

## *ON FIRST PRINCIPLES*



**ORIGEN**  
**ON FIRST PRINCIPLES**

Being Koetschau's Text of the *De Principiis*  
Translated into English, Together with an  
Introduction and Notes

BY  
G. W. BUTTERWORTH

WIPF & STOCK • Eugene, Oregon

Wipf and Stock Publishers  
199 W 8th Ave, Suite 3  
Eugene, OR 97401

On First Principles  
By Origen, and Butterworth, G. W.  
Copyright©1936 by Origen,  
ISBN 13: 978-1-62032-831-6  
Publication date 12/15/2012  
Previously published by SPCK, 1936

## CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION ... ..	i
	BIBLIOGRAPHY ... ..	xxxvii
	PREFACE OF RUFINUS ... ..	xl

### FIRST PRINCIPLES

#### BOOK I

	PREFACE ... ..	1
I.	THE FATHER ... ..	7
II.	CHRIST ... ..	15
III.	THE HOLY SPIRIT ... ..	29
IV.	LOSS, OR FALLING AWAY ... ..	40
V.	RATIONAL NATURES ... ..	44
VI.	THE END OR CONSUMMATION ... ..	52
VII.	THINGS CORPOREAL AND INCORPOREAL ... ..	59
VIII.	THE ANGELS ... ..	66

#### BOOK II

I.	THE WORLD AND THE CREATURES IN IT ... ..	76
II.	THE PERPETUITY OF BODILY NATURE ... ..	81
III.	THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD AND ITS CAUSES ... ..	83
IV.	THAT THERE IS ONE GOD OF THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS, AND THAT THE GOD OF THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS IS THE SAME ... ..	95
V.	THE JUST AND THE GOOD ... ..	101
VI.	THE INCARNATION OF THE SAVIOUR ... ..	108
VII.	THAT IT WAS THE SAME SPIRIT WHO WAS IN MOSES AND THE REST OF THE PROPHETS AND IN THE HOLY APOSTLES ... ..	116
VIII.	THE SOUL ... ..	120
IX.	THE WORLD, AND THE MOVEMENTS OF RATIONAL CREATURES BOTH GOOD AND EVIL, AND THE CAUSES OF THESE MOVEMENTS ... ..	129
X.	RESURRECTION AND PUNISHMENT ... ..	138
XI.	THE PROMISES ... ..	147

## CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	<b>BOOK III</b>	
	PREFACE OF RUFINUS ... ..	155
I.	FREE WILL ... ..	157
II.	HOW THE DEVIL AND THE OPPOSING POWERS ARE, ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, AT WAR WITH THE HUMAN RACE ... ..	211
III.	THE THREEFOLD WISDOM ... ..	223
IV.	WHETHER THE STATEMENT MADE BY SOME IS TRUE, THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL HAS TWO SOULS ... ..	230
V.	THAT THE WORLD IS ORIGINATED AND SUBJECT TO DECAY, SINCE IT TOOK ITS BEGINNING IN TIME	237
VI.	THE END ... ..	245
	<b>BOOK IV</b>	
I.	THE INSPIRATION OF DIVINE SCRIPTURE ...	256
II.	HOW DIVINE SCRIPTURE SHOULD BE READ AND INTERPRETED ... ..	269
III.	THE PRINCIPLE UNDERLYING THE OBSCURITIES IN DIVINE SCRIPTURE AND ITS IMPOSSIBLE OR UN- REASONABLE CHARACTER IN PLACES, IF TAKEN LITERALLY ... ..	288
IV.	SUMMARY OF DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ... ..	313
	INDEX ... ..	329

# INTRODUCTION

BY

G. W. Butterworth

## I

### LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ORIGEN

'THE greatest teacher of the Church after the apostles'—such was the description of Origen which Jerome adopted from Didymus, the blind theologian of Alexandria, and inserted in the preface to his translation of the great master's *Homilies on Ezekiel*.<sup>1</sup> In the preface to his own work, *On the Meaning of Hebrew Names*, Jerome repeated the tribute, remarking that 'all but the ignorant' recognised it to be true.<sup>2</sup> Later on, when his enthusiasm for Origen had cooled, Jerome found it embarrassing to be reminded of these early laudations. Yet his first judgment was certainly sound, and few who study the works of Origen to-day will be disposed to contest it.

The story of Origen's life is easily accessible to the student,<sup>3</sup> and need not be retold here except in outline. He was born A.D. 185-186, probably at Alexandria, of Christian parents. At the age of seventeen he narrowly escaped death in the persecution of Severus, when his father Leonides was martyred and Origen was with great difficulty prevented from voluntarily sharing his fate. Owing to the departure of Clement from Alexandria in the same persecution the headship of the Catechetical School became vacant, and such was the ability and industry of Origen that he was appointed to fill this post at the age of eighteen. He laboured with increasing success as a teacher, working almost day and night with the crowds, including heretics and non-Christians as well as members of the Church, who attended his lectures or came to consult him privately. About A.D. 215 he visited Cæsarea in Palestine, where his friends Alexander bishop of Jerusalem and Theoctistus bishop of Cæsarea asked him to lecture in church on the Scriptures. Demetrius, patriarch of Alexandria, objected to this, for Origen had not been ordained. In spite of the

<sup>1</sup> See Jerome, *Praef. in Hom. Orig. in Ezech.* (Lommatzsch XIV 4). Rufinus, *Apol.* II. 13 (Migne P.L. XXI. 596).

<sup>2</sup> Rufinus, *Apol.* II. 16 (Migne P.L. XXI. 597).

<sup>3</sup> See Bibliography, p. xxvii. Most of our information comes from Eusebius, *His. Eccl.* Bk. VI.

protests of Origen's friends Demetrius demanded his return to Alexandria, and he obeyed.

During the next period of his life, lasting from twelve to fifteen years, Origen began the literary work which established his fame throughout the whole Church. A wealthy layman named Ambrose, whom he had restored from heresy to the orthodox faith, became his life-long friend, and supplied him with the means to write and publish his books. The first parts of the *Commentary on St. John* were composed then, and following them came the treatise on *First Principles*, a comprehensive investigation of Christian doctrine on a scale never before attempted. It is probable that this work aroused opposition. Origen's mind was such that he could leave no question unprobed; and in the effort to reduce the Church's faith to a single, logical system, based on the Scriptures as they were then understood, he was led into speculations which to simpler folk appeared fantastic and dangerous. Owing either to this, or else to jealousy on the part of Demetrius, or perhaps to a combination of both, the relations between Origen and his bishop became strained and he took advantage of an invitation to visit Greece. Calling at Cæsarea on the way, he was there ordained presbyter by Theoctistus and Alexander. This act caused a final break with Demetrius, who strongly disapproved of it; and when Origen returned to Alexandria at the conclusion of his visit to Greece it became evident that he must seek another home.

Demetrius called a synod of Egyptian bishops, who decided that Origen should no longer be allowed to teach at Alexandria. Soon afterwards he was excommunicated, on what grounds we do not know, except that Jerome tells us they were not doctrinal.<sup>1</sup> But the sentence, though accepted at Rome and throughout a considerable part of the Christian world, had little practical effect outside Egypt; and Origen was gladly received by Theoctistus at Cæsarea, where he became at once an honoured teacher of the Church. Here he worked from A.D. 231 for the rest of his life. In addition to his writing, he expounded the Scriptures to the ordinary church congregations and lectured on deeper theological subjects to educated students. One of these, Gregory, afterwards called Thaumaturgus, or the Wonderworker, has

<sup>1</sup> Jerome *Ep. XXXIII. ad Paulam*. The passage is rhetorical, but it suggests clearly enough that jealousy was the motive for Origen's condemnation, and ecclesiastical irregularities the excuse.

left us, in his *Panegyric*,<sup>1</sup> a striking description of Origen. No higher tribute has ever been paid by a pupil to a revered master. Gregory was a young man, on his way to study law at Berytus, when he met with Origen. At the time it seemed a chance meeting, but afterwards Gregory could only attribute it to divine providence. Origen's charm of manner, his generous friendship, his wide sympathy and consummate wisdom captivated him. For five years he remained at Cæsarea, and when at last he left to return to his native land he felt, to use his own simile, like the prodigal son going from his father's house into the far country. A letter of Origen's reached him shortly after, urging him to dedicate his great gifts to God's service in the ministry of the Church; and in spite of much genuine hesitation Gregory became bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, where he achieved marvellous success.<sup>2</sup>

The literary work of Origen was enormous in extent. Before he left Alexandria he had already written, besides the *First Principles* and five books of the *Commentary on St. John*, two volumes on *The Resurrection*, ten volumes of *Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, a *Commentary on Psalms* i—xxv, eight volumes on *Genesis* and five on *Lamentations*. This activity was continued at Cæsarea. He produced *Commentaries* on almost every book of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. A treatise on *Prayer* was addressed to Ambrose and Tatiana; and when, during the persecution of Maximin (235-237) Ambrose and Protocetus, a presbyter of Cæsarea, were imprisoned, Origen wrote the *Exhortation to Martyrdom* for their encouragement. Of a different character are the eight books *Against Celsus*, which contain a detailed answer to a clever attack on Christianity made by an educated Greek about half a century before. Until he was sixty Origen would not allow his homilies delivered extemporaneously in church to be taken down and published. But he then withdrew his prohibition, and more than two hundred have been preserved, for the most part in Latin translations by Rufinus.

