

# The Origenic doctrine of the Pre-existence of souls in relation to the Christian Canon

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## *Resumen*

En este trabajo se intenta analizar el tema cosmológico y antropológico de la preexistencia de las almas, relacionado con el espacio tangible y los cuerpos humanos en la obra de Orígenes. Sin embargo, nuestra intención no es demostrar si son correctas o no las tesis del teólogo de Alejandría, desde el punto de vista del cristianismo, sino proyectar las condiciones históricas dentro de las cuales fueron expuestas. Presentamos de forma sinóptica las posibles influencias de Platón, así como las opiniones relativas expresadas por otros teólogos de su época. Nuestra tesis es que las divergencias de Orígenes con las enseñanzas cristianas se deben sobre todo a que él mismo se encargó de examinar temas que hasta su época no habían sido analizados sistemáticamente.

## *Abstract*

In this paper there is an attempt to examine the cosmological and anthropological issue on the souls' preexistence in relation to the tangible universe and the human bodies in Origenes' work. Our target is definitely not to show whether the theologian's viewpoints from Alexandria are correct or not but to bring forward the historic terms within which he formulated them. We present his potential influence by Plato himself as well as some other views by some other theologians of his era. We support that Origenes' deflections from Christian teaching are due to the fact that he tried to explain issues which had not been systematically developed.

*Palabras clave:* Alma, cuerpo, creación.

## *Introduction*

In this wider context of Christian thought the field of anthropology emerges in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. In general terms Christian Anthropology is engaged with every feature which is related to the material and spiritual constitution of man. More precisely, Christian Anthropology studies the earthly activities as much as the orientation of man regarding his communication with God. Therefore multifaceted

approach of being is attempted. The latter is studied as a biological and spiritual being and as an entity which communicates and defines itself through its reference to God. What exactly man is, constitutes a question which cannot be fully answered. However this question is related with the theory of man being an image of God in the world<sup>1</sup>. One of the issues which are related of the quest of Christian Anthropology is the nature of the human soul. The issue above has been thoroughly examined by Origen. This issue has already been raised in classic antiquity mostly by Plato whom Origen seems to follow in quite a few points. An inquiring reader could have resource to the dialogues of *Menon* *Phaedo* and *Phaedro* to acquire a global view of Plato's standpoint regarding the relation of the soul with the body. This kind of approach will be sufficient ground for one to comprehend Origen's understanding of Plato's viewpoint. It should also be mentioned that Plato not only presents this topic in a wider philosophical context but also he relates it with theological references. This is because Plato maintains that souls originate from the metaphysical world where they co-existed before they were incorporated with the archetypical Forms of whom they had full Knowledge. This notion that the embodiment of souls is equal to captivity or punishment will shed light to what will be mentioned below about the Athenian philosopher. Namely he reviews the quantitative aspect of the issue which indirectly can lead to a limitation of God's omnipotence.

The issue of the origin of souls, their infusion into the body and their relation to it may, in the first instance, appear as a theologoumenon of marginal significance for the articulation of the Canon of Christian faith. However, a closer study reveals that it has crucial implications in connection with a dualistic nature of creation, predestination, theodicy and Incarnation. Thus, the suggestion of the pre-existence of souls, their fall and their penal enclosure in the body by Origen was legitimately the object of a scrutinizing examination by Church Fathers, who eventually rendered it heterodox in the fifth Ecumenical council of Constantinople in 553 A.D. However, for an inquiring mind the stern formulation of the eleven anathemas appearing in the official acts of the Council will not suffice<sup>2</sup>. That is the theme which penetrates the following study in which light will be shed to the issue of the pre-existence of souls. This examination will be treated as an integral part of the original theory which involves the fall as well as the penal embodiment of souls so as to obtain a global and complete view. This examination, for reasons of clarity, will follow the threefold

1. See, Paul EVDOKIMOV, *La femme et le salut du monde. Étude d' Anthropologie Chrétienne sur les charismes de la femme*, Casterman, Paris, 1958.

