

Alfons Fürst

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**THE HISTORY OF HUMAN FREEDOM AND DIGNITY
IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION**



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Concepts of Origenism from Late Antiquity to Modern Times

Freedom between Pre-existence and Apokatastasis

ALFONS FÜRST, MÜNSTER

1. Origen on freedom between pre-existence and apokatastasis

Since late antiquity the debate about Origen and Origenism has focused on pre-existence and apokatastasis. Within Origen's Christian philosophy, however, these themes were side issues. They were neither at the core of his thought nor the starting points of his endeavour to forge a Christian concept of God and the spiritual and material world. Origen himself emphasised several times that human beings are not able to know anything about the beginning and the end of the universe. Humans can only acquire knowledge about the middle, the things between beginning and end, i. e. about the existing world and its history.¹ He even chided people who pretend to know anything certain about the end as babblers. "Babblers are those people who promise knowledge about the things which they cannot know because a human being can only comprehend the things in the middle."² Consequently, whenever Origen dealt with the question of the beginning and the end, he only suggested hypotheses and discussed possible ways of thinking. This does not mean that he did not have his own options; he clearly stated his preference for the theory of pre-existence and the fall of created minds in order to explain the multiplicity and depravity of the existing world and to preserve goodness and justness as main attributes of God.³ He often explained his vision, or hope, that in the end all being will be united again with God as it was in the beginning,⁴ but

1 Origen, in *Is. hom.* 1,2 (OWD 10, 200); 4,1 (10, 228–232); princ. IV 3,14 (GCS Orig. 5, 346).

2 In *Is. hom.* 4,1 (OWD 10, 230): *Garrulorum est hominum horum notitiam polliceri nescientium, quia homo ea tantum potest capere, quae media sunt.*

3 Princ. II 9,2 (GCS Orig. 5, 165 f.); II 9,6–8 (5, 169–172); III 1,21–23 (5, 235–242); III 3,5 (5, 261 f.); III 5,4 (5, 273–275); in *Ioh. comm.* II 30,181–31,191 (GCS Orig. 4, 87–89). See Henri CROUZEL, *Origène, Paris/Namur* 1985, 267–284; Mark S. M. SCOTT, *Journey Back to God. Origen on the Problem of Evil, Oxford* 2012, 49–73.

4 Princ. I 6,1–3 (GCS Orig. 5, 78–84); III 6,3 (5, 283–285); in *Ioh. comm.* I 16,91 (GCS Orig. 4, 20); *Cels.* VIII 72 (GCS Orig. 2, 288 f.). See CROUZEL, *ibid.* 337–341; SCOTT, *ibid.* 129–160; Ilaria E. RAMELLI, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis. A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena (SVigChr 120), Leiden* 2013, 137–215.

he never claimed to possess sure knowledge about these things. His theory of a restoration of all things (*ἀποκατάστασις πάντων*) was the greatest possible vision of Christian hope, and the concept of pre-existence, taken over from Plato and the Platonic tradition,⁵ was nothing but a possible explanation of the current state of the world in order to give an answer to the question of theodicy – an answer which has some advantages but cannot solve this enduring problem. As to the end, Origen also thought about the possibility that a soul might have sinned so much – i. e. the creature which is called the devil – that it cannot be redeemed.⁶ Yet he strongly insisted that human reasoning has to leave this question open. Origen never *taught* that the devil *must* be saved (or condemned) but he insisted that the possibility that he *can* be saved, not because of his nature or substance but by means of his will, cannot be denied by any human mind,⁷ because the created human mind is not able to know all of God's means to redeem the fallen parts of his creation.

Pre-existence and apokatastasis are thus part of Origen's soteriological concept, not as assured knowledge but rather in the mode of hypothesis and vision, as an expression of Christian hope. As such, they are neither the starting points nor the pillars of his Christian philosophy. According to his own statement, Origen was mostly concerned with the "middle" of being,⁸ i. e. the existing world and its natural evolution and human beings and their history. He put all of his efforts into understanding the history of *this* world and of mankind and providing orientation for the life of human beings within this world. From his Christian standpoint, the main document which discloses answers to these questions is the Bible. The Bible as Origen perceived it – namely, as one large text written by different authors who were all inspired by the one Spirit of God – tells a story from the beginning to the end, from *Genesis* to *Revelation*, merging into a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, and it is mostly concerned with the "middle" – the history of God's creation, the history of God and his people. Throughout his lifetime, Origen therefore studied the Bible intensively and undertook the great task of explaining

5 Cf., above all, Plato, *polit.* X 614a–621d.

6 *Princ.* I 8,4 (GCS Orig. 5, 101); II 10,7 (5, 181); *Cels.* VIII 39 (GCS Orig. 2, 254); in *Ex. hom.* 8,5 (GCS Orig. 6, 230); *cat. Pal.* in *Ps.* 118,118 (SC 189, 378); in *Hier. hom.* 6,2 (OWD 11, 216–218); 19,5(18,15) (11, 482); *lat.* 2(2),12 (11, 566–570); in *Hier. fig.* 37 (11, 620). For an explanation of these passages, see Origenes, *Die Homilien zum Buch Jeremia*, ed. by Alfons FÜRST/Horacio E. LONA (OWD 11), Berlin/Boston 2018, 74–79.

7 Cf. the discussion of this problem by Origen in a letter preserved in Latin translation by Rufinus, *adult. libr. Orig.* 7 (CChr.SL 20, 11 f.), and Jerome, *apol. adv. Rufin.* II 18 (CChr. SL 79, 53 f.): *Contra hoc recte Origenes respondit non eum (sc. diabolium) periturae esse substantiae, sed voluntate propria corruiisse et posse salvari.* See Henri CROUZEL, A Letter from Origen "To Friends in Alexandria", in: David NEIMAN/Margaret SCHATKIN (eds.), *The Heritage of the Early Church* (OCA 195), Rome 1973, 135–150, 146 f.

8 Cf. the passages noted above in n. 1.

it as a whole. He wrote lengthy commentaries and delivered (and then published) series of homilies on nearly every book of the Bible, an immense enterprise by which he became one of the most prolific authors not only of Early Christianity but of all antiquity. The central aim of the “sound doctrines” provided by the Bible is to “lead men to live the best life”, as he wrote in one of his last books, at the end of the *Apology against Celsus*,⁹ and as he had already stated in the opening lines of the early treatise *On First Principles*: Christians “derive the knowledge which leads human beings to live a good and blessed life from no other source than from the very words and teaching of Christ”.¹⁰

“A problem of the most necessary importance” in order “to live well” is the subject of free will or “self-determination”, as Origen emphasised in the same treatise.¹¹ He therefore put freedom at the core of his explanation of the world and of human life.¹² In his metaphysics of freedom, God, whom he understood as “uncreated freedom”,¹³ created spiritual minds and the material world freely out of disinterested goodness, and the interaction between God and his creatures is driven by freely acting agents on both sides. Together with God’s goodness and justice, and with his providence and education in order to teach rational human beings how to live a good life, freedom and thus accountability and culpability of beings endowed with reason are the key ideas of Origen’s thought. The Alexandrian philosopher not only wrote the first treatise about free self-agency in which he comprehensively discussed the main philosophical and biblical aspects of this question.¹⁴ He also forged the first metaphysics of freedom in which he conceived of freedom as the core principle of all reality by basing reality not on fixed substance but on will and

9 Cels. VIII 76 (GCS Orig. 2, 293): ... τῆς εἰς ἀνθρώπους φθανούσης ὑγιῶν δογμάτων προτρεπομένων ἐπὶ τὸν ἀριστον βίον ἀληθείας. Translation: p. 511 CHADWICK.

10 Princ. I praef. 1 (GCS Orig. 5, 7): *Scientiam quae provocat homines ad bene beateque vivendum non aliunde quam ab ipsis Christi verbis doctrinae suscipiunt* (sc. Christiani). Translation: p. 11 BEHR.

11 Ibid. III 1,1 (5, 195): Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ κηρύγματι τῷ ἐκκλησιαστικῷ περιέχεται ὁ περὶ κρίσεως δικαίας θεοῦ λόγος, ὅστις καὶ τοὺς ἀκούοντας, πιστευθεὶς εἶναι ἀληθῆς, προκαλεῖται ἐπὶ τὸ καλῶς βιοῦν καὶ παντὶ τρόπῳ φεύγειν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, δηλονότι συγκατατιθεμένους τῷ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν εἶναι τὰ ἐπαίνου καὶ ψόγου ἄξια, φέρε καὶ περὶ τοῦ αὐτεξουσίου ἰδίᾳ ὀλίγα διαλάβωμεν, ἀναγκαιοτάτου ὡς ἐνὶ μάλιστα προβλήματος. Translation: p. 285.

12 See the groundbreaking study of Christian HENGSTERMANN, *Origenes und der Ursprung der Freiheitsmetaphysik* (Adamantiana 8), Münster 2016, furthermore Alfons FÜRST, *Origenes. Grieche und Christ in römischer Zeit* (Standorte in Antike und Christentum 9), Stuttgart 2017, 110–142.

13 In Lev. hom. 16,6 (GCS Orig. 6, 502): *libertas ingenita*.

14 Princ. III 1 *Περὶ αὐτεξουσίου*, usually translated as “free will” but a better translation would be “self-agency” or “self-determination”. In Ioh. comm. II 16,112 (GCS Orig. 4, 73), Origen, using a Stoic term, speaks of *ἐξουσία αὐτοπραγίας*, “the power of self-agency” (translated by HEINE, FaCh 80, 124, as “the right of independent action”): a free rational being with a firm moral character is in full command of his self-motion.

motion.¹⁵ All of his treatises and all of his biblical commentaries and homilies are underlaid by this main idea. A proper interpretation of any given biblical text has to take into account God's freedom and his essential goodness and justice on the one hand and humans' freedom and their accidental and thus fallible goodness on the other. The history of God's creation is driven by the interaction of these freely acting agents. This is Origen's key idea about the "middle" of being which human minds can grasp. Freedom in the sense of creativity and self-determination is the driving force of cosmic as well as of historic and individual evolution between pre-existence and apokatastasis.¹⁶ Freedom as rational self-motion and power of self-agency constitutes the core of 'Origen's Origenism'.