A further proof of his untiring industry, and also of his deep reverence for the Scriptures, can be found in the

<sup>1</sup> For the text see Koetschau, *Das Gregorios Thaumaturgos Dankrede an Origenes*, Leipzig 1894. Eng. trans. by W. Metcalfe, S.P.C.K. 1920, and *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. XX., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> For Origen's letter to Gregory see Koetschau's edition of the *Panegyric* already referred to; also Robinson, *Philocalia*, Ch. XIII. (p. 64). Eng. Trans. in Metcalfe *op. cit.* and *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. X., p. 388.

*Hexapla*. This was a text of the Old Testament, in which six, and sometimes even more, different versions were placed side by side in columns for purposes of comparison. The six versions were the Hebrew, a transliteration of it in Greek characters, and the Greek versions of Aquila, of Symmachus, of the Septuagint and of Theodotion. It took Origen twenty-eight years to accomplish this task, the object of which was to ascertain the true text of the Septuagint. The work extended to fifty volumes, and being too large to be copied it did not survive for long. To-day nothing remains of it but some fragments, not inconsiderable in their total bulk, of the Septuagint.

Origen wrote many letters, and Eusebius was able to collect a hundred of them. Unfortunately all but three have perished. No loss of his writings is so regrettable as the loss of these letters. They would have given us a picture of the man, in his extraordinary attractiveness as a teacher and friend, which his theological compositions cannot be expected to supply. Those that remain are the letter to Gregory Thaumaturgus already referred to,<sup>1</sup> one to Africanus,<sup>2</sup> and portions of a third quoted in Latin by Jerome and Rufinus. The authenticity of this latter is not, however, absolutely beyond doubt. The letter to Africanus was in answer to one which Africanus had written on the subject of the History of Susanna, attached to the book of Daniel in the Septuagint. Africanus urged that it was a late addition and not part of the original Daniel. In quite modern critical fashion he argued that the story was not contained in the Hebrew; that it was different in style from the rest of Daniel; and above all that it contained plays on Greek words which in Hebrew would have been pointless. Origen's reply was to defend the passage. He was unwilling to reject a story which had great value for purposes of instruction and which had always been accepted in the Church. He had consulted Jewish scholars about the puns, but found that they would not commit themselves; there might possibly be Hebrew equivalents or analogies, although they could not produce them. This was Origen's own conclusion. In regard to the alleged difference in style, he replies simply that he cannot see it. Origen was no higher critic. This letter is of prime importance for all who would understand Origen's character, for it shows that he was

<sup>1</sup> See above p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> For the text see Migne P. G. XI. p. 47 ff. Eng. trans. *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. X., pp. 369 ff.

essentially and before all else a Christian pastor, whose main concern was for the spiritual needs of Christians and the traditional faith of the Church. This remains true in spite of the undoubted fact that he was chiefly a teacher of the educated, and that he felt the *simpliciores* needed correction on many points.

Origen's later life at Cæsarea was varied by visits to different parts of Palestine, to Athens and to Arabia. The first Arabian visit was made in order to convince Beryllus, bishop of Bostra, of the falsity of his views on the subject of the Incarnation, and the second to deal with errors concerning the Resurrection. In both cases he was successful. All through his life Origen appears as a defender of orthodox doctrine against heresy; and what is more, as one who could win men to his own viewpoint by persuasion and sympathy. Finally, in A.D. 250, when the persecution of Decius broke out, Origen was imprisoned, probably at Tyre. His friend Alexander of Jerusalem died in prison. Origen himself was cruelly tortured, but bore his suffering with the same undaunted spirit that he had displayed since boyhood. The death of Decius in 251 gave him release from prison. But his health was broken by all that he had undergone, and he died at Tyre in 253, in the seventieth year of his age. His tomb was still to be seen there at the close of the twelfth century.

Origen is one of those figures, none too common even in Church history, of whose character we can say that we know nothing but what is good. He was humble and free from envy, caring neither for power nor wealth. He bore unmerited suffering, from friends and foes alike, without complaint. His life, from beginning to end, was hard and strenuous. His courage never failed, and he died in reality a martyr's death. He loved truth with a sincerity and devotion rarely equalled, and never excelled. Intellectually he stands pre-eminent and alone, towering above the Greek fathers as Augustine towers above the Latins. The wide sweep of his thought is amazing. He contemplates a universe, not small and narrow as was that of many of his contemporaries, but of immense magnitude, world following world in almost infinite sequence, from the dim primeval epoch when God created all souls equal and free, to the far-off event when after countless vicissitudes of degradation and suffering they shall return to their original unity and perfection, and 'God shall be all in all'. It may be that the Church of those days was right in warning her children

off these speculations, and keeping them to the path of a simpler and more definite faith; lest perhaps, through overmuch thinking on problems insoluble to man, weaker souls should find themselves, like Milton's angels, 'in wandering mazes lost'. We of these days, however, cannot help regretting, not without a sense of shame, that this salutary warning should have been accompanied, as it was, by fierce denunciations which are neither Christian nor rational. And yet the fact that Origen stands outside the formal calendar of Christian saints gives him a certain solitariness which is not altogether inappropriate. For it can be said with truth that there is no father of the Church whose works are more profitable for study and whose temper and character are more worthy of our imitation.

## II

### THE FIRST PRINCIPLES. DATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF ITS COMPOSITION

THE treatise on *First Principles* was written before Origen left Alexandria for good in A.D. 231, that is, before he was forty-six years of age. When we seek for a more precise date we encounter difficulties. Our sources of information are the treatise itself and Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI. 14-24. From the first we obtain the following facts.

In Bk. II., Ch. iii. 6 (see p. 91 below) Origen refers to his *Commentary on Genesis I. 1*, as a work already written. On the contrary, in Bk. I., Ch. ii. 6 (see p. 18 below), when mentioning Genesis I. 26, he promises to explain the verse more carefully when he reaches it in his *Commentary*. The verse was in fact expounded in the fourth book of the *Commentary* and Genesis I. 16-18 in the third. As there were eight books of this *Commentary* written before the year 231, it seems probable that the work was begun quite early, especially when we remember that Origen was engaged in several different compositions at the same time.

In Bk. II., Ch. iv. 4 (see p. 100 below) Origen refers the reader to his *Commentary on the Second Psalm*. Evidently this work also was being written contemporaneously with the *First Principles*.

In Bk. II., Ch. x. 1 (see p. 138 below) mention is made of the books on the *Resurrection* which were an early work, being themselves quoted, according to Eusebius, in the *Commentary on Lamentations*.

From these passages all the knowledge we obtain is that the books on *First Principles* were written at a time when Origen was also at work on the Commentaries on *Genesis*, the *Psalms* and *Lamentations*. These were not, however, his earliest compositions, for the books on the *Resurrection* preceded them, as did also the beginning of the *Commentary on St. John*, which he calls 'the firstfruits of my labours in Alexandria.'<sup>1</sup>

The question is, therefore, when were the Commentaries begun? This turns on our view of the chronology of Eusebius in the Sixth Book of his *Ecclesiastical History*. In Ch. 23 of this Book Eusebius implies that Origen began his Commentaries immediately after his return from the interview with Mammæa, the aunt of the Emperor Elagabalus (218-222), and the mother of his successor, Alexander Severus (222-235). Mammæa would have been at Antioch in the year 218, when her nephew visited the city after his victory over Macrinus. But the text of Eusebius appears to date this visit in the time of Alexander. If this were so, it would either be a visit at the beginning of Alexander's reign, of which otherwise we know nothing, or else one that occurred after 231. The latter is very improbable, since Eusebius does not mention Origen's departure from Alexandria until Ch. 26, after giving a long account of his exegetical work in that city in Chs. 24 and 25. While we need not suppose that every detail of Eusebius' chronology is correct, it is evident that he is taking pains to place events in what he regards as their proper order. We may therefore conclude that, although the mention of Alexander in Ch. 21 brings to his mind the invitation sent by this Emperor's mother to Origen, the incident belongs in reality to the reign of Elagabalus, whom Eusebius has mentioned under his true name Antoninus only a few lines previously. It was after 218, then, that Origen began his Commentaries, 'at the urgent desire of Ambrose, who not only employed innumerable incentives in the form of requests and exhortations, but also furnished abundant means for the work'.<sup>2</sup>

The *First Principles* may have been written, therefore, at any date between, let us say, 219 and 230. But in view of the fact that the references contained in it to the commentaries on *Genesis* and the *Psalms* are to quite early parts of these works, we can with reasonable certainty fix the date

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in Ioh.* I. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI. 23.

not later than A.D. 225. Origen would then have been between thirty-five and forty years old when the work was complete.