2. Justin *Ep. Ad Mennam* (Mansi IX 533) 396-7 Frag. 23a. Koetschau.

division of the second anathema of the fifth Council in Constantinople namely the pre-existence, the fall and the penal embodiment of souls. It is not however of marginal importance that soul for Origen even during its fall maintains at least some kind of affinity with «*Verbo Dei*». Soul is therefore logical because it is in God's image:

*«Si ergo caelestes virtutes intellectualis lucis, id est, divinae naturae, per hoc quod sapientiae et sanctificationis participant, participium sumunt, et humana anima ejusdem lucis et sapientiae participium sumit, erunt et ita sunt unius naturae secum invicem uniusque substantiae. Incorruptae autem sunt et immortales caelestes virtutes, immortalis sine dubio et incorrupta erit etiam animae humanae substantia. Non solum autem, sed quoniam ipsa Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti natura, cujus solius intellectualis lucis universa creatura participium trahit, incorrupta est et aeterna, valde consequens et necessarium est etiam omnem substantiam, quae aeternae illius naturae participium trahit, perdurare etiam ipsam semper et incorruptibilem et aeternam, ut divinae bonitatis aeternitas etiam in eo intelligatur, dum et aeterni sunt hi, qui ejus beneficia consequuntur».*

(*De Prin.*, IV. 4.9)

Following the scope of study indicated above, Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of souls will be examined according to its original formulation in his writings. In addition, the arguments of his detractors with reference to the implications of the doctrine and the orthodox alternative, will maintain a balanced exposition of the issue. Finally, a closer insight into the conditions, and the relevant mind set upon which this hypothesis was formulated, will shed light on the issue of the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of its nature.

According to Origen's exposition of pre-existence, all rational creatures (*rationabiles creaturae*)<sup>3</sup> were created at once, in the beginning (*in principio*)<sup>4</sup> pure, equal and alike (*aequales creavit omnes ac similes*)<sup>5</sup>. They were without a body of

3. *De Prin.* II.9.6.

4. *ibid.* See also *De Prin.* II.9.1: "εν τη επινοουμένη αρχή".

5. *ibid.* See also *De Prin.* II.9.4. 'quod scilicet in his quae facta sunt, nihil injustum, nihil fortuitum videatur, sed omnia ita esse ut aequitatis ac justitiae regula expetit doceantur ("whence it will be apparent that in the things which were made there was nothing unrighteous, nothing accidental but all will be shown to be such as the principle of equity and righteousness demands".) (trans by G.W. Butterworth, *Origen on First Principles*, Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1936, p. 132).

matter, restricted in number so they can suffice only for the ordering of the world<sup>6</sup>. They all formed a unity by reason of the identity of their essence and power and by their union with the Knowledge of God<sup>7</sup>. The soul of Jesus was among them in equal union<sup>8</sup>. For Origen, there was never a time when God did not practice His attribute as Creator<sup>9</sup> and, subsequently, Origen declares that there was always a prefiguration of the present world in an immaterial form present in the Wisdom<sup>10</sup>.

Such a novel idea regarding Christian Theology was expected to receive various reactions. To Origen's detriment the overwhelming majority criticized harshly, the theory of pre-existence. Among these, *Epiphanius*, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, towards the end of the fourth century argued that souls did not exist prior to their embodiment<sup>11</sup>. In support of this he cites *Gen 2:23*

“Then the man said,  
‘This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman  
Because she was taken out of Man”

6. *De Prin.* II.9.1. ‘*Mensura vero materiae corporali consequenter aptabitur; quam utique tantam a Deo esse creatam credendum est, quantam sibi sciret ad ornatum mundi posse sufficere.* Here G. W. Butterworth wrongly argues that Eusebius in the Greek text “τοσοῦτον ἀριθμὸν τῷ βουλήματι αὐτοῦ υποστήσῃαι τὸν Θεόν νοητῶν ὅσον ἡδύνατο διαρκέσαι” renders the restriction of the number of intelligences to God's ability to control them and thus he construes Origen correctly. (*Origen on First Principles* p.xxxiii,129). However the verb διαρκῶ means to be sufficient and the verb ἡδύνατο can be taken as impersonal and therefore instead of God it takes as a subject the final infinitive διαρκεσαι. Thus it is translated ‘as many as could suffice’.

7. This piece of text is not an extract from *De Principiis* but it is part of the second anathema against Origen, decreed by the Second Council of Constantinople. However, Butterworth cites it because ‘for the most part it is in Origen's own words’ (*O.O.F.P.* p.125).