2. Origenism as a concept of the critical reception of Origen

In the late antique debates about Origen's legacy, the side issues of his metaphysics of freedom, pre-existence and apokatastasis, were given prominence.¹⁷ The key concept of his Christian philosophy, God's goodness and "uncreated freedom" and rational beings' power of self-agency as driving forces of creation, of natural and historical evolution and, finally, of salvation, was neither challenged nor controversially discussed. All Christian thinkers upheld the goodness and free will of God and men as central aspects of Christian theology. There were, of course, different conceptualisations of these notions. Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, for instance, or Jerome and Ambrose followed much more closely in the footsteps of Origen than did Augustine in his later works. It was not simply by chance that Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus dedicated the second part

- 15 Princ. II 9,1f. (GCS Orig. 5, 163–166). See the seminal contributions of Theo KOBUSCH, *Die philosophische Bedeutung des Kirchenvaters Origenes. Zur christlichen Kritik an der Einseitigkeit der griechischen Wesensphilosophie*, in: ThQ 165 (1985) 94–105; id., *Origenes, der Initiator der christlichen Philosophie*, in: Wilhelm GEERLINGS/Hildegard KÖNIG (eds.), *Origenes. Vir ecclesiasticus*. Festschrift für Hermann Josef Vogt (Hereditas 9), Bonn 1995, 27–44; id., *Die Begründung eines neuen Metaphysiktyps durch Origenes*, in: Wolfgang A. BIENERT/Uwe KÜHNEWEG (eds.), *Origeniana Septima. Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (BETHL 137), Leuven 1999, 61–68.
- 16 In *On First Principles*, Origen posits free will as the principle of motion, princ. II 9,2 (GCS Orig. 5, 165): "The Creator granted to the intellects created by him *the power of voluntary and free movement*, that the good that was in them might become their own, being preserved by their own free will." Translation: p. 239 BEHR (my italics). In *Against Celsus*, he describes his vision of the end as follows, Cels. VIII 72 (GCS Orig. 2, 288f.): "*We believe that at some time the Logos will have overcome the entire rational nature, and will have remodelled every soul to his own perfection, when each individual simply by the exercise of his freedom will choose what the Logos wills and will be in that state which he has chosen.*" Translation: p. 507 CHADWICK (my italics).
- 17 For an overview of Origen's reception in late antiquity, see FÜRST, *Origenes* (n. 12) 151–165.

of their anthology of Origen's works, the *Philocalia*, composed sometime between 364 and 378, to the question of free will and self-agency.¹⁸ None of these Church Fathers denied the importance of this concept without which Christian theology would collapse. Origen's seminal contribution to this topic was an inexhaustible source of inspiration for late antique Christian philosophers.

Other aspects of his theology, however, were increasingly regarded as problematic. As a consequence of the development of the Christian doctrine of God in the fourth century, Origen's reflections on the Trinity, the relation between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the involvement of the Trinitarian God in the history of creation and salvation seemed not to meet the newly established standards of Trinitarian language.¹⁹ Origen had paved the way to the Christian concept of a triune God by conceiving of the Son and the Holy Spirit as co-eternal with the Father, by writing the first treatise about the Holy Spirit, by introducing the parlance of three "hypostases" (*ὑποστάσεις*) in God and so forth, but he had not consistently used all of the notions coined in the fourth century to speak of God in a dogmatically correct manner. Above all, he did not use the main notion of the Nicene creed, the famous "homoousios" (*ὁμοούσιος*), to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son as "of the same substance". His Trinitarian theology was thus liable to the accusation of subordinationism. I cannot elaborate on this theme in the present article.²⁰ These remarks should only be taken as a hint of the phenomenon whereby Origen's ideas were put into a new dogmatic framework and seen from a new perspective by which they were judged critically.

This also happened to his reflections about pre-existence and apokatastasis. These hypotheses, which Origen proposed as consequences of his basic considerations about God and men, gained little support from the outset and lost nearly all credibility in late antiquity. The intricate question of the origin of the soul was never definitely resolved in ancient Christian theology (nor later on), but the Platonic answer, the concept of pre-existence, failed to gather much support in competition with the two other concepts, i. e. traducianism and creationism.²¹ Rather,

18 Philoc. 21–27 (p. 152–256 ROBINSON) "sur le libre arbitre" according to the title of the edition of Éric JUNOD, SC 226, Paris 1976. In philoc. 21 (p. 152–177 ROBINSON, not printed in SC 226) the treatise on free will (or self-agency) in princ. III 1 is preserved in Greek.

19 An elucidating study is Norbert BROX, *Spiritualität und Orthodoxie. Zum Konflikt des Origenes mit der Geschichte des Dogmas*, in: Ernst DASSMANN/Karl S. FRANK (eds.), *Pietas. Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting* (JAC.E 8), Münster 1980, 140–154, reprint in: Norbert BROX, *Das Frühchristentum. Schriften zur Historischen Theologie*, ed. by Franz DÜNZL/Alfons FÜRST/Ferdinand R. PROSTMEIER, Freiburg i. Br. u. a. 2000, 405–422.

20 For more information, see, e. g., Christoph BRUNS, *Trinität und Kosmos. Zur Gotteslehre des Origenes* (Adamantina 3), Münster 2013, 60–122.

21 The most comprehensive study is still Heinrich KARPP, *Probleme altchristlicher Anthropologie. Biblische Anthropologie und philosophische Theologie bei den Kirchenvätern des dritten Jahrhunderts* (BFChTh 44/3), Gütersloh 1950.

it became a critically assessed hallmark of 'Origenism'. The same holds true for the hope of the restoration of all things in the end. It was taken up by a very small minority of Christian philosophers like Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius Ponticus and Maximus the Confessor.²² On the contrary, the vast majority of Christians, intellectuals as well as ordinary people, expected a culmination of the history of salvation in a division between heaven or hell. In view of this common eschatology, Origen's *belief* – not 'doctrine' – that the end will consist in a reunification of creator and creation, became the second shibboleth of 'Origenism'. Starting with Methodius of Olympus at the turn of the fourth century, Origen's protological concept of a double creation and the pre-existence of the soul on the one hand, and his eschatological reflections about the resurrection on the other, especially the resurrection of the body, and final salvation were challenged.²³ During the first Origenist controversy around the turn of the fifth century, pre-existence and apokatastasis along with the alleged subordinationism were deemed to be heretical.²⁴ 'Origenism' thus became a concept of the critical reception of Origen and was increasingly regarded as a heresy. When 'Origenism' (in its Evagrian version) was formally condemned in the sixth century by the Roman emperor Justinian I in 543 and by the bishops convened at the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553, the main charges against Origen and his followers were the 'doctrines' of pre-existence and apokatastasis.²⁵

From then on, the concept of Origenism was strongly tied to the theories of pre-existence and apokatastasis. What had been open ways of thinking and expressions of hope in Origen's academic manner of dealing with questions at the edge of human knowledge were turned into 'doctrines' he had allegedly proclaimed, and these 'doctrines' were denounced and finally condemned as heretical. This notion of Origenism also affected the perception of Origen himself and of his philosophy. The side issues in his metaphysics were perceived as core ideas and starting points of his deliberations, and as such they were often also used as starting points to describe his philosophy as a whole. While Origen had focused

22 See the relevant chapters in the comprehensive study of RAMELLI, *Apokatastasis* (n. 4) 372–440. 461–512. 738–757.

23 See Henri CROUZEL, *Les critiques adressées par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité*, in: *Gr.* 53 (1972) 679–716.

24 See Elizabeth A. CLARK, *The Place of Jerome's Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist Controversy. The Apokatastasis and Ascetic Ideals*, in: *VigChr* 41 (1987) 154–171; id., *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton NJ 1992, 85–193.

25 Of the 9 anathemas of 543, nr. 1, 2 and 3 condemn pre-existence, nr. 9 the apokatastasis (and nr. 5 and 7 also concern questions of salvation and eschatology): ACO III p. 213 f. SCHWARTZ. Of the 15 anathemas of 553, nr. 1–6 condemn pre-existence and related topics, nr. 10–15 the apokatastasis and related eschatological ideas: ACO IV/1 p. 248 f. STRAUB. The rest of the anathemas concern christological problems of incarnation and salvation.

on the “middle”, i. e. the history of God and men as described in the Bible, the critical concept of Origenism focused on the beginning and the end of his metaphysical concepts, on protology and eschatology. To be sure, Origen’s strong emphasis on free will and the related conceptualisation of God’s and men’s relationship were not forgotten. But for centuries, they were not at the core of the reception of his metaphysics, and they did not play any role in the critical concept of Origenism as outlined above. The latter focused on pre-existence and apokatastasis (and subordinationism), and in some presentations of Origen’s thought this still holds true in modern times.

3. Humanist Origenism: the rediscovery of Origen’s metaphysics of freedom

It was only in the Renaissance and in Humanism that Origen’s groundbreaking invention of freedom as the key notion of all reality was rediscovered.²⁶ Main figures like Pico della Mirandola and Erasmus of Rotterdam drew on Origen and defended him against charges of heresy. In doing so, they did not accept the standard critical concept of Origenism but emphasised the main pillars of Origen’s Christian philosophy, namely his high esteem for reason and freedom.²⁷ In Renaissance Humanism and later on in the Reformation, the quest for a new understanding of what a human being is gathered a new and hitherto unparalleled momentum; this informed the history of ideas at least until the Enlightenment. The modern anthropology which was shaped in these highly controversial debates is based on the individual’s ability for dynamic change and self-realisation. This anthropological concept implies and presupposes the possibility of free decisions, and it puts a strong emphasis on reason as a primary capability of humans, out of which their

26 The main study is Max SCHÄR, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus* (BBGW 140), Basel/Stuttgart 1979. See now also Alfons FÜRST, *Origenismus und Humanismus. Die Wiederentdeckung des Origenes an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit*, in: id./Christian HENGSTERMANN (eds.), *Origenes Humanista*. Pico della Mirandas Traktat *De salute Origenis disputatio* (Adamantina 5), Münster 2015, 11–89; furthermore FÜRST, *Origenes* (n. 12) 171–195.