It is true that some scholars favour an earlier date than this. Schnitzer gives 213 and Preuschen 212-215. These dates can only be maintained on the assumption that the chronology of Eusebius is altogether unreliable. But there is good reason on general grounds for holding to 218 as the time when Origen began his work of writing Commentaries. The first years of his adult life, after the departure of Clement in 202, were so fully occupied with teaching at Alexandria that, as we are distinctly told, he had no time to study the Scriptures properly. Then he called Heracles to take a share in the work of the school, and immediately began his researches on the Biblical text which culminated in the *Hexapla*. This was doubtless a preliminary to the production of the Commentaries. The need for these was only slowly becoming apparent in the Church; although Heraclion the Gnostic had written a Commentary on St. John some forty or fifty years previously, and it was this which in all probability inspired Origen to attempt his own work on the same Gospel. Then, after the first visit to Cæsarea, came the definite request of Ambrose that he should produce Commentaries systematically and on a large scale. With the request was joined, as we have seen, the offer of ample financial help which enabled Origen to accede to it.

The *First Principles* was a work of an entirely different character from the Commentaries. For if these latter were, at least in the form and scope which Origen gave them, new to the Church, the *First Principles* was a fresh departure altogether. Not that it was without precursors. Its originality consisted in its vastness of plan, in the unity of its purpose, and in the genius with which it was executed. Origen would certainly not have regarded himself as a pioneer, still less as a teacher of doubtful orthodoxy. He was the exponent of the Christian tradition to thoughtful and cultivated men; but he would subject that tradition to a far keener examination than his predecessors had ventured upon. De Faye, in his recent work on Origen,<sup>1</sup> has suggested that the *First Principles* was designed to take the place of the *Didaskalos*, or Teacher, which Clement had planned to follow on his *Protreptikos* and *Paidagogos*, but which he was never able

<sup>1</sup> Eugène de Faye, *Origène, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée*. Paris, 1923.

to write.<sup>1</sup> It is more natural to suppose that the *Stromata* and the *Hypotyposes* were intended to be the continuation of the two works just mentioned. But it would appear that Clement himself composed a work on *First Principles and Theology*.<sup>2</sup> It is no longer extant; in fact we have no certain mention of it except in his own works. Perhaps it was never published at all in the strict sense of the word, but used solely for the students to whom Clement lectured in the Catechetical School. This treatise probably dealt with the origin of the world, among other subjects, and it is not unreasonable to regard it as having laid down the lines which Origen afterwards followed. In both works the substance was simply the lectures delivered to students in the School. Zahn has conjectured that a fragment found in John Malalas may refer to this lost work of Clement's. It runs as follows: 'The Syrian, the son of Agenor, was a man of wisdom, who composed his Arithmetical Philosophy in the Phœnician language. He suggested that first principles were incorporeal, that bodies underwent changes, and that souls entered into different kinds of animals. He first expounded these doctrines, as the most wise Clement wrote of them.'<sup>3</sup> The likeness between this and some of the contents of Origen's *First Principles* is at once evident. Even if Zahn's identification is not correct, we can yet see that Origen was dealing with questions which had been raised and discussed in the School before his time, and which were then admitted to be legitimate subjects for inquiry.

### III

#### THE TRANSLATION OF RUFINUS. CIRCUMSTANCES OF ITS COMPOSITION

As I have already remarked, the grounds on which Origen was condemned by the Synod of bishops called by Demetrius in Alexandria were not doctrinal.<sup>4</sup> That is to say, the *First Principles* was not then and there held to be heretical; if it had been, the fact would certainly have come into prominence. None the less, the work could scarcely fail to cause offence, in so far as it came to the knowledge of the

<sup>1</sup> De Faye, *op. cit.* I. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Clem. Alex. *III Strom.* 13, 1 and 21, 2, and *Quis Dives Salvetur* 26, 8 (Stählin II 201, 12 and 205, 11 and III 177, 25, 26).

<sup>3</sup> Zahn, *Supplementum Clementinum*, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. ii.

*simpliciores*, who even in Clement's day were disposed to fear all thinking and to raise the cry, 'Only believe'.<sup>1</sup> As time went on the offence would be likely to increase. For Origen was not a lonely figure in the Church. He had many followers, who admired him not only for his interpretations of the Scriptures but also for his theological doctrines.

The first serious attack was made by Methodius, bishop of Patara in Lycia, in the early years of the fourth century. He wrote vigorously against Origen and his followers in regard to doctrines characteristic of the *First Principles*, viz: the eternity of creation, the pre-existence of souls and the spiritual nature of the resurrection body. At the Council of Nicæa Origen's name and authority do not appear to have been invoked by either side, but in the controversies which followed it was not long before the Arians discovered that some support for their distinctive teaching might be drawn from the considerable degree of subordination which he had predicated of the Son. Others, however, including such great names as Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers, Basil and the two Gregories, while admitting that his works were not wholly free from error, yet regarded him as orthodox in the main and defended him.

Towards the end of the fourth century Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, renewed the attack. In two works, the *Anchoratus* and the *Adv. Hæreses*, he includes Origen among the heretics, on the grounds previously set forth by Methodius and on others dealing with the nature of the Son and his relation to the Father. Origen was charged with teaching that the Son, though generated from the essence of the Father, was nevertheless a creature, bearing the title Son by courtesy and not by right; that the Holy Spirit was also a creature; and that one day the Kingdom of Christ would come to an end and all beings, including the devil himself, would be reconciled and restored to God.

Epiphanius felt it to be not enough to write against Origen; in his old age he travelled to Palestine in order to extirpate, if possible, from the minds of all who were well-disposed towards the great theologian every trace of what he considered to be pestilent heresies. Origen had now been dead nearly one hundred and forty years, and the Church had changed from being a body of persecuted believers into a victorious institution, honoured and privileged by the

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Alex. *Strom.* I. 43 i; (Stählin II. 28, 20).

State. The zeal for repression of which she had once been the victim was now directed against all who would not conform to the type of thought now in favour, a type more rigid than that which was held to be permissible for educated men in the days of Origen. Epiphanius was a true representative of his age in this respect. There were living near Jerusalem at this time Rufinus, who had established a monastery on the Mount of Olives in A.D. 377, and Jerome, who had dwelt similarly at Bethlehem since 386. Both were admirers of Origen; and so, too, was John, bishop of Jerusalem. Not one of these would have consented to be bound by every fragment of Origen's teaching, but they respected his genius and revered his memory. Jerome, in particular, had begun to translate Origen's *Homilies* even before he left Rome. He used Origen's Commentary on *Ephesians* freely in writing his own Commentary on that epistle, borrowing then without question much of Origen's speculation on the angelic beings which he afterwards repudiated. His prefaces, too, as we have seen, speak of Origen in the highest possible terms.

The first act of Epiphanius was to preach, at the invitation of the bishop, in the Church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem. The sermon was a fierce attack upon Origenism directed, as it seemed to those who heard it, against the bishop himself. He followed this up by urging the monks to dissociate themselves from their bishop until he had cleared himself from the suspicion of heresy. Jerome took alarm at this, for he was sensitive to the least imputation of heresy, and adopted the attitude recommended by Epiphanius. Rufinus, however, was the leading member of a group of clergy who supported the bishop. This caused the first breach between Jerome and Rufinus; but it did not last long, for after Epiphanius had returned to Cyprus the two friends were reconciled, and Jerome returned to communion with his bishop.

It is clear, however, that there still remained a diversity of feeling and outlook upon the subject of Origen which was likely to cause trouble if ever the dispute should arise again. To us Jerome appears to have shown extreme timidity in the face of an accusation which was not directed against him personally and which he could easily have rebutted. We must remember, on the other hand, that a charge of heresy, if substantiated, was then becoming a serious matter for any man of prominence in the Church, involving perhaps loss of liberty, or even of life itself.