8. *De Prin.* II.6.3.

9. This piece of text is also not included in *De Principiis* but it is cited in Koetschou's ed p. 65 note on 1.8 and also in Butterworth's translation (*O.O.F.P.* p.42).

10. This text is also part of Koetschou's edition without existing in the actual text of *De Principiis*.

11. *Epiphanius, Phanarion 64, 26* (GCS 312,442). This is also supported by Theophilus *Ep. Paschalis* (404) (=Jerome *Ep* 100) 12 (CSEL 55, 226).

Thus for *Epiphanius* the body existed united with the soul prior to the Fall<sup>12</sup> and not before as an independent entity. Moreover, *Theophilus*, in order to support the parallel existence of body and soul from the beginning of creation, quotes *Zechariah 12:1*

“...the Lord...formed the spirit of man within him.”

Subsequently, he contends that if the spirit of man pre-existed and was incorporated in man after its cosmic fall, then the prophet should rather have said that God “enclosed”, or “cast down”, the spirit<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, *Theophilus* in 400 A.D. strongly disapproves of Origen’s contention that God created as many souls as He could control. Instead of this, *Theophilus* supports that God made the number of creatures that He “ought to have made”<sup>14</sup> since God is not controlled by matter<sup>15</sup>. In addition to this, Jerome at the end of the fourth century introduced the discussion about the implications of the soul of Jesus being assimilated in equal union with all the other souls, which later in the fall would be relegated in the state of angels, humans or even demons<sup>16</sup>. This would jeopardize the belief in the divinity of Jesus and subsequently it would question the redemptive character of His Incarnation. Finally, later systematic theology propounded that souls have their proper role only in union with the body and not as independent existences. In the latter case, souls would have no individuality, no personal human identity, and therefore they would be in an unnatural state of existence<sup>17</sup>.

However, the theory which was most favourable among the Fathers, and which was regarded as the orthodox one, was *creationism*. This doctrine propounds that God creates a new soul for each human individual. Then the soul is inserted by God into the body as it is formed in the maternal womb. Thus soul and body are created together. This theory was supported by *Lactantius*<sup>18</sup>, Jerome<sup>19</sup>, Ambrose<sup>20</sup> and

12. *Epiphanius, Ep. and Iohannem Episcopum* (=Jerome, *Eo* 51) 5 (CSEL 54, 403-4) as quoted by E.A. Clark in *The Origenistic Controversy*, Princeton University Press, 1992, p.95.

13. *Theophilus*, Fragment 2, *Ep. synodalis prima*.

14. *Theophilus, Ep. paschalis* (402) (=Jerome *Ep.98*) 17 (CSEL 55, 201-2).

15. *Theophilus, Ep. paschalis* (402) (=Jerome *Ep.98*) 18 (CSEL 55, 203).

16. Jerome *Apologia* II,4 (CCL 79,36).

17. J. E. ROYCE, “Origin of the human soul” in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, XIII, p.471.

18. *Lactantius, Inst.* 2.12,3.

19. Jerome *Adv Ruf* 3.23 and *Apol* III 28 (79,100).

20. Ambrose *De Noe et acra* 1.4.9.

others<sup>21</sup>.

In contrast to creationism was a less fortunate theory called *traducianism*. According to this theory, the soul is contained in bodily sperm (*tradux*, seed or sprout) and it is transmitted by organic generation. This doctrine was presented by Tertullian, who argued that Adam's soul alone was created by God, whereas all the other souls were generated through the paternal seed<sup>22</sup>. Apollinorists hold a versified traducianistic theory consisting in the generation of children's souls from the souls of parents, a theory which was also open to grave objections<sup>23</sup>. Finally, traducianism was condemned by Pope *Anastasius II* in 498<sup>24</sup>, on the grounds that the generative act of the parents is only the extrinsic cause of the origin of soul. In the orthodox doctrine, the soul is the object of an immediate and direct creation only by God<sup>25</sup>.