27 For Pico, see Alfons FÜRST, *Vernunft und Freiheit. Pico della Mirandas Verteidigung des Origenes*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Origenes Humanista* (n. 26) 197–238; for Erasmus: Christian HENGSTERMANN, *Die Seele zwischen Tier und Gott. Die origeneische Freiheitsanthropologie bei Erasmus von Rotterdam*, in: Alfons FÜRST/Christian HENGSTERMANN (eds.), *Autonomie und Menschenwürde. Origenes in der Philosophie der Neuzeit* (Adamantina 2), Münster 2012, 139–167. – As to the broader philosophical context of the debate about human freedom and dignity in Humanism and Renaissance, see Thomas LEINKAUF, *Grundriss Philosophie des Humanismus und der Renaissance (1350–1600)*, 2 vols., Hamburg 2017, vol. 1, 128–158. 647–691.

freedom can be enacted. From this perspective, Origen's anthropology of freedom was discovered as a useful source. The Alexandrian philosopher had conceived of humans as rational beings endowed with the power of self-agency. This concept worked as a source of inspiration – N. B. as one source among others – for interest in the individual in early modern times. The revival of Origen's metaphysics of freedom was usually accompanied by a revival of Platonism because the Alexandrian's Christian philosophy was shaped not only by the biblical but also by the Platonic tradition. Thus, when early modern Christian philosophers like Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, or later on the Cambridge Platonists, did not follow the Aristotelian tradition found in medieval scholasticism but reactivated the Platonic ways of thinking, Origen's Christian Platonism was not far away.

Admittedly, when Pico in a long chapter *On the Salvation of Origen* in his *Apology* of 1487 defended Origen, whom he called "the most excellent man in philosophy as well as in all disciplines",²⁸ against the traditional assumption that he should be condemned to hell, the Earl of Mirandola took over late medieval speculations about the salvation of Origen.²⁹ But in the speech *On the Dignity of Man*, which he wrote as the opening lecture of the disputation about the 900 theses proposed by him in 1486³⁰ (among them the hypothesis about Origen which he defended in the *Apology* against the charge of being heretical),³¹ Pico subscribed to Origen's main idea that human beings, by virtue of their reason and their capability to decide and act freely, define their substance and their position and rank in the universe by themselves: "You ... may determine your nature for yourself, according to your own free will, in whose hands We (i. e. God) have placed you (i. e. Adam) ..., so that you may, as the free and extraordinary shaper of yourself, fashion yourself in whatever form you prefer."³² Moreover, he followed Origen's

28 Pico della Mirandola, *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* I 1 (I p. 54 Garin): *Origenes Adamantius in philosophia secta sicut in omnibus disciplinis eminentissimus*. This treatise was written during the last two years of Pico's life in 1493/94.

29 FÜRST, *Vernunft und Freiheit* (n. 27) 200–207.

30 The speech was published only posthumously in 1496, two years after Pico's death, and received the title *De hominis dignitate* in the Straßburg edition of his works in 1504.

31 Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones nongentae: Conclusiones in Theologia numero XXIX secundum opinionem propriam a communi modo dicendi Theologorum satis diversam*, nr. 29, quoted in: *Apologia. De salute Origenis disputatio* 1 and 46: *Rationabilis est credere Origenem esse salvum quam credere ipsum esse damnatum*. For an English edition of the *Conclusiones*, see Stephen A. FARMER, *Syncretism in the West. Pico's 900 Theses* (1486). *The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems. With Text, Translation and Commentary* (MRTS 167), Tempe AZ 1998, 434. For an edition (with German translation) of the *Apologia*, see FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Origenes Humanista* (n. 26) 280–369 (the hypothesis about the salvation of Origen *ibid.* 280 and 348).

32 Pico, *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (p. 106 GARIN). Translation: p. 117 BORGHESI/PAPIO/RIVA. See Ernst CASSIRER, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (SBW 10), Leipzig 1927, reprint in ECW 14, Hamburg 2002, 1–220, 96–102; *id.*, Giovanni

anthropocentric cosmology and the concept of a cosmic Christ in the *Heptaplus* of 1489. In his explanation of the creation according to *Genesis* (Gen. 1,1–27), Pico conceived of “man endowed with intellect and free will”³³ as the paragon of the world and synthesis of all things according to Christ, the image of God.³⁴ Pico did not say that he was directly inspired by Origen when he forged this concept of human dignity based on autonomous freedom and self-realisation granted by God’s generosity, but there is a close affinity between these ideas and Origen’s concepts of human freedom and dignity. Thus, the key idea of Origen’s anthropology and metaphysics was again on the intellectual agenda, whereas the previously prevailing critical concept of Origenism did not play any role. On the contrary, Pico defined the final beatitude as the “return of everything to its beginning”.³⁵ He thus advocated Origen’s apokatastasis, the restoration of all things in the end.

These thoughts, forged in the Italian Renaissance of the late *Quattrocento*, affected to a great extent the most influential European humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam, who boldly stated in a letter written in 1518 that he had learned more about Christian philosophy from one page of Origen than from ten pages of Augustine.³⁶ Erasmus presented Origen as a spiritual guide and biblical exegete.³⁷ In the early *Handbook of a Christian Knight*, published in 1503,³⁸ as well as in the late preface *On the Life, Style, Teaching Method and Works of Origen*, published two months after his death in 1536 in his edition of the complete (Latin) works of

Pico della Mirandola. A Study in the History of Renaissance Ideas, in: JHI 3 (1942) 123–144. 319–346, 319–338; id., “Über die Würde des Menschen” von Pico della Mirandola, in: *Studia Humanitatis* 12 (1959) 48–61; Theo KOBUSCH, Die Würde des Menschen – ein Erbe der christlichen Philosophie, in: Rolf GRÖSCHNER/Stephan KIRSTE/Oliver W. LEMBECKE (eds.), *Des Menschen Würde – entdeckt und erfunden im Humanismus der italienischen Renaissance*, Tübingen 2008, 235–250; Theo KOBUSCH, Origenes und Pico. Picos *Oratio* im Licht der spätantiken Philosophie, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Origenes Humanista* (n. 26) 141–159; FÜRST, Origenismus und Humanismus (n. 26) 57–77.

33 Pico, *Heptaplus* VII prooem. (p. 328 GARIN).

34 Ibid. V 6 f. (p. 300–308). See the in-depth study of Christian HENGSTERMANN, *Der Kosmos als Freiheit und Geschichte. Picos Origenismus im Heptaplus*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Origenes Humanista* (n. 26) 161–195, esp. 185–193; furthermore FÜRST, *Origenismus und Humanismus* (n. 26) 78–90.

35 Pico, *ibid.* VII prooem. (p. 326): *Felicitatem ego sic definio: redivitum uniuscuiusque rei ad suum principium*. Cf. *ibid.* (p. 334); VII 1 (p. 340); *Expositio primae dictionis, idest “in principio”* (p. 380): ... *finem omnium rerum esse, ut principio suo restituantur*.

36 Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Epistulae* III 844.252–254 ALLEN: *Plus me docet Christianae philosophiae unica Origenis pagina quam decem Augustini*. Cf. *Annotationes in Epistolam ad Galatas* (LB 6, 809).

37 The main study is André GODIN, *Erasmus lecteur d’Origène* (THR 190), Geneva 1982. For the following account see the article of Hengstermann noted above in n. 27.

38 Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (LB 5). See GODIN, *ibid.* 33–118.

Origen,³⁹ Erasmus depicted Origen as the ideal of Christian piety and perfection. He adopted the Origenian concept of a soul which is able to make its choice between good and evil and has to maintain its decision by a permanent moral effort. Man either becomes like a wild beast or a lukewarm mediocrity if he follows evil, or he assimilates himself to his innermost principle, the Word of God, and thus attains the highest expression of his freedom and dignity.⁴⁰ Like Pico, Erasmus advocated the dynamic mutability and free self-agency of human beings between irrational beasts and God as perfect freedom. The same was true in the middle of his life. In his famous debate with Martin Luther about the free or the captive will, Erasmus in his *Diatribes on Freewill* of 1524⁴¹ defended free will and quoted at length from Origen's foundational treatise *On Freewill* in the third book of *On First Principles*.⁴² Moreover, Erasmus's *Diatribes* basically reproduced the general structure of Origen's treatise, which is, for the most part, based on an explanation of relevant and conflicting passages of Scripture.⁴³

For the first time in the history of the reception of Origen after the Cappadocian Fathers in the fourth century – with the notable exception of John Scotus Eriugena in the ninth century⁴⁴ – the core idea of Origen's metaphysics and anthropology of freedom was taken up by Renaissance humanists like Pico and Erasmus. Theirs was not a critical and heretical concept of Origenism which hinged on pre-existence and apokatastasis. While clearly following Origen's treatise *On Freewill*, Erasmus reproduced neither Origen's concept of pre-existence nor that of an ongoing divine education in future worlds to come.⁴⁵ He avoided being trapped in the misleading alternatives of Origen's orthodoxy or heterodoxy but managed to retrieve the foundational pivot of his thought.⁴⁶ Thus, the humanist Origenists presented an image of Origen which reflected the heart of his Christian philosophy. Freedom and self-agency were given back to the picture of Origen as principal features. Yet for the first time, Origen's esteem for reason and freedom in the process of salvation became a matter of dispute among Christian theologians of the emerging Protestant and Catholic confessional churches.

39 Erasmus, *De vita, phrasi, docendi ratione et operibus Origenis* (LB 8, 425–440). See GODIN, *ibid.* 631–660.

40 Erasmus, *Enchiridion* EH 52–60.

41 Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio* (LB 9, 1215–1248).

42 *Ibid.* III a 2–17.

43 This has been proven by André GODIN, *Une lecture sélective d'Origène à la Renaissance. Erasme et le Peri archôn*, in: Henri CROUZEL/Gennaro LOMIENTO/Josep RIUS-CAMPS (eds.), *Origeniana* (QVetChr 12), Bari 1975, 83–95.

44 For Eriugena's concept of apokatastasis, see RAMELLI, *Apokatastasis* (n. 4) 773–815.

45 GODIN, *Erasme et le Peri archôn* (n. 43) 88–90.

46 *Ibid.* 94.

