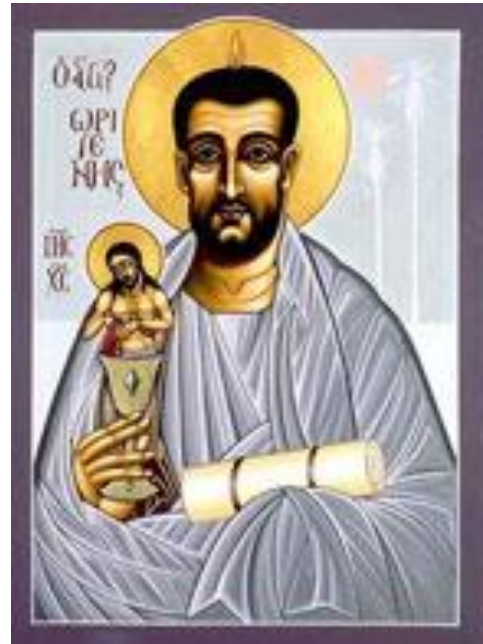


Origen

Origen (c. 185-254 A.D.) (also known as Adamantius) was one of the most influential thinkers of the ancient church-if not always the most understood among them. He was born to Christian parents, having been instructed in the faith initially by his father Leonides. His father, however, was martyred during the persecutions of Septimius Severus at the beginning of the third century and Origen, a young teenager, wanted to follow in his father's footsteps by offering himself too as a martyr alongside his father. His mother prevented him from doing so, however, by hiding his clothes. Origen continued the instruction he had received from his father under the tutelage of Clement who was the head of the school of Alexandria. Ultimately, Origen himself was recruited to conduct catechetical instruction at the age of 18, shortly after Clement had fled due to the persecutions. Origen remained, visiting the prisoners and comforting those who were condemned. This only increased his popularity. His students became so numerous that his Bishop, Demetrius, found the need to restrict his teaching to doctrine alone.



In a move to maintain his independence, Origen sold his library in order to provide at least a modicum of income while he taught during the day and studied Scripture at night. Due not only to his economic circumstances but also to his piety, he engaged in an austere lifestyle, making himself-at least according to some accounts-a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom. This would later prove a source of difficulties when he sought to become a priest, as some would use this fact to disqualify and discredit him from the priesthood. In the meantime, Origen continued to teach and the school continued to grow, to the point where he appointed Heraclas to teach the catechumens so that he could focus his efforts on the baptized who were more advanced in their faith and learning.

His own studies became more focused on the interpretation of Scripture. He founded an academy for higher studies that would continue the work of Pantaenus and Clement who had preceded him at Alexandria in the study and interpretation of Scripture. Many of his writings were published due to his friendship with Ambrose, a wealthy individual who had been converted from Valentinian Gnosticism to orthodoxy by Origen. When a popular uprising occurred in Alexandria, Ambrose was forced to leave, taking refuge in Caesarea where he was joined by Origen. While there, Origen, who was not yet ordained, preached in the local churches at the behest of the bishops in Jerusalem and Caesarea. This did not sit well with bishop Demetrius back in Alexandria. Origen was recalled to Alexandria in 216 A.D., once the unrest there had subsided, but the tension between him and his bishop remained.

Around 230 A.D. Origen once again visited Caesarea while on a trip to Greece that the church in Alexandria had asked him to make. While in Caesarea, he no doubt was asked to preach again. And so he was ordained by the bishop of Caesarea so that his bishop in Alexandria might no longer have a reason to criticize his preaching there. However, Bishop Demetrius in Alexandria saw this as an infringement of his rights as bishop and his role as ecclesiastical overseer of Origen. He convened a

synod that resolved to banish Origen from Alexandria, with a second synod revoking his ordination. Origen left Alexandria and moved to Caesarea where he spent the next 20 years of his life writing and teaching. Towards the end of his life, a new persecution broke out across the entire empire under the emperor Decius in 250 A.D. The persecutions were designed to pressure Christians to deny the faith. Origen, who himself was now over 60 years old, was among those tortured. There is some debate as to whether he gave in and denied his faith or not. Whether or not he actually succumbed to the tortures, the rumored circulated that he had, and his reputation as a faithful son of the Church was negatively affected-although he is favorably represented by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History. Origen died at the age of 69, perhaps as result of his torture.

His writings, which are too numerous to recount here, and his exegetical method, have not only survived but are without doubt the most influential writings and method of interpretation of any ancient Christian writer. Many of his homilies, scholia and commentaries form the basis for the interpretations of subsequent centuries. His Hexapla was a masterpiece of Biblical scholarship that enabled a comparison of the Hebrew and its Greek translation of the Old Testament by arranging 6 texts side by side: Hebrew; a transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek; and four Greek translations: Aquila, Symmachus, the Septuagint and Theodotion. His doctrinal writings include a defense Against Celsus, a pagan intellectual who had mounted one of the most significant arguments against Christianity of the day, but which Origen ably refuted. Perhaps most significant, however, was his work On First Principles (ca 220 A.D.) where he focuses on explicating the three senses of Scripture (literal, moral, spiritual) that he used in interpreting Scripture. While he favored the spiritual, or allegorical, interpretation, Origen's treatment of the literal sense was quite thorough.