In our endeavour to attain a more objective and clear insight to the conditions leading to the formulation of the doctrine of pre-existence by Origen, it should be underscored that Ante-Nicean Christianity had not yet established any relevant dogma. More precisely, even in the fifth century the Church still held no firm position upon the subject. This argument can, on its own, be sound enough to acquit Origen of heresy. *Pamphilus* in the late fourth century writes that, since the Church has not pronounced an opinion on this matter, it is unreasonable to label someone who entertains a different opinion a heretic<sup>26</sup>. The lack of any relevant dogma on the part of the Church is supported by *Rufinus* who because of this makes allowances for theological debate<sup>27</sup>. More important is that the silence of the Church is also claimed

21. *Lactantius, De opif. Dei* 19.

22. Tertullian *De anima* 23-27,36. Others that seem to have favoured traducianism are Gregory of Nyssa (*De hom. ipit* 29) and Faustus of Riez (*Epist* 3).

23. The implications of this theory are summarised in the fact that soul is simple and spiritual and thus it cannot be compounded from something received from each parent or in the case of the parents cannot be divided. For further discussion, see J.E. ROYCE, "Origin of the human soul", in *N.C.E.*, Vol. XIII.p.470.

24. The text in which this condemnation appears is Anastasius' epistle to the Galician bishops (*The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed by E A Livingstone p.1636) Traducianism was also rejected by Augustine (*Epist.* 190.4.14).

25. For further discussion regarding the time of infusion of the soul to the body according to Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and modern embryology, see J.E. ROYCE, "Origin of the Human Soul", in *N.C.E.* XIII, p. 471.

26. *Pamphilus, Apologia* 9 (PG 17, 606).

27. *Rufinus, Apologia ad Anastasium* 6 (CCL20,27). However, according to E Clark, "Jerome tried to make it sound as if the Church had ruled in favor of creationism". (*Contra Iohannem* 22 PQL 23,389). The same writer also argues that in 412 A.D. after the heat of the controversy

by Origen, who is left with an open space for speculation<sup>28</sup>. Even Augustine – considerably later than Origen- after having discarded traducianism, was oscillating between the doctrines of pre-existence and creationism<sup>29</sup>. The latter theory, in particular, seemed for him incapable of explaining the transmission of original sin<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, in *De Libero arbitrio* he hints at the pre-existence of souls and intimates that it was in our pre-embodied state that we once possessed virtue<sup>31</sup>. The example of Augustine affirms the highly speculative climate surrounding the issue of the origin of the soul even in a period very close to the 5<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council of Constantinople. The obscurity of the Bible also did not point to any specific theory, but it was a ductible basis for various constructions and thus religious speculation was encouraged.

In addition, to this, during the period in which Origen was formulating his system, there was no investigation of the various heresies such as Pelagianism or Arianism which would preoccupy the fourth- and fifth- century theologians. Thus, there was nothing to compel Origen to be more precise and cautious in the structure of his conceptual framework<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, in this context, he very early engaged in a free and unrestricted quest to explain the state of the present world. The failure of his suggestion to be a part of the Christian Canon three centuries later seems to be more an anachronism than a just synodical condemnation.

Secondly, the issue concerning to what extent Origen's doctrine of pre-existence is the finished product of a dogmatic affirmation or a tentative suggestion has recently occupied scholars. This view is also strongly founded on textual grounds. Origen writes that with reference to rational natures he spoke in a general way, by

had died, Jerome became more cautious *Ep.* 126,1 (CSEL 56,143). (*The Origenistic Controversy* p.12).

28. *De Prin* pref.5 “non satis manifesta praedicatione distinguitur” (“all this is not very clearly defined in the teaching”) trans. by Butterworth *O.O.F.P.* p.4.

29. Augustine (*Retract.* 1.1.3).

30. Augustine (*Epist* 166.8).

31. Augustine (*De libero arbitrio* 1.12.24). On Augustine's view of the origin of souls, see R. HANSON, “Christian Platonism in Origen and Augustine”, in *Origeniana Tertia*, R. Hanson and H. Crouzel (eds.) 1981, p.222.

32. H. CROUZEL (*Origen* pp. 172-3) and R. CADIOU (*Origen: His life at Alexandria*, London, Herder Book Company 10, (1944), pp.147-8) are unanimous in this matter.