4. The Cambridge Origenists on freedom, pre-existence and apokatastasis

After the recovery of the original key aspects of Origen's Christian philosophy, the notion of freedom as the ability of self-realisation remained a central feature of early modern debates about freedom.⁴⁷ This tradition reached its apogee in the 17th century among the Cambridge Platonists.⁴⁸ Contrary to their Calvinist background and education, this group of English clergymen at Emmanuel, Christ's, Queen's and Clare Colleges in Cambridge forged a Platonically inspired Christian philosophy of religion in which they advocated a univocal notion of absolute and universally valid moral values and an intellectualist concept of free will, i. e. of a will bound to reason and the supreme good. Apart from the Platonic tradition, they drew heavily on Origen's metaphysics of freedom and can therefore be deemed Cambridge Origenists as well.⁴⁹ Their picture of Origen and their concept of Origenism, respectively, contained all the main features of the Origenist tradition: pre-existence and apokatastasis, the alleged subordinationism and the metaphysics of freedom, but they dealt with these themes quite diversely. Depending on what they gave prominence to and the ways in which they discussed these themes, they presented quite different pictures of Origen and Origenism.

The main document of this "Origenist moment in English theology", as the apogee of this movement between the years 1658 and 1662 has rightly been called,⁵⁰ is the anonymous *Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of*

47 See Theo KOBUSCH, *Die Idee der Freiheit. Origenes und der neuzeitliche Freiheitsgedanke*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Autonomie und Menschenwürde* (n. 27) 67–80, 74–80; id., *Die Univozität des Moralischen. Zur Wirkung des Origenes in Deismus und Aufklärung*, in: Anders-Christian JACOBSEN (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima. Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (BETHL 279), Leuven et al. 2016, 29–45, 37–45.

48 For the broader philosophical context, see Wolfgang RÖD, *Die Philosophie der Neuzeit 1. Von Francis Bacon bis Spinoza* (GPh 7), München 1978, 174–185, and Sarah HUTTON, *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford 2015, 136–159.

49 Already Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz described Henry More as "Platonist and Origenist": Briefwechsel zwischen Leibniz und Remond. 1713–1716, in: *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. by Carl I. GERHARDT, vol. 3, Berlin 1887 (reprint Hildesheim 1960), 646: "M. Morus etoit Platonicien et Origeniste." See also the title of the book edited by Alfons FÜRST/Christian HENGSTERMANN (eds.), *Die Cambridge Origenists. George Rusts Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions* (Adamantina 4), Münster 2013.

50 Sarah HUTTON, Henry More and Anne Conway on Preexistence and Universal Salvation, in: Marialuisa BALDI (ed.), "Mind senior to the World". *Stoicismo e origenismo nella filosofia platonica del Seicento inglese*, Milan 1996, 113–125, 113. In these years, the major works of Cambridge Origenism appeared, starting with William Spencer's bilingual Greek and Latin edition of Origen's *Apology against Celsus* and the *Philocalia* in 1658. Spencer's preface to his edition is edited with German translation and notes in FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Cambridge Origenists* (n. 49) 220–231.

His Opinions, published in London in 1661.⁵¹ The presumed author, George Rust, defended not only the man Origen against the charge of being a heretic and thus condemned, echoing Pico, but also his repeatedly contested opinions about the Trinity, pre-existence and universal salvation. Origen's "doctrine concerning the Holy Trinity, amongst the hypostases whereof, they say, he puts an inequality", is the first issue discussed and defended in the *Letter of Resolution*;⁵² the second one is "that the Souls of men do praexist"; and the third one "that through their fault and negligence they appear here inhabitants of the earth cloath'd with terrestrial bodies".⁵³ Themes 4, 5 and 6 are related to the resurrection and salvation, namely "that the mystery of the Resurrection is this, that we shall be cloathed with heavenly or aethereal bodies"; "that after long periods of time the damned shall be delivered from their torments, and try their fortunes again in such regions of the world as their Nature fits them for"; and "that the Earth after her Conflagration shall become habitable again, and be the mansion of men and other animals; and this in eternal vicissitudes".⁵⁴ For the first time in the history of Origen's reception, the critical aspects of his Christian philosophy were openly defended against what the author saw as the false accusations brought forward in the first Origenist controversy. Origen was rather presented as an early Christian author whose theology had been wrongly condemned as heretical.

Nevertheless, in so doing, the author of the *Letter of Resolution* still adhered to the two key tenets of Origenism and thus presented a picture of Origen seen through this lense. He presupposed the version of Origenism which had been shaped in the late antique controversies, based on the 'doctrines' of Origen that were denigrated as heretical. Although he argued for an orthodox interpretation of this Origenism, he did not leave the framework of 'doctrines' to which this picture of Origen was confined. In one respect he even subscribed to a distorted presentation of Origen's eschatology. He took exception to the doctrine of eternal punishment and argued for God's universal love and saving will, but he did not advocate a *definite* restoration of all things; instead, he proposed a theory of

51 [George Rust], *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions*, reproduced from the edition of 1661, with a bibliographical note by Marjorie Hope NICOLSON, New York 1933. For the context and content of this treatise, see Christian HENGSTERMANN, *George Rusts Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions*. Manifest eines neuzeitlichen Origenismus, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *ibid.* 11–45; *id.*, Pre-existence and Universal Salvation. The Origenian Renaissance in Early Modern Cambridge, in: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 25 (2017) 971–989; furthermore also Constantinos A. PATRIDES, The Salvation of Satan, in: *JHI* 28 (1967) 467–478, 475–478.

52 [Rust], *Letter of Resolution* p. 14–21, defended *ibid.* p. 96–100.

53 *Ibid.* p. 21–46 and p. 46–55, both defended *ibid.* p. 100–108.

54 *Ibid.* p. 55–71, p. 71–81 and p. 81–95, all defended *ibid.* p. 108–125, p. 125–134 and p. 134 f., respectively.

endless world cycles. He thus presented the Origenist interpretation of Origen's apokatastasis as a never-ending series of the fall and return of souls.⁵⁵ By means of arguing for the orthodoxy of these Origenist 'doctrines', the *Letter of Resolution* unconsciously presented not a more appropriate image of Origen himself but a positive version of the critical concept of Origenism.

Not surprisingly, therefore, free will or freedom is not listed among Origen's chief opinions. Against determinist and fideist voluntarism, Rust, like all of the Cambridge Platonists, admittedly defended a concept of God and human beings based on reason and freedom and upheld the ability of the soul to turn towards God by its own free choice. But when it came to the fallen soul's constitution and behaviour, his description turned out to be quite pessimistic and even deterministic.⁵⁶ According to "the experience of most men", he wrote in the only passage where he dealt with free will, "we are so fatally entangled in" "all manner of viciousness" coming "from without" and "from our own intrinsick constitution" "that it is next to a miracle to rid our selves in any good measure of its chains". He thus spoke restrictively of "some men" who "talk of *liberty* and *free-will* and a sovereign power in us to keep all these rebellious humours in good order". Because he did not want to play into the hands of their "adversaries, who from the assurance of their very senses that there is a great *lapse* and degeneracy in universal mankind, do without all ceremony bluntly cast the cause upon God", i. e. the voluntarists of the Calvinist tradition whom Rust blamed for making an arbitrary God directly responsible for the fall of every soul, he granted "these contenders for *Free-will* that something of what they plead for is true (as indeed it cannot be denied)". Despite this clear option for the free will of pre-existent souls, Rust nevertheless remained sceptical whether, when considering "the condition of our nature" and "the strong inclinations in us" driven by customs and passions, "and how corporeal motions determine the thoughts and passions of our minde", it is much more likely "that we shall chuse the ways of vice rather than virtue".⁵⁷ Rust here insists on a realistic perception of the human condition and the often confined and restricted ability of a human being to choose the good, although one is basically free to do this.

55 Ibid. p. 17. See Christian HENGSTERMANN, *Der Niedergang der Hölle. Auferstehung und die Wiederherstellung aller Dinge im Letter of Resolution*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Cambridge Origenists* (n. 49) 177–198 (esp. 181 n. 18); Alfons FÜRST/Christian HENGSTERMANN, *Die Apokalypse und der Naturgeist. Theologische Physik in George Rusts Origenes-Schrift*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *ibid.* 199–217 (esp. 200 f. 215 f.).

56 See Alfons FÜRST, *Emanatianismus und Präexistentialismus. George Rusts origeneische Theodizeestrategie zwischen Determinismus und Freiheit*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *ibid.* 133–164, 150–164.

57 [Rust], *Letter of Resolution* p. 34–36. Cf. *ibid.* 49 f.

This view does not yet automatically undermine the assumption of a free will, but Rust went even a step further in his sceptical stance. He described the fall of the soul as “little less than necessary”. Human beings are, he wrote, “*fatally* intangled” in the “chains” of their “own intrinsick constitution”; their souls are “*fatally and necessarily*” put into bodies which “will be their utter bane and miserable ruine”; and “the elements of our terrestrial composition are such as *almost fatally* intangle us in vice, passion and misery”.⁵⁸ Rust strongly advocated pre-existence in order to avoid a deterministic explanation of the condition of human beings. But the vocabulary of fatal necessity used by him can be taken as a hint of the problem that rational beings were created in a condition from which the fall, in a certain sense, was inevitable. Since the goodness of created beings is not substantial – as in God – but accidental, “mutability in created essences” is “necessary”,⁵⁹ “lapsability”, as Rust said using a word coined by the Cambridge Platonists, i. e. the ability to collapse or to fall, belongs to their “nature” so that “through the lapsability of their nature they *should* fall” and that “it seems *necessary* according to the course of nature that they should sink” into terrestrial bodies.⁶⁰ Although Rust stressed that this “would not happen to them without their own fault”, he clearly saw that it is not possible to release God from all responsibility “since it proceeded somewhat from that *imcompoßibility* which his own hands had wrought in their essential contexture”.⁶¹ For Rust, the tense conjunction of mind and body, “the necessary impossibility in created natures incorporate”,⁶² is the source of all misery, of the “great slavery or distraction in us”.⁶³ By ascribing this inward tension, “impossibility”, to God who created the “essential contexture” of human

58 Ibid. p. 30. 34. 38. 56.

59 Rust here took up Origen’s main argument for the fall of rational beings: because they are created, they are mutable, and this mutability is the (necessary but not compulsory) precondition for the possibility of changing their attitude towards God. Cf. Origen, princ. II 9,2 (GCS Orig. 5, 165): “Since these rational natures, which as we have said above were made in the beginning, were made when they did not previously exist, by this very fact – that they were not, and then they began to exist – they are necessarily changeable and mutable, since whatever power existed in their substance was not in it by nature but was the result of the beneficence of their Maker. What they are, therefore, is neither their own nor eternal, but given by God. For it did not always exist, and everything that is given can also be taken away and withdrawn. The cause for withdrawal would be this, that the movements of the souls are not directed rightly and commendably.” Translation: p. 239 BEHR.