Jerome, too, was a Latin, and had little sympathy with the Greek habit of thinking out problems. Anyway it is certain that, in spite of all he had previously written in Origen's praise, he determined that for the future he would say or do nothing to compromise himself.

There the matter might have ended, had not Rufinus returned to Italy in 397. He had read and lectured in Greek for many years, and was familiar with the writings of the early Greek fathers, including Origen. He brought back with him many manuscripts of these works. They were then unknown in Italy. Even Pope Anastasius, when asked a little later on to condemn Origen, while readily agreeing to do so on the basis of a few extracts from the *First Principles*, yet admitted that he did not know either the author or his writings. But there was a certain friend of Rufinus, named Macarius, who had heard of the *First Principles* and was anxious to read it, hoping to find in it some arguments to help him in a controversy in which he was then engaged with the *mathematici*, or pagan astrologers. He had dreamed of a ship coming to Italy laden with the spoils of the East; and when Rufinus appeared he interpreted the dream as an indication of his return and begged him to translate the work, for he was unable himself to read it in Greek. Rufinus hesitated, knowing well the odium which would gather round any man who seemed to be friendly towards Origen. Finally, however, he consented, and produced the version which is now before us.

Rufinus did not believe that the Greek text which had come down to him was in every detail authentic. He could not imagine a time when Christian thought had been more fluid than it was in his own day; and although he was well aware that Origen was a bold thinker, he felt it to be quite impossible that he should have differed on any material point from the theology of the fourth century. That the text of the *First Principles* did so differ was plain. It was daily being quoted as evidence of its author's heresy. Rufinus maintained, without any doubt in all honesty, that the text had been tampered with by heretics. To prove this he translated and published with his version of the *First Principles* the first book of the *Defence of Origen*, a work composed by Pamphilus the martyr in collaboration with Eusebius of Cæsarea, the Church historian.<sup>1</sup> The object

<sup>1</sup> S. Pamphili Martyris *Apologia pro Origene*, Migne P. G. XVII. 539.

of this work was to refute the attacks made on Origen by Methodius and others.

Jerome asserted afterwards that this book was written by Eusebius and not by Pamphilus; but this is contradicted by the statement of Eusebius himself and by the later testimony of Photius, who tells us that Eusebius and Pamphilus wrote the first five books together and that the sixth was composed by Eusebius alone after the martyr's death.<sup>1</sup> Rufinus attributes the first book to Pamphilus alone; and in this he was probably correct, since in it the name of Pamphilus is prefixed, in dialogue fashion, to all the paragraphs which state the objections made to Origen's teaching or introduce his replies, the latter being presented largely in Origen's own words. Moreover at the beginning of the book the first person singular is used. The authority of Pamphilus the martyr was very great, and it was a natural method of protection for Rufinus to make the *Defence of Origen* known to the Latin world as a preliminary to the publication of the *First Principles*.

The *Defence*, so far as we have it in Rufinus' translation, opens with five chapters wherein Origen's faith in regard to the Church tradition, the nature of heresy, and the doctrines of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, together with the Incarnation is defined by quotations made from his own writings. These chapters are wholly orthodox; for, as we have already said, Origen counted it his business to defend the Church tradition and to explain its meaning to intelligent men. Pamphilus sums up this section by exclaiming: 'What can be so correct as this, what so true, what so catholic, what more useful for general instruction even among those who rage against him with bitter enmity, what so entirely free from blame?'

We are, however, almost completely dependent upon Rufinus for our knowledge of what actually it was that Origen said and Pamphilus praised. Only in a few cases do we possess the Greek which enables us to check him, and when we can do this the result is not satisfactory. For instance, in Ch. IV., on the Holy Spirit, Rufinus writes as follows: 'But for us there is one God the Father, from whom are all things. There is therefore one true God who, as I said, is the fount of deity, and one Christ the maker of christis, and one Holy Spirit who makes the Holy Spirit in the soul of every saint.' Now Origen's own statement, as

<sup>1</sup> Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 118.

Pamphilus quoted it in Greek, was to the effect that the Father's work embraces the whole universe, the work of the Son extends to rational creatures only, and the work of the Spirit is confined to the saints. The Son is therefore 'less' than the Father, and the Spirit 'still less' than the Son. It could not have been by accident or by a mere habit of loose translation that these offensive phrases were avoided; the omission was deliberate. When Pamphilus quoted this passage of Origen, clearly he did not realise that it might be called heretical. This point weakens considerably the contention of Rufinus that the text of Origen had been corrupted by heretics; if anything had changed it was the authorised theology of the Church.

The *Defence* goes on to enumerate nine charges made against Origen's teaching and to give answers to them in his own words supplemented by the explanations of Pamphilus. Most of the charges are easily disposed of; for they relate to questions which are satisfactorily dealt with in the *First Principles*, even though Origen's statements may sometimes lend themselves to perversion by hostile critics. For instance, some affirmed that he denied the literal truth of Scripture and the events of our Lord's earthly life. But Origen's teaching is quite clear: he only denied the literal truth in such stories as the Garden of Eden and the Fall, or others containing similar anthropomorphisms, where it seemed to him to be incredible. Ordinary historical facts he accepted readily enough, although often he did not consider them important or even edifying. The charge, therefore, while not wholly unintelligible, admits of a reasonable answer.

A more serious charge is that Origen denied the reality of punishment in the next life, because men would then have no bodies. Again, Origen's doctrine on these questions, though it ran counter to the gross materialism of many in his time, is both rational and scriptural. He found the term 'spiritual body' in the Scriptures and held fast to it. The body, he contended, must be suitable to the sphere in which it has to live, and in a spiritual world we shall need spiritual bodies. These would be the same bodies which we have now, because they would be garments of the same personality; but they would not resemble the earthly body in appearance or structure or function. Punishment, too, must be disciplinary and remedial in character and not a mere infliction of pain, which would be unworthy of God. All this is clearly and intelligently argued in the *First*

*Principles*; in fact, it proceeds directly from Origen's idea of God and forms the basis of his whole system of theology. But it lay open to attack by men whose ideas of heaven were framed after the pattern of things on earth. Pamphilus spends much space in answering this charge on Origen's lines. Once again, however, we have to complain of a serious mistranslation by Rufinus. He deliberately omits the phrase 'spiritual bodies', found both in Origen and in Pamphilus. He could not possibly have claimed that heretics had inserted this in the text, when its source was so obvious. It was omitted in the hope of conciliating his Latin readers.

A further charge is that Origen held false opinions about the soul. Here, too, Pamphilus feels the need of defending him at some length. The Church, he says, had not spoken decisively on this question. If it had, then Origen might have been deserving of blame; but in fact many different opinions were held by Christians about the origin and nature of the soul. Moreover, here as elsewhere, Origen put forward his views for discussion, and not as settled dogmas. The last charge of all, and perhaps the most difficult one to counter, is that Origen taught the doctrine of transmigration of souls. Now any reader of the *First Principles*, if he takes into consideration, as he must do, the irrefutable evidence of Jerome and the Emperor Justinian, will be forced to admit that Origen at least allowed the possibility of transmigration. That is putting the case at its lowest. Pamphilus does not quote the evidence of the *First Principles*. He relies on passages from the *Commentary on St. Matthew*, in which Origen argues against the doctrine. We possess the Greek text of this passage, so that there can be no doubt of its genuineness. The argument runs as follows: if such transmigration should occur, it would happen, by hypothesis, as a punishment for sin. What then could prevent the process from going on infinitely, and destroying the possibility of a time when 'heaven and earth shall pass away'? If, on the other hand, men should at last, one by one and through infinite ages, become purified so as no longer to need bodies, what then becomes of the statement of Scripture, 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?' This reasoning is very different from that in the *First Principles*. It is possible that Origen's opinion had changed in the intervening years. Or he may have felt that more caution was needed in a commentary which would circulate widely among all classes

of Christians, than in a treatise which reflected for the most part the discussions between himself and his students in the Catechetical School.