Flor. II., 18 (2007), pp. 421-431.

logical inference rather than by precise dogmatic statement<sup>33</sup>. In another part Origen becomes more precise in his contention by writing that, in fear of his views being taken as heretical and contrary to the faith of the Church (*heretica haec et contra fidem ecclesiasticam*)<sup>34</sup>, he will speak by discussing and investigating rather than by laying down fixed and certain conclusions<sup>35</sup>. In other parts of *De Principiis* Origen also presents the contemporary speculation regarding the origin of soul<sup>36</sup> and invites his readers to be critical and discover the truth themselves<sup>37</sup>.

Scholars have almost reached unanimity regarding the speculative and investigative character of Origen's understanding of the world. J. Armantage affirms that *De Principiis* does not present a basic statement of Origen's view of religion, integrating and specifying the relationship between the church and the world<sup>38</sup>. Instead, C. Rabinowitz talks about "Origen's speculative investigation of Christianity", the beauty of which "lies in its creativity and not in its dogmatic nature"<sup>39</sup>. In the same manner L. G. Patterson affirms that Origen intended "forcing attention on significant questions rather than winning acceptance of the solutions he proposed to them"<sup>40</sup>. Finally, J Danielou contends that Origen, in comparison to Clement, makes

33. *De Prin* I.7.1 "...generalis nobis sermoŕe digesta sint, per consequentiam magis intellectum quam definito dogmate pertractata atque discussa de rationabilibus maturis..." (trans. by Butterworth *O.O.F.P.*p.59).

34. *De Prin*. I.6.1.

35. *ibid* "...discutientibus magis et pertractantibus quam pro certo ac definito statuentibus" (trans. by Butterworth *O.O.F.P.*p.52)).

36. *De Prin* pref5. In book two of his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (8, 146, 3-4) Origen again addresses the matter by providing the same summary of the three views on the coming of the soul to the body. After stating the traducianist position, he poses an alternative: soul comes from the outside and is placed in the body which has already been prepared and formed in the female womb (*parato iam et formato intra viscera muliebra corpore*). Then Origen goes on to ask whether the soul in that case comes newly created or had been created earlier (*utrum super creata...an prius et olim facta*) and for some reason now assumes a body. At this point he does not pursue the question whereas in *De Principiis* he argues for soul's pre-existent state.

37. *Ibid*, pref.9.

38. J. ARMANTAGE, "The best of both worlds: Origen's view on religion and resurrection" in *Origeniana prima*, Università di Bari, 1975, p.345.

39. C.E. RABINOWITZ, "Personal and cosmic salvation in Origen", in *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984), p. 328.

40. L. G. PATTERSON, "Who are the Opponents in Methodius' *De resurrectione*", in *Studia Patristica* XIX, p.229.



more room for personal speculation<sup>41</sup> while R. Daly blames “over-enthusiastic Origenists for turning Origen’s speculation into doctrine<sup>42</sup>. As one can see, there is ample textual evidence and scholarly consensus with regard to Origen’s character of this doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. Origen may not have considered it as a compelling and authoritative theory at all, but as an impressive notion which fitted nicely in his systematic view of the world. Origen’s impetus to taxonomize and interconnect all the loose ends in his world-view may account for the systematic incorporation and operation of pre-existence in the whole scheme, although nowhere is it said to be a prime contention of his. Of course, no one can accuse anyone of heresy and how much to condemn him for bringing into discussion -particularly when this is made clear in the preface<sup>43</sup> -a theory, regardless of its unorthodox features. The Church, after all, *before affirming* upon any subject of faith, allowed a long period in which Fathers were discussing the rightness of it, producing alternatives or deviating from the more accepted solution. In this free and fruitful discourse, Origen’s suggestion of the pre-existence of souls was an essential part which tried to *explain* the inadequacies of the other methods, towards a synodical decision. And for this, Origen cannot be charged with heresy.

Thirdly, a major stumbling block in Origen’s of pre-existence is its opposition to the orthodox dogma of the creation of the world by God *ex nihilo*. According to Origen, God had created *in the beginning* a supply of souls which later received angelic, human or demonic bodies, according to their merit. However, regarding the time occurrence of the creation of souls – which seems here to be the issue of dispute – Origen is misunderstood<sup>44</sup>. Origen had conceived God as perpetual Creator from the

41. J. DANIELOU, *Gospel message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. J.A. Baker, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1973, p. 155.

42. R. DALY, “Origen studies and Pierre Nautin’s Origene” in *Theological Studies* 39 (1978), p.509. On the same subject, see also R. A. NORRIS, *God and World in Early Christian Theology*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1966, p. 106.