60 [Rust], Letter of Resolution p. 48 f. (wording inverted; my italics). The *Oxford English Dictionary* only gives two further examples of the use of the word “lapsability” (or “lapsibility”) in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists Ralph Cudworth, True Intellectual System (see below n. 86) p. 565, and Henry More, Two choice and useful treatises (see below n. 66) p. 80.

61 [Rust], *ibid.* p. 72.

62 *Ibid.* p. 101.

63 *Ibid.* p. 121.

beings in this way, Rust pointed out that even when the fall is ascribed to pre-existent souls who used their free will in the wrong way the problem remains that these souls were created under this condition by God and thus in some way had no chance of avoiding this fate. It was not the choice of created beings to be like this. In this sense, the fall was fatal and necessary, “wherefore the objection can be made against the production of such a lapsible being”, as he said in the sermon *God is Love* in 1658.⁶⁴ It might be due to this insight that the way in which the theme of free will is displayed in the *Letter of Resolution* is marked by quite strong deterministic accents.

The *Letter of Resolution*, although immediately censured by the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University for its defence of pre-existence,⁶⁵ was influential beyond Cambridge. In Oxford, Joseph Glanvill, a student of Henry More, made a case for the protology and eschatology of Origen, especially for pre-existence as “light from the east”, in *A Letter Concerning the Pre-existence of Souls* and a treatise with the title *Lux Orientalis or An Enquiry into the Opinion of the Eastern Sages Concerning the Pre-existence of Souls*, both written in 1662.⁶⁶ Another student of Henry More, presumably the most famous one, Lady Anne Conway of Ragley Hall (her family’s manor in Warwickshire) can rightly be seen as the most Origenian of all the writers connected to the group of Origenian Platonists in Cambridge. More had recommended the *Letter of Resolution* to his pupil shortly after its publication in 1661.⁶⁷ Although this extraordinary woman philosopher of the 17th century does not mention Origen by name in her *Principles of the Most*

64 George Rust, *God is Love*, in: *The Remains of That Reverend and learned Prelate, Dr. George Rust, Late Lord Bishop of Dromore, in the Kingdom of Ireland*, collected and published by Henry Hallywell, London 1686, 1–20, 18; reprint with German translation in FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Cambridge Origenists* (n. 49) 232–267, 264.

65 This was reported by Henry More in a letter to Anne Conway written on September 24th, 1661: *The Conway Letters. The Correspondance of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More and their Friends (1642–1684)*, ed. by Marjorie Hope NICOLSON, revised edition with an introduction and new material, ed. by Sarah HUTTON, Oxford 1992, p. 194.

66 The letter was published by Charles F. MULLETT, *A Letter by Joseph Glanvill on the Future State*, in: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 1 (1938) 447–456, and again by Rhodri LEWIS, *Of “Origenian Platonisme”*. Joseph Glanvill on the Pre-existence of Souls, in: *ibid.* 69 (2006) 267–300, reprinted with German translation and notes in FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Cambridge Origenists* (n. 49) 286–305. For the treatise, see the edition together with another treatise of George Rust and a commentary on both texts by their teacher Henry More: *Two choice and usefull treatises, the one Lux Orientalis or An Enquiry into the opinion of the Eastern sages concerning the pre-existence of souls, being a key to unlock the grand mysteries of providence in relation to man’s sin and misery. The other, A Discourse of Truth by the late Reverend Dr. Rust, Lord Bishop of Dromore in Ireland with annotations on them both*, London 1682. The preface of *Lux Orientalis* is reprinted with German translation and notes in FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *ibid.* 306–325.

67 More, *Letter to Conway*, September 14th, 1661: *Conway Letters* (n. 65) p. 192.

Ancient and Modern Philosophy, written in English during the last decade of her life in the 1670s but published only posthumously and anonymously in 1690 in Amsterdam in a Latin version under the title *Principia philosophiae antiquissimae et recentissimae* (which was re-translated into English in London in 1692),⁶⁸ she closely followed the metaphysical and anthropological ideas of the ancient Christian Platonist. Her metaphysical concept of a processual spiritualistic monism can be understood as an explication of Origen's metaphysics of God's free motion in creation from pre-existence to universal salvation.⁶⁹

Conway advocated pre-existence and apokatastasis even more strongly than Origen himself when she wrote, e. g., that "all God's creatures, which have previously fallen and degenerated from their original goodness, *must* be changed and restored after a certain time to a condition which is not simply as good as that in which they were created, but better"⁷⁰ The salvation of all being was Conway's main interest from the outset.⁷¹ The driving force of the evolutionary development of all spiritual beings towards their perfection in a godlike quality⁷² is freedom, conceptualised, as in Origen, as a spontaneous self-motion. Human beings

- 68 [Anne Conway], *Principiae Philosophiae Antiquissimae & recentissimae de Deo, Christo & Creatura id est de Spiritu & materia in genere*, in: *Opuscula philosophica quibus continetur, Principiae Philosophiae Antiquissimae & recentissimae ac philosophia vulgaris refutata quibus junctur sunt C. C. problemata de revolutione animarum humanorum*, Amsterdam 1690; English translation by 'J. C.', *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy: Concerning God, Christ, and the Creature; that is, concerning Spirit and Matter in General*, London 1692. These late 17th-century Latin and English versions are published in Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. with an introduction by Peter LOPTSON (AIHI 101), The Hague et al. 1982. A modernised English translation is provided in Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Allison COUDERT/Taylor CORSE, Cambridge/New York 1996.
- 69 HUTTON, *Preexistence and Universal Salvation* (n. 50) 120–125; ead., *Origen and Anne Conway*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Autonomie und Menschenwürde* (n. 27) 221–234; Christian HENGSTERMANN, *Grundlegung eines Prozessmonismus. Anne Conways Kritik an ihrem Lehrer Henry More*, in: id./Ulrike WEICHERT (eds.), *Anne Conways Principia Philosophiae. Materialismuskritik und Alleinheits-Spekulation im neuzeitlichen England* (Pontes 52), Berlin 2012, 131–150.
- 70 Conway, *Principles* 7,1 (p. 42 COUDERT/CORSE; my italics). Cf. *ibid.* 6,9 (p. 37); 7,2 (p. 44 f.).
- 71 HENGSTERMANN, *Prozessmonismus* (n. 69) 140 f., with reference to an early letter of Conway to her tutor More preserved in Richard Ward, *The Life of Henry More*, ed. by Sarah HUTTON et al. (AIHI 167), Dordrecht et al. 2000, p. 169, reprinted and commented in ead., *On an Early Letter by Anne Conway*, in: Pina TOTARO (ed.), *Donne, filosofia e cultura nel Seicento*, Rome 1999, 109–115; see also HUTTON, *Preexistence and Universal Salvation* (n. 50) 121; ead., *Origen and Anne Conway* (n. 69) 226.
- 72 Conway, *Principles* 4,4 (p. 22 COUDERT/CORSE): "The creatures ... can never strictly speaking become him (sc. Christ) ... Moreover, the highest point they can reach is this, to be like him, as Scripture says." Cf. *ibid.* 9,7 (p. 67): "Thus a creature is capable of a further and more perfect degree of life, ever greater and greater to infinity, but it can never attain equality with God."

have the ability to decide freely and determine their own actions. Conway called this the “indifference of will”, i. e. the ability to choose the good or the bad.⁷³ As in Origen, the ontological status of a spiritual being is expressed in its bodily constitution which is shaped by its free decisions: A spirit “has the ability and freedom to shape the body according to its own ideas and inclinations”.⁷⁴ On the contrary, because God cannot choose the bad, “that indifference of acting or not acting can in no way be said to be in God”; instead, “he is free and acts spontaneously in whatever he does”⁷⁵ out of overflowing goodness and disinterested love,⁷⁶ “without any external force or compulsion or without any cause coming from the creatures”.⁷⁷ As in Origen’s libertarianism, freedom and necessity coincide in God: “God is a perpetual creator acting with as much freedom as necessity.”⁷⁸

In these works of the Cambridge Origenists, apart from the notion of free will and self-determination, pre-existence and apokatastasis were back on the agenda of Christian philosophy. The question is how much they dominated the concept of Origenism and how Origen was portrayed. In the *Letter of Resolution* and in Joseph Glanvill, they obscure the idea of freedom. Anne Conway’s system as a whole, however, is a thorough Origenian metaphysics of willful and spontaneous motions of spiritual beings and thus updates Origen’s metaphysics of freedom within the philosophical context of the 17th century. The notion of freedom was an essential part of her picture of Origen, although she did not extensively deal with this theme. This was even more the case with Conway’s teacher Henry More. This leading figure of the Cambridge Platonists moved the reception of Origen away from the key tenets of Origenism to the rediscovery of his libertarian ethics and metaphysics. While he, contrary to Conway, did not subscribe to the idea of universal salvation,⁷⁹ he strongly advocated pre-existence, like Rust and Glanvill, and this continued in his later writings after an early poem of 1647 *On the Prae-*

73 Ibid. 3,1 (p. 15): “For this indifference of will is the basis for all mutability and corruptibility in creatures, so that there would be no evil in creatures if they were not mutable.” This argument of the mutability of created beings and thus their corruptibility resonates well with the reasoning in the *Letter of Resolution* and might have been taken from it. It matches also Origen’s reasoning: see above n. 59.