One result of this examination of Pamphilus' *Defence* is to put us on our guard when reading Rufinus. Pamphilus, enthusiastic though he was, had felt it needful to exercise caution and to make certain admissions when defending Origen. Rufinus did not dare to let even Pamphilus speak for himself. What then would he do with Origen? He is perfectly candid with his readers, at least in a general way. He would alter Origen where he thought him wrong; not arbitrarily, of course, but in accordance with statements of an orthodox character to be found elsewhere in his writings. But to justify himself still further, Rufinus wrote a small pamphlet on '*The Corruption of the Works of Origen*' and attached it to the translation of the *First Principles*.<sup>1</sup> Here he gives more fully his reasons for altering the text. They are as follows:

- (i) *It was impossible to suppose that so intelligent and learned a man as Origen should have contradicted himself. A difference between works written in youth and old age might be natural, due either to forgetfulness or to change of opinion in the interval. But Origen exhibits contradictions in the same passage, almost in successive sentences.*

This argument is answered by Jerome in his Apology, Bk. II., Ch. 16. Rufinus brings forward but one instance, namely, that in the same passage Origen says that the Holy Spirit is of the divine essence and also numbers him among created beings. This is from the *First Principles*. Jerome points out that Eusebius and Didymus had both accepted the offensive passage as orthodox. Neither Didymus, who was himself a commentator on the *First Principles*, nor Eusebius, had ever complained that the text had been interpolated by heretics. What Didymus said was that, to use Jerome's words, 'simple men like us' did not understand Origen's real meaning, which was quite orthodox. Of course it was, we must agree. For Origen accepted the Church tradition that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were consubstantial. What he had to account for was the order of the Persons, and in particular the priority of the Father. If Origen's solution of the problem was wrong, the proper course was to propose a better one.

<sup>1</sup> *Liber de adulteratione librorum Origenis*, Migne P. G. XVII. 615.

Jerome and Rufinus both preferred to leave this problem unsolved and to be content with the acceptance of a formula. But they dealt with Origen in different ways, the one calling him a heretic, the other defending him by imputing his reasonings to heretics.

- (ii) *Other writers of unquestioned orthodoxy had had their works corrupted by heretics; as for instance Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria and Dionysius of Alexandria.*

In regard to Clement of Rome Rufinus was misled by the universal opinion of his day that the *Recognitions* were his work. As for the others, the natural inference is, as Jerome clearly sees, that (supposing the incriminated passages to be heretical) the authors may have made mistakes; or that incautious statements may have been allowed before the time of Arius but carefully scrutinized after; or that unskilful copyists may have changed the text inadvertently. We need not spend longer on this.

- (iii) *Origen himself had complained, in a letter still extant, that his works had been corrupted by heretics.*

The letter of Origen, which Rufinus here professes to translate, is of great interest. It deals only with one specific point, the possibility of the devil's salvation. Origen denies that he ever asserted this; only a madman could have done so. A discussion had taken place between himself and a heretic, of which notes had been made and afterwards published. Origen declares that he had never given the matter a second thought until it was brought to his notice that an incorrect version was being circulated. He discovered on inquiry that the notes had been revised for publication with the object, as the author calmly admitted, of 'improving' them. The letter, as given by Rufinus, goes on to speak of a forged work which had been published under Origen's name and which contained heretical statements. The author of this was discovered and his work condemned as a forgery in his own presence by a group of Origen's friends.

The only point we need consider here is that relating to the devil's salvation. According to the *First Principles* Origen did assert that the devil would at last be saved. It is indeed an essential part of his system of thought. Again and again he returns to his favourite text, 'that God may be all in all'. Why then should he have denied it? We should be tempted to suppose that the letter is not authentic, but

for the fact that it was available to Jerome also and must therefore have been one of the collection of Origen's letters known then to all the Greek world. But again Jerome gives us at any rate a partial answer to the argument of Rufinus. He proves that the latter has not presented the letter fairly. He has omitted the first part, which explains the second. Jerome translates this first part for us.<sup>1</sup> It is a bold and outspoken defence of himself by Origen against Demetrius of Alexandria and others who had condemned him. The contents are quite in Origen's manner. The Scripture itself declares, he says, that leaders and princes may go wrong; this is now being fulfilled. Yet we must not hate them, but rather pity and pray for them. We must not speak evil of any man. Michael would not even rail at the devil, but left it to God to rebuke him. Now, Origen continues, not only gross sinners, such as adulterers and thieves, shall be shut out of the kingdom of God, but evil speakers too. So careful is he, therefore, in view of this warning, that he will not even rail at the devil. But as a result of this care, some have charged him with asserting the salvation of the devil, which only a madman would assert.

By suppressing the first part of the letter with its inconvenient criticism of bishops, and also the definite statement of Origen that he will not rail even at the devil, Rufinus has given a false impression of the letter, in spite of the superficial accuracy of such portions as he quotes.

Jerome goes on to relate another fact which bears upon this question. There was current a dialogue between Origen and Candidus, a Valentinian. Candidus asserted that the devil was of a wholly evil nature and could not be saved. Origen maintained that it was by his own fault and not by his evil nature that the devil fell, and that he might have been saved if he had so willed. Candidus turns this into an admission that the devil will be saved, which Origen denies.

It is clear from all this that what Origen was forced by the logic of his thought to assert was the theoretical possibility of the devil's salvation. In no way could he avoid this. When he is dealing with ultimate problems, as in the *First Principles*, he is certainly carried beyond this theoretical possibility. In the last resort, when God is 'all in all', there is no room for a devil as such. Must we then agree with Denis, that this letter, if genuine, would prove 'that

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, *Apol.* II. Chs. 18, 19.

Origen was weak enough to retract . . . not only what he had thought, but what he continued to think'?<sup>1</sup> We need not go so far as this. When working out a speculative theology, as in the *First Principles*, an author must be allowed freedom to indicate, not dogmatically but suggestively for discussion, where his principles appear to lead. Practical teaching to an uneducated multitude is another thing. More care would be needed then, and a bold teacher ought not to be pressed to reduce all his speculative conclusions to categorical dogmas. Origen may quite justly have claimed this protection, especially if it be the case, as he is said to have asserted in his letter to Fabian of Rome, that the *First Principles* was published in the beginning by Ambrose without his knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

We need not deal with the other examples given by Rufinus of the corruption of writings by heretics. They add nothing to the force of his argument. He has certainly not established any right to give the world a garbled version of Origen's work. On the contrary, he has laid himself under the suspicion that fear of heresy is with him a stronger motive than love of truth. Both when translating Pamphilus and when quoting Origen's letter he has shown himself willing to alter the text, or to omit portions of it, on no evidence whatever, and for no purpose except to conciliate the prejudices of his readers and to give greater authority to his translation. But if he uses so much freedom in framing this preliminary defence of his work, we must clearly examine the translation itself with critical eyes. For our desire is simply to discover what Origen taught. Only by adhering strictly to the truth can we rightly estimate his services to the Church and his position in the development of Christian doctrine.

#### IV

##### THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JEROME AND RUFINUS

BESIDES fortifying himself by the publication of the two abovementioned introductory essays Rufinus used another weapon of defence. In his own preface he referred in glowing terms to the previous translations of Origen's works made by Jerome. Now when we recall the disturbance at

<sup>1</sup> Denis, *De la Philosophie d'Origène*, p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome, *Ep. lxxxiv ad Pamm. et Ocean.* 9.

Jerusalem only a few years before, when Jerome had openly taken his stand against Origen, we can hardly acquit Rufinus of guile in making these allusions. Jerome, according to him, 'had inspired every one with a deep longing to read Origen and study him earnestly'. He had promised to continue his own translations, but the desire to be a 'father of the word' and not a mere translator had conquered him, and he was now much too busy with his own compositions. Consequently Rufinus had consented to 'take up the work which was begun and approved by him', although he confesses that he cannot bring to it an ability comparable with that of Jerome. He goes on to describe the method of his translation, and to declare that it was the same method as that followed by Jerome himself, who had so 'smoothed over and emended' any passages likely to cause offence, that 'a Latin reader would find in them nothing out of harmony with our faith'.

All this was strictly true, but seeing that Jerome had by this time changed his opinion about Origen we cannot be surprised that he took exception to Rufinus' statements when he heard of them. For their effect was at the very least to represent him as acquiescing in every doctrine of Origen which Rufinus had thought fit not to remove from his translation. In the quarrel at Jerusalem Rufinus had taken an opposite side to Jerome, as we have seen. That is to say, he was more liberal-minded than Jerome in regard to what was or was not permissible as speculation for purposes of discussion. If, knowing Jerome as he did, Rufinus really thought that he would take his eulogy as a sincere compliment, he must have been singularly dull. We must admit, however, that in his subsequent *Defence* he does protest most strongly that his praise was sincerely meant.

