of the condemnation was not Origen's theological views as such, but conflicts in the monastic environment due to the spiritual practices of the so-called "Origenists", which had little relation to his theology.

On such shaky grounds, the condemnation of Origen seems unfounded. For the same reasons, one could condemn other early, pre-Nicene Fathers of the Church, since from the standpoint of the later orthodox Christian dogmatics, many of them expressed dubious ideas that served as the basis for the emergence of heresies and sects. For example, on the same grounds one could condemn Philo and Clement of Alexandria, on whose theological concepts Origen based his work. At the same time, the influence of non-Christian Hellenistic philosophy in the works of Philo and Clement is noticeably much stronger than in Origen, who "Christianized" the Platonic tradition, which manifests itself in the broad sense of this concept in all the Christian theology, much more radically.

Probably the main reason for the condemnation is that, developing his system in the spirit of free research, Origen recommended his readers to independently study many questions that the Holy Scripture left under the veil of secrecy. This required moral purity and high speculation, since with such a free approach, it was easy to fall into the temptation of deviating from the foundations of the Christian doctrine. At the same time, Origen's own Christian spirituality, as well as his spiritual experience, were forgotten. The dogmatization of the Christian doctrine, caused by the struggle with numerous heresies, as well as giving the church an ideological function based on a strong alliance of imperial power and the church, turned out to be incompatible with Origen's freethinking and with his approaches to theological reasoning and philosophizing.

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