74 Ibid. 6,7 (p. 36).

75 Ibid. 3,1 (p. 15).

76 Ibid. 2,4 (p. 13): “God is infinitely good, loving, and bountiful; indeed, he is goodness and charity itself, the infinite fountain and ocean of goodness, charity, and bounty.”

77 Ibid. 3,1 (p. 15).

78 Ibid. 6,6 (p. 33). Cf. *ibid.* 3,2 (p. 16): “God is both a most free agent and a most necessary one, so that he must do whatever he does to and for his creatures since his infinite wisdom, goodness, and justice are a law to him which cannot be superseded.”

79 Convincingly demonstrated by Dennis P. WALKER, *The Decline of Hell. Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment*, London 1964, 127–134.

existence of the Soul, especially in the treatise *The Immortality of the Soul* of 1659.⁸⁰ Through the concept of pre-existence, More, like Origen, found an answer to the age-old problem of theodicy, i. e. the question of how to reconcile sin and evil with God's goodness and justice.⁸¹ For his libertarian concept of free will, he was probably also influenced by Origenian ideas.⁸² More drew heavily on the Christian Platonism of Origen, whom he hailed as "miracle of the Christian world"⁸³ and "the greatest Light and Bulwark that ancient Christianity had",⁸⁴ especially in his concept of free will as an essential human ability to do what is good. The picture of Origen which emerges out of the writings of Henry More is centred around the pre-existence of the soul and a libertarian concept of freedom.

It remained, however, to the other leading figure of the Cambridge Platonists, Ralph Cudworth, to reestablish a libertarian notion of freedom as the core of Origen's Christian Platonism.⁸⁵ Cudworth rejected both pre-existence and apokatastasis – like John Smith and Nathaniel Culverwell, other members of this circle – and, at the same time, emphatically advocated Origen's metaphysics and ethics of freedom. To the "fundamentals or essentials" of his Platonic-Origenian philosophy, as he described them in the preface to his monumental, albeit incomplete *True Intellectual System of the Universe* of 1678, belongs the assumption that "there is something ἐφ' ἡμῖν or, that we are so far forth principles or masters of our own actions, as to be accountable to justice for them, or to make us guilty and blameworthy for what we do amiss, and to deserve punishment accordingly".⁸⁶

80 Henry More, *The Praeexistency of the Soul*, London 1647, in: *The Complete Poems of Dr. Henry More*, ed. by Alexander Balloch GROSART, Edinburgh 1878, p. 117–128; Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul*, London 1659, ed. by Alexander JACOB (AIHI 122), Dordrecht et al. 1987, esp. p. 145–153. See Robert CROCKER, *Henry More and the Preexistence of the Soul*, in: id. (ed.), *Religion, Reason and Nature in Early Modern Europe* (AIHI 180), Dordrecht et al. 2001, 77–96, reproduced with modifications in id., *Henry More 1614–1687. A Biography of the Cambridge Platonist* (AIHI 185), Dordrecht et al. 2004, 111–125; Douglas HEDLEY, *The Cambridge Platonists and the "Miracle of the Christian World"*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Autonomie und Menschenwürde* (n. 27) 185–197, 189–192.

81 HUTTON, *Preexistence and Universal Salvation* (n. 50) 116–120.

82 See the contribution of David Leech to the present volume.

83 Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*, 2 vols., London 1662, vol. I, *The Preface General* p. xxi; *Opera omnia* II/2, London 1679, *Praefatio generalis* p. 12: *Originem Adamantium, istud Christiani orbis miraculum*.

84 More, *Immortality of the Soul* p. 247.

85 See Christian HENGSTERMANN, *Platonismus und Panentheismus bei Ralph Cudworth*, in: Frank MEIER-HAMIDI/Klaus MÜLLER (eds.), *Persönlich und alles zugleich. Theorien der All-Einheit und christliche Gottrede* (RaFi 40), Regensburg 2010, 192–211; id., *Die "Cambridge Platonists". Freiheitsmetaphysik und All-Einheitsspekulation im neuzeitlichen Christentum*, in: id./WEICHERT, *Anne Conways Principia Philosophiae* (n. 69) 13–39.

86 Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, London 1678, *The Preface* (unnumbered p. 3). The motto of this work is quoted from Origen, *Cels.* VI 13 (GCS Orig.

A Treatise of Freewill, which was edited only in 1838, formed part of the huge quantity of unpublished manuscripts which Cudworth prepared for the second and third parts of the *True Intellectual System*.⁸⁷ In the opening lines of this treatise, Cudworth repeated the statement just quoted from the preface of the *True Intellectual System* that “there is something ἐφ’ ἡμῶν, in nostra potestate, in our own power (though dependently upon God Almighty), and that we are not altogether passive in our actings, nor determined by inevitable necessity in whatsoever we do”.⁸⁸ In his argument for this conviction in the first chapter of *A Treatise of Freewill*, Cudworth adopted all the main reasons for the existence of free will which Origen had adduced in his writings, so we can assume that these were the likely sources for his account.⁸⁹ On the one hand, Cudworth argued philosophically that freedom is a presupposition of human action “because we praise and dispraise, commend and blame men for their actings”, and sometimes men blame, accuse and condemn “themselves for their own actions” out of “an inward sense of guilt” or “remorse of conscience”.⁹⁰ In the same sense, Origen had used the examples of a master who blames his slave, or a father who chides his son for having acted wickedly.⁹¹ This argument foreshadows the reasoning of Immanuel Kant that freedom as an *a priori* of human action is a postulate of practical reason.⁹² On the other hand, Cudworth, like Origen,⁹³ drew an argument from biblical and ecclesiastical preaching “that there is a solemn day of judgement appointed, in which God will conspicuously, palpably, and notoriously render to every one according to his works or actions past” and that “we cannot possibly maintain the justice of God in this, if all men’s actions be necessary either in their own nature,

2, 83): “Human wisdom is a means of education for the soul, divine wisdom being the ultimate end.” Translation: p. 326 CHADWICK.

87 This treatise (Ms. Add. 4978) is the shortest of the three treatises on liberty and necessity in the British Library in London, Ms. Add. 4978–4982: *A Treatise of Freewill*, ed. by John ALLEN, London 1838 (reprint: *The Collected Works of Ralph Cudworth*, vol. 1, Hildesheim 1979). Modern edition with a slightly revised text to make it more readable: Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*. With *A Treatise of Freewill*, ed. by Sarah HUTTON, Cambridge 1996, p. 153–209.

88 Cudworth, *Treatise of Freewill* 1 (p. 155 HUTTON).

89 HUTTON, *Ralph Cudworth* (n. 87) 155 n. 1, assumes this in view of *On First Principles*. See also Jean-Louis BRETEAU, *Origène était-il pour Cudworth le modèle du philosophe Chrétien?*, in: BALDI, *Stoicismo e origenismo* (n. 50) 127–147, 140–144.

90 Cudworth, *Treatise of Freewill* 1 (p. 155, 156 HUTTON). Cf. *ibid.* 5 (p. 167). 11 (p. 182 f.).

91 Origen, *orat.* 6,2 (GCS Orig. 2, 312).

92 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Riga 1788, Vorrede (AA 5, A 3–28).

93 Origen, *princ.* III 1,1 (GCS Orig. 5, 195), quoted above in n. 11: “... in the ecclesiastical preaching there is included the doctrine of the righteous judgement of God, which, when believed to be true, summons those who hear it to live well and to avoid sin in every way, clearly acknowledging that things worthy of praise and blame are within our own power ...” Translation: p. 285 BEHR.

or by Divine decrees and influx”⁹⁴ Again, like Origen’s defence of God from the charge of being unjust, Cudworth assumed that man “was himself the cause of the evil” but that “God is causeless and guiltless”, as he said with the famous formula of Plato: *θεὸς ἀναίτιος*.⁹⁵ Besides the philosophical argument against the determinist atomism of Thomas Hobbes – who is explicitly criticised several times in the *Treatise of Freewill*⁹⁶ – “that absolute necessity does not reign over all human actions, but that there is something of contingent liberty in them”, Cudworth was interested in defending the truth and rationality of the Christian faith: “We cannot”, he concluded, “possibly maintain the truth of Christianity without a liberty from necessity.”⁹⁷ Lastly, Cudworth also agrees with Origen’s vision – while not subscribing to the Alexandrian’s hope for *universal* salvation – that the goal of life, “the true liberty of a man”, is reached “by the right use of the faculty of freewill” so that “he doth freely, readily, and easily comply with the law of the Divine life”. According to Origen this state is achieved “when each individual simply by the exercise of his freedom will choose what the Logos wills and will be in that state which he has chosen”.⁹⁸ According to Cudworth, this will happen “together with the assistance of Divine grace”,⁹⁹ as Origen, too, emphasised repeatedly,¹⁰⁰ so that the charge of Pelagianism does not apply, either to Origen or to Cudworth.¹⁰¹

94 Cudworth, *Treatise of Freewill* 1 (p. 157 HUTTON). Cf. *ibid.* 4 (p. 165 f.).

95 *Ibid.* 1 (p. 155), quoting Plato, *polit.* X 617e.

96 *Ibid.* 2 (p. 158. 159 f.). 4 (p. 163). 5 (p. 168). 8 (p. 172): “Hobbians” among “Epicureans and Atheists”. 15 (p. 190). 18 (p. 198). 19 (p. 200). 22 (p. 203). For this, see the contribution of Christian Hengstmann to the present volume, and furthermore Yves Ch. ZARCA, Ralph Cudworth et le fondement de la morale: l’action, le sujet et la norme, in: *ArPh* 58 (1995) 405–420.

97 Cudworth, *ibid.* 1 (p. 157).

98 Origen, *Cels.* VIII 72 (GCS Orig. 2, 288 f.). Translation: p. 507 CHADWICK (see above n. 16).

99 Cudworth, *Treatise of Freewill* 17 (p. 196 HUTTON).

100 Origen, *princ.* III 1,12 (GCS Orig. 5, 216); III 1,19 (5, 231–233); in *Ex. hom.* 6,1 (GCS Orig. 6, 191); in *Ios. hom.* 12,2 (GCS Orig. 7, 369); in *Hier. hom.* 9,4 (OWD 11, 262); in *Matth. comm.* X 11 (GCS Orig. 10, 12); in *Rom. comm.* VII 14,3 (SC 543, 384–386); in *Rom. comm.* VI frg. 5 (p. 204 SCHERER); *philoc.* 26,7 (SC 226, 256–262).