The translation of the *First Principles* soon came into the hands of Jerome's friends in Italy, of whom Pammachius, Oceanus and Marcella were the chief. They were horrified by some of the doctrines still remaining in it and by the implied suggestion that Jerome would raise no objection to them. They sent him, therefore, a copy of the work with a request for information. Jerome replied by making a faithful Latin translation of the whole of the *First Principles* and sending it to Pammachius with a covering letter.<sup>1</sup> He admits that he had once praised Origen

<sup>1</sup> i.e., *Ep. lxxxiv ad Pamm. et Ocean.*

for his good work ; he would still do so if others would not praise his errors. Origen's doctrines on the nature of the Son and the Holy Spirit, on the pre-existence of souls, on the resurrection, and on the ultimate restitution of all things, when it will be 'the same for Gabriel as for the devil, for Paul as for Caiaphas, for virgins as for prostitutes', were poisonous heresies. No Latin writer had ever yet ventured to translate his works on the *Resurrection* and on *First Principles*, or the *Stromata* and the *Commentaries*, but only the *Homilies*, or popular addresses, which were harmless. The assertion that Origen's works had been corrupted by heretics Jerome denies; both Eusebius and Didymus had taken for granted that Origen held the incriminated views. Moreover, Jerome cannot believe that Pamphilus wrote the first book of the *Defence*; it must be by Eusebius. If, however, Pamphilus did write it, his martyrdom would wash away the fault.

Jerome's defence was in the main a reasonable one. He had a right to change his opinion of Origen if he so wished. But he was not candid enough to confess that in his previous writings he had adopted as his own without question some at least of the doctrines which he was now condemning, namely, the fall of souls from a heavenly state into human bodies and the subjection of Lucifer and the other opposing powers to the rule of Christ in his future kingdom. Moreover, he cannot restrain his pen from making remarks about Rufinus which are both spiteful and untrue. The letter, however, was not addressed to Rufinus and presumably need never have come to his knowledge. Jerome had enclosed with it a short letter for Rufinus, which Pammachius was asked to deliver. This was written in a different strain. It expostulated with him for the language he had used in the preface to the *First Principles*, but it also contained expressions of esteem and friendship which should have been sufficient to avert a quarrel between the two. Unfortunately Pammachius, by what we can only regard as a gross breach of faith, did not deliver this letter. Instead, he and his friends published Jerome's letter to him, and when this came to the knowledge of Rufinus, he felt it necessary to record his own case in the form of a lengthy *Defence*.

The *Defence* enumerates, as was inevitable, the instances in which Jerome in his early days had freely accepted Origen's opinions. If Jerome had frankly admitted a change of views all this would have been irrelevant; but, as we have seen, he shrank from doing this. Little exception can be

taken to the tone of Rufinus' statements; he writes warmly, but in a Christian spirit. The facts were proved beyond dispute from Jerome's own writings; he had actually used many passages of Origen which he now objected to. But over and above this there emerge from the discussion three points which reveal the different tempers of the two men. A consideration of these will help us to view the controversy in a true light.

First, Rufinus comments on Jerome's lack of charity. He is aware of his opponent's literary skill, that he can so handle words as 'to make one whom he wishes to injure and to wound appear to have received neither wounds nor injuries'. 'Any idle gossip stirs him up to fault-finding and vituperation.'<sup>1</sup> 'I will pardon him then, though he never pardons others, but condemns them for their words without any thought of charity.'<sup>2</sup> As for himself, he adds at the close: 'I ask for pardon, if I have handled the matter too roughly'.<sup>3</sup> Jerome's great services to the Church are sadly marred by his dogmatic and overbearing manner and by the use of his brilliant gifts for attacking those whom personally he disliked.

Again, Rufinus upholds the position that Christians are free to discuss questions even though they may not be able to reach the complete truth about them. Jerome and the world to which he belonged appear to have ruled out all discussion whatever. They are aware of no difficulties; they are troubled by no problems. It is important to remember that Rufinus, whose own belief was severely orthodox, should have been ready to defend Origen on this point, as Pamphilus had done before him. When questions are raised which the Apostle does not plainly answer, then, he says, 'we either say that we do not know, or that we stand in doubt; and that since we do not get a full understanding but only a hint of his meaning, we do not declare but suggest the explanation'.<sup>4</sup> It is evidence of a genuine feeling for truth that Rufinus should have left as much as he did of the inquiries of Origen, whereas Jerome regarded them as wholly illegitimate and productive of harm.

The third point is but a particular instance of the second. Origen's only motive in ascribing a pre-existence to souls was to defend the justice of God. The different surroundings into which men were born was to him a real difficulty.

<sup>1</sup> Rufinus, *Apol.* I. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rufinus, *Apol.* I. 31 (a).

<sup>3</sup> Rufinus, *Apol.* II. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Rufinus, *Apol.* I. 39.

There is probably no other Christian father who has a heart so tender, so sensitive to human suffering, as Origen had. Jerome had once followed Origen in his explanation of the problem, but afterwards, terrified by the possibility of being thought a heretic, he contemptuously rejected all such speculations. They were, he said, of pagan origin. Rufinus answered him in words that are dignified and memorable: 'Neither you (i.e. Jerome) nor Origen are forthwith to be reckoned among pagans if, as you yourself have said, it was with the desire of vindicating God's justice and of answering those who assert that all things are governed by chance or fate, with the desire, I say, of showing that the providence of God which controls the universe is just, that you declared that each soul has acquired the causes of its inequality from its movements and feelings in that previous existence which it had in the heavenly places; or even if you said that it was in harmony with the good and unchangeable and simple nature of the Trinity that every creature should at the end of all things be restored to the original condition in which it was created at the first, and that this would happen after long punishments continuing through ages of time, which God inflicts on each soul not in the spirit of one who is angry but of a healer, whose admonitions are without fault, and who because his object is to restore and to heal will at last bring his punishments to an end. How far these words are true God must judge; but they seem to me to contain little impiety against God, nor any paganism, especially when they are spoken with the desire and intention of finding some argument by which the justice of God might be vindicated.'<sup>1</sup> The man who could write thus, at considerable risk to his reputation, deserves our respect and gratitude.

Jerome's friends in Italy sent him notes of the chief points of Rufinus' attack. His brother Paulinian saw a copy of the work and, committing some portions to memory, communicated them to Jerome in Palestine, whither he was returning after some years' absence. From these two sources Jerome obtained sufficient information to write two books of a counter *Defence*. His one anxiety is to clear himself from any suspicion of heresy. But he will not see that the only satisfactory way of doing this is to admit that, on his own principles, he had formerly made a mistake in including Origen's opinions in his works. He says that

<sup>1</sup> Rufinus, *Apol.* II. 9. (2).

these opinions were given side by side with others, for the reader to choose from, and that sometimes he had indicated his dissent from them. 'What is my fault?' he naively asks. The fault was that, if the opinions in question were poisonous heresies, he should not have inserted them in his *Commentary on Ephesians* without the slightest warning to the reader that they were such. If on the other hand they were permissible speculations he had no ground of complaint against Rufinus for translating them into Latin.

A copy of these two books was brought to Rufinus by the captain of a trading ship which was carrying goods to Aquileia. Rufinus was disposed to reply still further, but the Christian world was now becoming scandalized at this unedifying controversy, and Chromatius the bishop of Aquileia prevailed upon him to desist. Yet he sent back a letter to Jerome which was far from friendly in tone. He intimated, apparently, that he could have published if he had so desired other facts which would have destroyed his adversary's reputation for ever. Jerome answered with a third book of his *Defence*. It adds little to the others. One characteristic sentence may be quoted: 'We were once zealous in our praise of Origen; let us be equally zealous in condemning him now that he is condemned by the whole world.'<sup>1</sup> With this may be compared the utterance of Gelasius, in regard to authors whose works were prohibited to Latin readers after the Roman Council of A.D. 494. 'Rufinus, a highly religious man, wrote many books on ecclesiastical matters and certain commentaries on the Scriptures; but since the blessed Jerome controverted him on certain points concerning freewill, we must hold the same belief as the aforementioned Jerome; and this not only in the case of Rufinus, but of all persons whatever whom that man of faith and piety has censured.'<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the mistakes of Rufinus may have been, he could have stood little chance of obtaining a just hearing in the face of such a spirit as this.