By Epiphanius' account, Origen produced over 6,000 works, but most were lost or destroyed because of his posthumous condemnation as a heretic at the 5th Ecumenical Council (553 A.D.). He was condemned because of his teaching on the preexistence of souls and some of his other platonic excesses concerning the heavenly bodies. Further condemnations resulted from his teaching on the Son whom he often subordinated to the Father (and the Spirit to both Father and Son), as well as his very Platonic teaching of apokatastasis which taught that at the end of time all sentient beings, including the devil, will be returned to the One so that there will no longer be any differentiation among beings. While a number of these condemnations appear to have hit the mark, the question remains as to whether all these condemnations were fair in lieu of the entirety of what he taught. Add this to the fact that he was condemned in such a manner that he could not answer the charges, or face his accusers, and one can easily understand the new appreciation that has arisen for one of the great minds of the ancient world, but also the accompanying caution that always seems to lie in the background.

185	Birth of Origen
202	Leonidas- Origen's father; he was martyred in Alexandria during the persecution of Septimius Severus; Origen escapes as a teenage orphan. Condemned to death by the Egyptian prefect Lactus, he was beheaded, and his property seized.
202-231	Origen trained in Greek Literature and Philosophy under Ammonius Saccas
c. 212	Origen Visits Rome.
216	Origen visits Palestine.

220-229	Flourishing of Alexandrian School under Origen, Heraclas, and Demetrius; Origen's first period of literacy activity in Alexandria: Commentary on John.
c. 230	Origen writes: Hexapla and First Principles
231	Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria deposes Origen from the priesthood; brings Catechetical school more under episcopal supervision.
231	Origen invited to Greece, teaches, writes and preaches in church as a simple presbyter.
231	Origen moves from Alexandria to Caesarea in Palestine where he completes his work Hexapla, as well as homilies and biblical commentaries, which make frequent use of Jewish Midrashim exegesis; Gregory Thaumaturgus describes his method of teaching; many church leaders emerge from Origen's teaching; neither Origen nor Plotinus changed teaching when they left Alexandria.
231	Origen succeeded by Heraclas as head of the catechetical school at Alexandria.
232	Origen writes Commentaries on Genesis
235	Origen writes Exhortation to Martyrdom
250	Origen arrested and tortured.
c. 250	Origen writes Contra Celsum, Didascalia.
373-380	Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345-410) resides in Egypt under Didymus; translates Origen into Latin (397ff.)
543	Edict against Origenism
731	Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People echoes many earlier African voices (Origen, Pachomius, Augustine, Cyril) long buried in medieval European texts.

Origen Quotes

- Although Christ was God, he took flesh; and having been made man, he remained what he was, God.
- What each one honors before all else, what before all things he admires and loves, this for him is God.
- The physical voice we use in prayer need not be great nor startling; even should we not lift up any great cry or shout, God will yet hear us.
- Those who believe the Author of Nature to be also the Author of Scripture must expect to find in Scripture the same sorts of difficulties that they find in Nature.
- What good does it do me if Christ was born in Bethlehem once if he is not born again in my heart through faith?
- The human heart is no small thing, for it can embrace so much.
- Free will is the power of choosing good and evil.
- What man of sense will agree with the statement that the first, second and third days, in which the evening and morning were named, were without sun, moon and stars? What man is found such an idiot as to suppose that God planted trees in Paradise, in Eden, Like a Husbandman?
- The discussion of prayer is so great that it requires the Father to reveal it, His firstborn Word to teach it, and the Spirit to enable us to think and speak rightly of so great a subject.
- Now the true soldiers of Christ must always be prepared to do battle for the truth, and must never, so far as lies with them, allow false convictions to creep in.

- It is in our power to stretch out our arms and, by doing good in our actions, to seize life and set it in our soul.
- Conscience is the chamber of justice.
- It can be shown that an incorporeal and reasonable being has life in itself independently of the body... then it is beyond a doubt bodies are only of secondary importance and arise from time to time to meet the varying conditions of reasonable creatures. Those who require bodies are clothed with them, and contrariwise, when fallen souls have lifted themselves up to better things their bodies are once more annihilated. They are ever vanishing and ever reappearing.
- But the Wisdom of God, which is His only-begotten Son, being in all respects incapable of change or alteration, and every good quality in Him being essential, and such as cannot be changed and converted, His glory is therefore declared to be pure and sincere.
- But God, who is the beginning of all things, is not to be regarded as a composite being, lest perchance there should be found to exist elements prior to the beginning itself, out of which everything is composed, whatever that be which is called composite.
- For whatever be the knowledge which we are able to obtain of God, either by perception or reflection, we must of necessity believe that He is by many degrees far better than what we perceive Him to be.
- We are obliged, therefore, to say that whoever speaks that which is foreign to religion is using many words, while he who speaks the words of truth, even should he go over the whole field and omit nothing, is always speaking the one word.
- When anyone prays, the angels that minister to God and watch over mankind gather round about him and join with him in prayer.
- Where there is division, there is sin.
- This opinion, however, is held by most, that the devil was an angel, and that, having become an apostate, he induced as many of the angels as possible to fall away with himself, and these up to the present time are called his angels.