101 Cudworth argued against the charge of Pelagianism in *Treatise of Freewill* 2 (p. 160 HUTTON) and 26 (p. 208). Origen was decried as ‘father of Pelagianism’ since the late antique controversies about Pelagius’s doctrine of sin and grace: CLARK, *Origenist Controversy* (n. 24) 194–244. This accusation was renewed in the 17th century, above all in the Jansenist controversy: Marc PARMENTIER, Pelagius as the Bogeyman of Catholics and Protestants in the Seventeenth Century, in: *Augustiniana* 53 (2003) 147–158; Thomas P. SCHECK, Origen and the History of Justification. The Legacy of Origen’s Commentary on Romans, *Notre Dame IN* 2008, 205–216; Bernward SCHMIDT, *Origenes Pelagianus?* Huets Auseinandersetzung mit dem Origenesverständnis Cornelis Jansens, in: Alfons FÜRST (ed.), *Origenes in Frankreich. Die Origeniana* Pierre-Daniel Huets (Adamantina 10), Münster 2017, 173–201.

Cudworth not only followed Origen in the dual philosophical and biblical structure and content of his position concerning free self-agency, but, even more importantly, he also adopted the core idea of Origen's metaphysics of freedom. While Origen had taken over the Stoics' theory of action and their concept of free decisions depending upon the soul's "ruling principle" (*ἡγεμονικόν*), he had rejected their doctrine of endless cyclical repetitions of always exactly the same world¹⁰² because this metaphysical determinism undermines men's ability to decide and choose freely and thus jettisons the endeavour to uphold moral accountability. Cudworth followed Origen in both aspects: in opposing "the doctrine of the Stoics, that there had been and should be infinite such worlds or mundane periods, and circuits from eternity to eternity, exactly alike to one another",¹⁰³ and in strongly advocating "the hegemonic of the soul",¹⁰⁴ "that which is properly we ourselves",¹⁰⁵ "which first moveth in us, and is the spring and principle of all deliberative action".¹⁰⁶ In both aspects, Cudworth relied explicitly on "the learned Origen" as he called him twice and whom he named several times.¹⁰⁷ He quoted at length the main passage on the Stoics' theory of palingenesis in Origen's *Apolo- gy against Celsus*,¹⁰⁸ and for "the ruling, governing, commanding, determining principle in us" he quoted a key passage in the same work about the origin of evil: "Each person's mind is responsible for the evil which exists in him, and this is what evil is. Evils are actions which result from it. In our view nothing else is strictly speaking evil."¹⁰⁹ The Cambridge Origenist adopted the idea that, "according to Origen, every man's own hegemonic, or that which rules or commands in his soul, is the only cause of moral evil, vice, or wickedness, which is truly evil, as also are the actions that proceed from it",¹¹⁰ and decisively argued for the *ἡγεμονικόν* as the ruling principle of every man in which understanding and will are dialectically intertwined, or in Cudworth's wording, "that one and the same reasonable soul in us may both will understandingly, or knowingly of what it

102 Rust had also dealt with this question: Letter of Resolution p. 81–95.

103 Cudworth, *Treatise of Freewill* 3 (p. 161 HUTTON).

104 *Ibid.* 8 (p. 175).

105 *Ibid.* 10 (p. 178).

106 *Ibid.* 8 (p. 173). The concept of the *ἡγεμονικόν* is largely developed *ibid.* 7–10 (p. 170–182).

107 *Ibid.* 3 (p. 161) and 9 (p. 175). Cf. furtheron *ibid.* 9 (p. 176). 14 (p. 186. 188).

108 *Ibid.* 3 (p. 161 f.): Origen, *Cels.* IV 67 f. (GCS Orig. 1, 337 f.). Cudworth, as HUTTON, Ralph Cudworth (n. 87) 162 n. 20, notes, referred to William Spencer's edition of *Contra Celsum* (Cambridge 1677, bk. 4, p. 208 f.) of which he owned a copy of the 1658 edition.

109 Origen, *ibid.* IV 66 (1, 336), quoted by Cudworth, *ibid.* 9 (p. 175). Cudworth quoted a slightly shorter Latin translation: *Nam sua cuique ratio causa est existentis in ipso malitiae, quae ex ea proveniunt: nec aliud quicquam est malum juxta nostrum examen exquisitissimum.* The English translation (p. 237 CHADWICK) was added by the editor Hutton (who wrongly gives *Contra Celsum* IV 65 as reference: HUTTON, *ibid.* 176 n. 42).

110 Cudworth, *ibid.* 9 (p. 176).

wills; and understand or think of this or that object willingly”.¹¹¹ To hold human beings accountable for their deeds and misdeeds is only possible if we can impute them to “the persons themselves”,¹¹² and to regard a person as the cause for his or her own acts presupposes regarding him or her as a freely self-determining agent. By defending the “liberty of self-determination”,¹¹³ by rejecting a philosophically determinist and theologically voluntarist metaphysics and by bolstering an inner self, the *ἡγεμονικόν*, as “ruling principle” of all human capabilities and actions, Cudworth – following the anthropological core idea of Pico della Mirandola – brought to the fore Origen’s seminal contribution to the history of philosophy: by his own power of “self-improvement” and “self-promoting”, of “self-forming” and “self-framing” in the innermost principle of his soul, “every man is self-made, into what he is”.¹¹⁴

Hence, the Cambridge Origenists and above all Ralph Cudworth not only highlighted Origen’s anthropology and metaphysics of freedom. They also made clear that Origen proposed a libertarian concept of freedom against the Stoic compatibilism. The picture of Origen as depicted by these pre-enlightenment philosophers of religion was centred around the notions of free will and motion and enriched by a precise and succinct description of Origen’s libertarian concept of freedom. As Cudworth proves, pre-existence and apokatastasis do not necessarily belong to an appropriate picture of Origen. He accurately subscribed to Origen’s libertarianism without endorsing the ill-fated protological and eschatological corollaries. While the Cambridge Platonists disagreed about the two common Origenist doctrines of the pre-existence and restitution of souls, they forged

111 Ibid. 7 (p. 171).

112 Ibid. 1 (p. 156). – In the treatise *On Prayer*, published for the first time only 1686 in Oxford and thus unknown to Cudworth, Origen had argued in precisely the same way for self-agency, orat. 6,2 (GCS Orig. 2, 312): “Let a man consider his own experience and see if he can honestly say that it is not himself who wills, not himself who eats, not himself who walks, not himself who agrees to and accepts certain opinions, not himself who dissents from others as false.” Translation: p. 99 JAY (modified).

113 Cudworth, *ibid.* 5 (p. 166).

114 Ibid. 10 (p. 178). Chapter 13 (p. 185) can be understood as a summary of Cudworth’s reasoning for the power of self-agency: “This faculty of *ἄρτεξούσιον*, or *sui potestas*, or power over ourselves, which belongs to the hegemonicon of the soul, or the soul as reduplicated upon itself, and self-comprehensive, whereby it can act upon itself, intend and exert itself more or less, and by reason thereof judge, and will, and act differently, is intended by God and nature for good, as a self-promoting, self-improving power, in good, and also a self-conserving power in the same, whereby men [receive] praise of God, and their persons being justified and sins pardoned through the merits and true propitiatory sacrifice, have a reward graciously bestowed on them by God, even a crown of life . . . , whereby men also come to be unto themselves the causes of their own sin, of guilt, blame, and punishment . . . in that great day of judgement which is to come. . . . such an hegemonicon in the soul, as whereby it has a power over itself or a freedom from necessity.”

a profoundly libertarian concept of God's and men's goodness and freedom which foreshadowed the enlightenment concepts of internal moral obligation and autonomous freedom.¹¹⁵

Cudworth's account of Origen's libertarianism brought about a further important rectification of Origen's image. The Alexandrian was (and is) often linked to Arianism by means of the supposed subordinationism in his concept of the Trinity.¹¹⁶ Read within the framework of his anti-voluntarist metaphysics of freedom, Cudworth corrected this false view and detached Origen from Arianism.¹¹⁷ Divine wisdom (the Son) does not emerge from divine goodness (the Father) by an arbitrary act, as would be the case if the Son were created, but rather as a necessary and nevertheless self-motivated and thus freely willed expression of God's love. Thus, the Son must be "grounded in the very nature of the supreme source", i.e. consubstantial with the Father.¹¹⁸ Again, Cudworth presents a correct – or, to put it more cautiously, at least a more appropriate – picture of Origen. If the Alexandrian's understanding of the Trinity is interpreted within the context of his dynamic metaphysics of God's self-motion out of his disinterested goodness and love, it becomes clear why he is definitely not a forerunner of Arianism. But this insight is only possible if the core of his Christian philosophy is perceived, namely the concept of libertarian freedom in the sense of self-determined moral agency as a fundamental metaphysical and anthropological principle. Hence, it becomes clear how important the Cambridge Origenists' contribution to the history of Origenism is in order to achieve a truly Origenian picture of Origen.

5. The revival of apokatastasis: from Pico to Petersen

While the Cambridge Platonists' ideas about the capacity of autonomous self-determination of rational beings gained momentum in the Enlightenment dis-

115 On Cudworth's pre-enlightenment concept of obligation and self-determining moral agency, see Stephen DARWALL, *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought': 1640–1740*, Cambridge 1995, 109–148, with an excellent account of Cudworth's concept of self-determination based on the unpublished manuscripts in the British Library and on the *Treatise of Freewill* (ibid. 130–147). See also the older but still relevant account of John A. PASSMORE, *Ralph Cudworth. An Interpretation*, Cambridge 1951 (reprint Bristol 1990), 51–67.