## V

### CHARACTER OF RUFINUS' TRANSLATION

THE foregoing chapters have made it clear that we must look back upon Rufinus with two minds. First, we owe

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, *Apol.* III. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Migne, P. G. LIX. 173.

him deep gratitude that he undertook the translation of the *First Principles* at all. He saw what a magnificent work it was, when most of his contemporaries were content to throw it aside as worthless. Apart from Rufinus we might have remained almost in the dark about its contents, and a whole world of Christian speculation characteristic of one of the most vigorous and brilliant periods of Church history would have been lost to us. And we must admire his courage; for with all his care to cut out or soften down the worst audacities of Origen he yet left enough to bring him into deep suspicion with the narrower minds who then controlled the Church in the west. On the other hand, the fact must be faced that we cannot trust him. We have already seen how he will alter anything that appears to him to need alteration, on no other evidence than his own subjective impression. His most recent defender, M. Gustave Bardy, says that 'the gaps and alterations which we discover here and there do not astonish us, for they were announced and foreseen'.<sup>1</sup> But the truth is that no one who had nothing to go upon except the innocent-looking prefaces of Rufinus would have the least conception of the scope of the changes which he made. There are not only long additions and omissions, but mistranslations, some deliberate, some perhaps unconscious, paraphrases in which the point and force of the original is completely lost, and countless minor alterations which must be studied in detail before their cumulative effect can be appreciated. After gathering every Greek fragment that can be found there is less than one-sixth of the original work available by which to check Rufinus. Included in this proportion are the most controverted, and therefore the more seriously altered, parts of the work. But even in the other parts, where fewer disputed points of doctrine occur, we can never be quite sure that we have Origen's thought as he himself expressed it. The sharp edges of the Greek have been rubbed smooth by the rhetorical prose of Rufinus, and even with a full knowledge of such other works of Origen as have come down to us in the Greek it is often impossible to reconstruct the original with any certainty.

All the fragments, whether in Greek or in Latin, that are available for checking Rufinus have been known to scholars for long past. But they have not been fully utilised.

<sup>1</sup> Gustave Bardy, *Recherches sur l'histoire du texte et des versions latines du De Principiis d'Origène*, p. 206, Paris, 1923.

The publication of Dr. Paul Koetschau's text of the *First Principles* in 1913 marked a new era. He placed in the body of the text all the material we possess which can justly claim to belong to Origen; and not only that, but he also quoted in footnotes many passages from Jerome and other writers which are indispensable for reference. This work renders all previous texts of Origen out of date, and consequently makes it imperative to read with caution all previous descriptions of his theology. 'It is not too much to say,' comments M. de Faye, 'that the confidence which has always been placed in these Latin versions renders obsolete every exposition of Origen's theology which saw the light before M. Koetschau's edition of the *De Principiis*.'<sup>1</sup> In the following translation I have followed Koetschau's reconstruction throughout; not simply because it is the only one we possess, but also because in the course of many years' reading of the text I have seen no reason to differ materially from his conclusions. I acknowledge with much gratitude all the help I have received from this admirable work.<sup>2</sup>

Koetschau's Introduction, pp. lxxxviii-cxxxvii, contains a complete examination of Rufinus' translation and a list of the passages available for correcting it. The reader who wishes to study the matter in detail will do well to turn to this. Here, however, I will make a brief summary of the material referred to.

i. The *Philocalia*,<sup>3</sup> a collection of extracts from Origen's works made by Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, contains Bk. III. Ch. i and Bk. IV. Chs. i-iii of the *First Principles*. These form by far the greater part of the Greek fragments now extant.

ii. The treatise or letter sent by Justinian to Mennas, Patriarch of Constantinople, before the 2nd Council of Constantinople, A.D. 553.<sup>4</sup> This letter contains numerous extracts from the *First Principles*, which formed the basis on which Origen was condemned at the Council. Whether this condemnation took place at the Council itself, or pre-

<sup>1</sup> Eugène de Faye, *op. cit.* i. p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte. Origenes Werke, De Principiis, herausgegeben von Dr. Paul Koetschau. Leipzig 1913.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Philocalia of Origen*, by J. Armitage Robinson. Cambridge, 1893. Eng. Trans. of the *Philocalia*, by the Rev. George Lewis, T. & T. Clark, 1911.

<sup>4</sup> The letter is printed in Mansi, *Concilia*, Vol. IX. pp. 524-533.

viously at the local synod of A.D. 543, makes no difference for our purpose.

iii. The fifteen Anathemas against Origen decreed at the above-mentioned Council or synod.<sup>1</sup> Koetschau gives a place in his text to Nos. 2 to 6 of these Anathemas, on the ground that they record, though not perhaps always word for word, the teaching of Origen in the *First Principles*.

iv. Various fragments taken from Antipater of Bostra, Leontius of Byzantium, Theophilus of Alexandria, Epiphanius, Gregory of Nyssa and others.

Koetschau admits in all forty-three Greek fragments, varying in length from a few words to the extensive passages taken from the *Philocalia*. Of these some fourteen are entirely missing from the text of Rufinus; nine are shortened, altered or incomplete; five are inaccurately translated; and the remaining fifteen are given with reasonable, though not always strict, accuracy.

As I have stated above, M. Gustave Bardy disputes the conclusions reached by Koetschau in regard to the passages taken from Justinian's letter to Mennas and the Anathemas. He contends that the former are divorced from their context and that in some cases they may be deformed or interpolated. This is not likely. The fact that there were many followers of Origen even in the sixth century—it was their existence and influence which made Justinian so eager to secure Origen's condemnation—would have rendered it necessary to be careful. There was also plenty of material for condemnation, according to Justinian's ideas, without the need of perversion or exaggeration. Bardy does not in fact deny that Justinian's letter gives us our best information about Origen's true teaching, though he would use it with caution. But he makes a strong objection to the inclusion of the Anathemas in the text. These have in view, according to him, not so much Origen himself as the 'so-called Origenists who were contemporaries of Justinian'.<sup>2</sup> An examination will show, however, that they differ but little from the letter of Justinian. In regard to Bardy's further objection to Koetschau's reconstruction of Bk. I. Ch. viii.,<sup>3</sup> on the ground that it is too hazardous, we must admit that the piecing together of the different fragments is ingeniously done and that too much reliance must not be placed on the

<sup>1</sup> For the text see Mansi, *Concilia*, Vol. IX., pp. 396-400.

<sup>2</sup> Bardy, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 66-68.

precise order and connexion of the passages. But there can be no doubt whatever that they belong to this chapter, for every fragment of testimony we possess speaks with the same voice about Origen's doctrine of the fall of the angels and their ultimate restoration. 'Who gave you leave', cries Jerome to Rufinus, 'to omit so much from your translation?'<sup>1</sup> Unless we fill the gaps left by Rufinus with the material which every other writer who deals with the *First Principles* declares to have been there, we can have no hope of ascertaining what Origen really wrote.

The Latin translation sent by Jerome to his friends in Italy has unfortunately been lost. Jerome's usual method of translation was no different from that of Rufinus, but on this occasion he adhered strictly to the original. 'In my translation of the *First Principles*,' he says, 'I expressed in a simple way what was contained in the Greek text.'<sup>2</sup> And Rufinus corroborates this when he complains of Jerome that 'he re-interpreted these very books which I had translated, and inserted all those passages which had been omitted by me as being of doubtful authenticity.'<sup>3</sup> Some years after, this translation, though carefully kept back from publication by Pammachius, was circulated in a garbled form by a friend to whom he had lent it for a short time. A copy of this came into the hands of one Avitus, who wrote to Jerome for an explanation. In reply Jerome sent him a true copy, accompanied by a letter containing long quotations, many of them literal, of the alleged heretical teachings of the work. This letter is extant and provides an authority of first-class character for supplementing the gaps in Rufinus' translation and correcting him elsewhere. Koetschau gives a list of more than fifty quotations obtained from it. All are printed in his edition, either as part of the text or in footnotes, and all are included in the present translation.<sup>4</sup>

M. Bardy, however, seeks to discredit Jerome's translation. Jerome, he says, changed the delicate *nuances* of Origen into categorical statements, presenting in an absolute manner theories capable of a generous interpretation; he may have translated Origen better, but he understood him less, lacking what Rufinus possessed, the sympathy which gives intelligence.<sup>5</sup> If Bardy means that Origen's theories

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, *Apol.* II. 11b.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome, *Apol.* I. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Rufinus, *Apol.* I. 21.

<sup>4</sup> For the letter, see Jerome, *Ep.* cxxiv, *ad Avitum*.

<sup>5</sup> Bardy, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

were always subject to revision, put forward, as he so often reminds us, for discussion rather than as unalterable dogmas, and that while Rufinus partly understood this temper of mind Jerome had no sympathy with it at all, then his contention is true. It is true also that Jerome means throughout to make the worst of Origen and Rufinus the best, each from his own viewpoint. The modern reader can and must allow for this. But no arguments will alter the fact that Rufinus has left many gaps which without Jerome's help we could not fill at all, and that time after time he deliberately transforms, abbreviates or renders inaccurately his original. Nor must we suppose that Origen's teaching, though offered in humility and with a readiness to be convinced by better knowledge, lacked definiteness. It was this definiteness which Rufinus feared, and which he endeavoured to obscure in his translation. On the other hand, Jerome's presentation of Origen, though blunt, is full and fair. The passages quoted in the Letter to Avitus have a genuine Origenistic ring about them and there is no evidence whatever of hardening or exaggeration.