43. *De Prin.* pref.5.9.

44. Justin and Athenagoras argue that a commitment to the idea of pre-existent matter in general terms, does not rule out a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. (Justin II *Apology* 6, Athenagoras, *Leg* 10.1). God could have created matter prior to its ordering and arranging. See N.J. TORCHIA, “Theories of Creation in the Second Century Apologists and their Middle Platonic Backgrounds” in *Studia Patristica* XXVI p.194. It should be noted that the issue of the infinite character of matter in Justine’s work is deemed to be one of the most difficult. The Christian theologian suggests that the account of creation in *Genesis* bears a lot of similarities to the respective account of Plato in *Timeus*’ dialogue. While proceeding further, Justine presents God to have ordered pre-existent matter. Justine does not mention, however, whether

beginning of his existence. He contends that if one argues that the creation did not exist from the beginning, then this means that there was a time that God was not Creator. Subsequently, this implies a change and a probable improvement in the nature of God – later as Creator which is incompatible with the unchangeable divine substance. In Origen's words:

“To prove that God is almighty we must assume the existence of the universe. For if anyone would have it that certain ages, or periods of time...elapsd during which the present creation did not exist, he would undoubtedly prove that in those ages or periods God was not almighty, but that he afterwards became almighty from the time when he began to have creatures over whom he could exercise power<sup>45</sup>”.

Thus, Origen conceives creation as a continual emanation from God, co-eternal with Him. In this regard, G. Bostock writes that Origen is influenced by the Hermetic Tradition which describes creation as rays flowing perpetually from an eternal sun (God)<sup>46</sup>. Therefore, for Origen creation in general is not conceived as an act time-definable or time-limited. It is more an idea free of temporal restrictions. Thus, the pre-existence of souls, despite its apparent clash with the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, is not really heretical, if one considers seriously Origen's particular mindset. For him it was natural for God to have created from the beginning of His existence. If there was any time that there was no creation, then at that time God would not have been a Creator. But this would imply a change to the immutable and complete divine substance which God holds eternally. Thus, if one accepts that God has not undergone any change in His status, he is also bound to accept that God practised all His divine attributes from the beginning of His existence. Therefore, there was no pagan or polytheistic feature behind Origen's notion of existence of soul prior to its joining a body. On the contrary, his syllogism was based on logical inference. However, the obvious dualism which underlies Origen's notion of the first

the creator of this matter is God or not. Nevertheless, taking into consideration Justine standpoint as a whole it is possible that he argues that God originally created matter and he ordered it later on.

45. *De Prin*, I.2.10 “*ideo ut omnipotens ostendatur Deus, omnia subsistere necesse set...*”(trans. by Butterworth G.W. *O.O.F.P.*p.23).

46. Behind the Hermetic tradition lies the solar theology of ancient Egypt. See G. BOSTOCK “Origen's Philosophy of Creation” in *Origeniana Quinta*, R.J. Daly (ed.), Leuven University Press, 1992, p.255. The same parallel occurs also in Origen (*De Prin* I,1.6.).

creation of heavenly entities and the latter inferior creation of the material world will be the issue of another study.

In conclusion, it was demonstrated that the doctrine of the prior existence of souls by Origen cannot be rendered heretical. First of all, because when it was expounded by Origen there was not yet any orthodox dogma established by the Church. Thus, everyone could speculate freely and of course this would not make one a heretic. Secondly, there is no evidence that Origen's theory was more than a speculation which took a doctrinal character due to his impetus to systemize. Thirdly, even if pre-existence was a principal contention of Origen, his Christian motives to vindicate God's omnipotence and Justice in the way he thought it was apposite, is enough to acquit him of heresy. The inadequacies of his theory if they are seen under this perspective are rather the price that a great innovator and critical thinker had to pay than heretical features.

Moreover, it should be noted that in the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. AC. *Maximus* the Confessor, in his work *De variis difficilibus locis*, attempted a systematic approach of the theory of Origen. The subject of universal restitution (αποκατάστασις) was of prime importance in *Maximus'* approach. After the doctrinal evolution in the period of the five centuries after the original exposition of Origen, *Maximus* attempted to refute some of Origen's positions focusing mainly on methodological issues.