Of Rufinus' ordinary method of translation we may gain the truest idea by studying the two long passages of which the originals are preserved in the *Philocalia*. Generally speaking, the subject matter is here unobjectionable and Rufinus, even when abiding by his own cautious rules, had no need to alter, omit or interpolate. The reader of the present translation can form his own judgment; for in it Origen and Rufinus are set side by side and the two translations are made to agree in wording so far as is possible, that is, wherever it seemed clear that Rufinus was endeavouring to adhere closely to his original. He does not often do this, it is true. His method, like that of Jerome himself, is what we should call paraphrasing rather than translating. But he gives the general sense, for the most part, of what Origen wrote; and where he does this we must be satisfied.

The two passages are Bk. III. Ch. i, on the subject of Free Will, and Bk. IV. Chs. i-iii on the Inspiration and Interpretation of the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> Koetschau has examined these carefully and obtained the following results: Rufinus has omitted twenty-eight passages, the great majority of which, however, are very short, consisting of only a few words or a line or two. He has made twenty-two additions, again mostly not more than a few words in length. And

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 157 ff. and 256 ff.

there are forty-five cases of inaccurate translation, some being due to a misunderstanding of the Greek and others to the desire of altering it for dogmatic reasons. It must be sufficient here to make a few general observations on these irregularities.

Of the additions made by Rufinus many are for the sake of clearness. He is fond, too, of rhetorical embellishment and will often put in a didactic or pietistic touch that is wanting in Origen. Sometimes, when texts are quoted, he will add an extra one that occurs to him or insert a fresh illustration. In other cases a dogmatic motive is apparent. Origen's dry, scientific statements and candid admission of difficulties are scarcely ever left as they stand. The assertion that the intelligence of some animals comes near to human reason is carefully toned down.<sup>1</sup> The desire of Origen to prove the goodness of God is transformed by Rufinus into a desire to keep close to the faith of the Church and to test all things by 'the rule of piety'.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the smaller omissions may be accidental. Others are not highly significant. But Rufinus has evidently hesitated to reproduce Origen's statement that certain of Moses' laws were irrational or impossible.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, he does not care to translate Origen's criticism on a literal interpretation of St. Matt. v. 28, 29—what good would it do to cut out the right eye?<sup>4</sup> He fears the lengths to which allegorical interpretation may go and omits the advice to discover in Scripture the 'depths of the wisdom of God'.<sup>5</sup> In the longest of his two omissions it has generally been supposed that the same distrust is to be observed; but I have given reasons in the notes for thinking that Rufinus did not fully understand this passage.<sup>6</sup>

The inaccurate renderings are often pure mistakes. Not seldom Rufinus altogether misses the point of the Greek. On the whole, however, we can gather from him fairly well the main drift of the arguments. But in the case of a keen thinker like Origen the construction of every sentence, the balance of phrases and often the very order of the words are important; and it would be folly to deny that, for all the good intentions of Rufinus, we lose much when we turn to his version from the Greek.

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 290.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 296.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 193.

<sup>5</sup> See below, p. 293.

<sup>6</sup> See below, p. 299.

## VI

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

IT is not clear what was the exact meaning attached by Origen to the title *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*. The phrase may indicate that the work is an inquiry into the elementary principles of the Christian religion; or, interpreted in a wider sense, it may signify that Origen intended to present his readers with a complete philosophy of religion. This is suggested by his own assertion, made at the beginning of the book, that he was framing a 'single body of doctrine'.<sup>1</sup> There may be in addition some thought of the 'principalities', with whose history and destiny parts of the book are concerned, and also of the 'beginnings' of the universe, and consequently of the end which, in Origen's oft-repeated phrase, must be like the beginning. The word *Ἀρχαί* will cover all these meanings and probably Origen meant it to be understood in a comprehensive way. As we have seen, the title was not a new one, since Clement of Alexandria had already used it.

The thoughts to which Origen's speculations led him proved strange and disturbing to Christians of later ages. But we need not doubt that they were natural enough to the age and intellectual environment in which they arose. It never occurred to Origen that he was anything but an orthodox defender of the faith. All he tried to do was to work out its implications for the educated world of his time. Problems which do not arise in simple minds were continually being raised by his pupils and by the heretics in their rival theological schools. What is the explanation of apparently undeserved suffering? Has man free will, or is this an illusion? What happened before this world was created, and what will happen after it has come to an end? What is the origin and nature of the human soul? Are the stars alive? Are there worlds in the sky, where spirits live? Origen believed that it was right to investigate such problems. Not all of them could be solved. But some might be, and the Christian thinker must do his best.

Other problems were of even greater importance. It was universally acknowledged in the Church that Father, Son and Spirit constituted the Trinity, that each was divine, and that a vast gulf separated them from the universe of created beings. But no authority had as yet laid down precisely

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 6.

how they were related to one another, or had attempted to answer a whole series of questions on the subject of the divine nature which present themselves at once to the mind of a thoughtful believer. This was the task which Origen, as a comparatively young man, took in hand. He was not altogether a pioneer, for Pantænus and Clement had prepared the way. Origen's achievement was to focus all previous speculation, after passing it through his own brilliant intellect, into a coherent system. Though subject to every limitation of his age, he yet had the scientific spirit and used a scientific method. He follows where reason leads him. He is sensitive to difficulties and often acknowledges ignorance. It is indeed his spirit and method rather than his conclusions which are of permanent value. For the Church, no doubt wisely in the main, set aside his chief doctrines, branding them as heretical. But she would not have reached so sure a conviction about the safe path of theological progress had it not been for the stimulus provided by this bold and clear thinker, who brought every question fearlessly into the light of day.

M. de Faye has rightly observed that Origen's system is in the same class with the Gnostic speculations of his time.<sup>1</sup> The Father is the fount and origin of all being, and is pure spirit. The problem is to connect him with the existent material world. The Gnostics bridged the gulf by a series of descents from spirit into matter, to be followed at last by a restoration of the spiritual seeds or sparks imprisoned in matter to their original home. On this theme they played with all manner of fantastic variations. The Christian theology, as expounded by Origen, severely avoids these extravagances; yet the process of descent and ascent runs through it all. The Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal act of will. Gnostic theories of emanation are rejected on the ground that they involve a division of the divine nature. The eternal generation of the Son is as it were an expansion rather than a division of the divine nature. But Origen, in his keen desire to represent this eternal act as proceeding from will and intelligence and not as a fatalistic process, sometimes describes the begetting as a creating, and the Son as a created being. It was this that puzzled Rufinus, how Origen could be both orthodox and unorthodox at the same time. But there is really neither any doubt about Origen's words, nor difficulty about his

<sup>1</sup> Eugène de Faye, *op. cit.* I., p. 100 f.

thought. He relied on such scriptural passages as 'the first-born of all creation'<sup>1</sup> and he emphasises over and over again the secondary position of the Son. The Holy Spirit is still less in degree, but all three are consubstantial, partaking of the fulness of the divine essence. Both Son and Spirit are genuine Beings, not simply divine attributes, and Origen had been taught that an indication of them was to be seen in the two cherubim who, in Isaiah's vision, cover the face of God.<sup>2</sup>

A fresh departure is made by the creation of rational beings, called either minds or souls. These are definitely outside the Godhead, as the Son and Spirit are definitely within. Nevertheless they are spiritual creatures, made in God's own image. Origen inquires whether they were made infinite in number and decides that they were not. By a curious limitation of the divine power, which is characteristic of his thought, he tells us that God made exactly as many as he could control. They were all equal, and apparently identical. But they had free will, and this faculty caused movements to arise within them. Some remained in their original condition, but others fell away from God. Thus was variety and diversity introduced into the world, not by God's ordering, but by the free action of created souls. The fall necessitated the use of bodies; at first bright and transparent bodies such as stars have, and afterwards darker and heavier ones. In this way the various orders of angelic beings arose and below them the daemons; for all are of one original nature and ascend or descend in accordance with the movements of their own wills. From one class of these spirits the human race was constituted, and the qualities of each human soul and the environment into which it is born are due to its merits or demerits in previous existences. God is entirely just and has no favourites; souls are the masters of their own destinies and each obtains what he deserves.

The matter which was necessary to serve as bodies for the fallen spirits was created by God and is not eternal. Other matter had to be created to provide them with a dwelling-place. Matter is such that it can be adapted to an infinite variety of forms and purposes. The sojourn of man in this present world is designed to discipline and educate him, so that he may rise in the scale of being. He may, however, fall; and just as the utmost heights lie open

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 32 and 311.