116 For an ancient influential statement in this respect, see Epiphanius of Salamis, *pan. haer.* 64,4,2 (GCS Epiph. 2, 410): "For Arius took his cue from Origen, and so did the Anomoeans who succeeded him, and the rest." Translation: II p. 137 WILLIAMS. As to the charge of subordinationism against Origen in the 17th century, see Denis Petau's *De trinitate*, quoted several times by Cudworth, *True Intellectual System* p. 599. 602. 604. For this, see BRETEAU, *Origène* (n. 89) 134 f.

117 Cudworth, *Treatise of Freewill* 14 (p. 186 f. HUTTON).

118 See HEDLEY, *Cambridge Platonists* (n. 80) 192–196 (quote ibid. 195).

courses of the 18th and 19th centuries, their Origenian origin and background fell into oblivion, along with the groundbreaking contribution of the Cambridge Origenists to this development. Ralph Cudworth has to bear much of the responsibility for this himself because his voluminous and seminal writings on moral accountability and self-determination were not published – except for a small portion of them only very late in 1731 and 1838, respectively – and thus passed unnoticed into the archives.¹¹⁹ But apart from these circumstances of text transmission and publication, this turn in the modern reception of Origen might be connected – among other possible reasons, above all the fundamental change from metaphysical to transcendental concepts of being – to a significant change in the view on Origen and his thought mainly in theological contexts. On the one hand, his campaign for freedom in God and men, in nature and in history, was suspected of damaging the Christian belief in salvation through the grace of God, and on the other, his hope for universal salvation was vigorously propagated in some Christian churches as a ‘doctrine’ – with the effect that it dominated the image of Origen but was still deemed to be heresy. Thus, Origen was widely seen as the heretical teacher of the apokatastasis while his libertarian concept of freedom – if not regarded as Pelagianism – fell into oblivion (and this also holds true for the increasingly outdated theory of pre-existence). Or to put it another way, the picture of Origen was once again depicted by the features and colours of the critical concept of late antique Origenism.

As to the first aspect, while the Cambridge Platonists highlighted Origen’s concept of free will, other theologians and philosophers of the 17th century were sceptical concerning this strong accent on freedom and reason. Pierre-Daniel Huet (who did not read the writings of the Cambridge Origenists due to his lack of knowledge of English), the author of the first scholarly analyses of the life, doctrine and works of Origen according to the emerging ‘modern’ standards in the famous *Origeniana* published in 1668, admittedly defended Origen against a host of wrong accusations.¹²⁰ But he nevertheless remained highly sceptical about his emphasis on freedom. “But although”, Huet concluded his critical assessment of Origen’s doctrines, “we have adduced many arguments in order to refute Origen’s detractors and to clear him of blame, we have to admit that he made many mistakes.”¹²¹

119 For more information on this, see DARWALL, *British Moralists* (n. 115) 115–117.

120 Origenis in Sacras Scripturas Commentaria, quaecunque Graece reperiri potuerunt. Petrus Daniel Huetius ... edidit. ... Idem praefixit Origeniana, Tripartitum opus, quo Origenis narratur vita, doctrina excutitur, scripta recensentur, Rouen 1668, II 3,1–15 (p. 185–190). On Huet’s critical method, see Alfons FÜRST, *Res Origenis referre*. Kontext, Themen und Methoden der *Origeniana* Pierre-Daniel Huets, in: id., *Origenes in Frankreich* (n. 101) 75–90.

121 Huet, *Origeniana* II 3,17 (p. 192): *Quamvis autem multa vel ad refellendos Origenis adversarios vel ad ipsum excusandum attulerimus in multis tamen peccasse fatendum est.*

Huet detected two main principles of Origen's theology, namely pre-existence and freedom, as the basic reason for his errors: "It is highly noteworthy that most of the Origenian errors have resulted from the twin doctrines of the pre-existence of rational beings and the unrestricted and perpetual use of an always vigorous and thriving freedom."¹²² Huet was one of the most prominent representatives of scepticism in the 17th century, a stance, by the way, which he combined with a fierce fideism; from this philosophical perspective he criticised Origen for having trusted the powers of reason and freedom too much.¹²³ Therefore, as an outcome of the first scholarly analysis of Origen's thought, onto his key doctrine of freedom was cast the awkward aspersion of being the actual source of most of his own errors, and this suspicion also fell upon the speculative presuppositions (pre-existence) and final conclusions (apokatastasis) of Origen's metaphysics of freedom.

As to the second aspect, while belief in hell declined in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the hope of universal salvation gained more and more acceptance.¹²⁴ Among many advocates, the couple Johanna Eleonora and Johann Wilhelm Petersen played an important role in promoting the restoration of all things as the truth of Christian eschatology.¹²⁵ Their championing of the apokatastasis, however, was not prompted directly by Origen's writings. The reception of Origen in Early Modern times came often in the wake of the revival of other paradigms connected to Origenism. This was especially the case with Platonism. In the Florentine Renaissance as well as in the Cambridge Platonists' movement, Origen was rediscovered as a Christian authority within a revival of Platonic philosophy, quite often alongside Plotinus. Another paradigm to which Origen could belong, was the Kabbalah, which was conceived of as a tradition of ancient wisdom or *prisca theologia*, a *philosophia perennis* encompassing all traditions of mankind from the very beginning. Pico della Mirandola was the first Christian scholar who included

122 Ibid. II 2,6,2 (p. 92): *Imprimis autem maxima illud animadversione dignum est, ex ... gemino hoc dogmate, mentium προῦπάρξεως et pleni ac perpetui libertatis usus semper vigentis ac florentis, maximam Origenianorum errorum partem prodiisse.*

123 See the in-depth analysis of Huet's critique of Origen's rational theology by Alfons FÜRST, Skeptizismus und Fideismus. Pierre-Daniel Huet und die Vernunfttheologie des Origenes, in: id., Origenes in Frankreich (n. 101) 13–34, and Christian HENGSTERMANN, Die Auferstehung des Leibes und die Wiederherstellung aller Dinge. Rationale Theologie und Eschatologie in Pierre-Daniel Huets *Origeniana*, in: ibid. 203–238.

124 WALKER, Decline of Hell (n. 79), in the first part of his comprehensive study, ibid. 3–70, analysed the dogmatic reasons why the traditional doctrine of hell lost persuasiveness, and in the second part, ibid. 73–263, described the historical development in the 17th and early 18th centuries of the decline of hell.

125 WALKER, ibid. 231–244. Wilhelm SCHMIDT-BIGGEMANN, *Philosophia perennis. Historische Umriss abendländischer Spiritualität in Antike, Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Frankfurt a. M. 1998, 538–584, placed Petersens' eschatology of cosmic salvation in a series of Origenist thinkers like John Scotus Eriugena, Pico della Mirandola and Guillaume Postel.

Kabbalist ideas to a large extent into his all-encompassing vision of a universal Christian truth.¹²⁶ In the case of Anne Conway, it is clear that she first encountered the thought and writings of Origen via William Spencer's translation of the *Apology against Celsus* and the *Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions*, which was recommended to her by her mentor Henry More. Only later in her life, when Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont gained a decisive influence over her, did Kabbalist ideas gain influence on her ways of thinking.¹²⁷ Clearly the opposite was the case with the Petersens. In their discovery of the apokatastasis, Jane Lead, whose belief in universal salvation was mediated by George Rust's defence of Origen and Conway's and Van Helmont's Kabbalist convictions,¹²⁸ played a decisive role, and Origen came only later and within this broader context.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, in his massive *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton*, whose first two volumes (of three) were anonymously published in 1700, Johann Petersen highlighted Origen as the most powerful teacher of the apokatastasis and wrote a short apology for his person and doctrine.¹³⁰

In the subject index at the front of Petersen's vast and comprehensive defence of the apokatastasis doctrine, Origen is the only proper name recorded. Petersen noted that in *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton* – among other things, of course – Origen, “who taught the apokatastasis most strongly, *is defended*”, that “his curriculum vitae is described” and that “he has many who defend him”.¹³¹ Other names are listed under the entry “testimonies of those who believed and appreciated the apokatastasis fully or partially”,¹³² namely (apart from later authors), the Church Fathers Clement of Alexandria, Dionysius the Areopagite, Domitian of Ancyra,

126 Paul Oskar KRISTELLER, *Acht Philosophen der italienischen Renaissance*. Petrarca, Valla, Ficino, Pico, Pomponazzi, Telesio, Patrizi, Bruno, Weinheim 1986, 52 f.

127 Sarah HUTTON, *Anne Conway. A Woman Philosopher*, Cambridge 2004, 69–72. – It is really a pity that Conway's handwritten English manuscript of her *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* is not preserved. Thus, there is no way to decide to what extent the many hints to Kabbalist texts in the Latin translation provided by Van Helmont are due to his editing.

128 On Jane Lead, see WALKER, *Decline of Hell* (n. 79) 218–230 (for the sources: *ibid.* 225).

129 Convincingly shown in Elisa Bellucci's contribution to the present volume.

130 [Johann Wilhelm Petersen], *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton*, *Das ist: Das Geheimniß Der Wiederbringung aller Dinge, Offenbahret durch Einen Zeugen Gottes und seiner Warheit*, Pamphilia 1700 (in some copies, the years for the first two volumes are given as 1701 and 1703).

131 *Ibid.* I, Register p. VI. To the entry “Origines” is noted: “Welcher die Wiederbringung am stärcksten gelehrt, *wird defendirt* I. p. 53 ... 57, Sein Lebenslauff beschrieben I. p. 58 seqq. Hat viele die ihn vertheidigen II p. 88.” I quote the original spelling, but for an easier reading slashes are replaced by commas; italics designate highlighted words in the original text.

132 *Ibid.* p. IX: “Zeugnüsse. Deren, welche die Wiederbringung gantzlich, oder zum Theil geglaubt und eingesehen haben.”

Gregory of Nyssa and, again, Origen.¹³³ These index entries can be taken as a hint that for Petersen Origen was the most important advocate of the apokatastasis.

This impression is confirmed by the fact that at the beginning of the preface Origen is mentioned and quoted at decisive places. After Petersen, in the opening lines, had pointed to the only place in the Bible where the phrase ἀποκατάστασις πάντων is used, namely in Acts 3:21, Origen is immediately mentioned as the most important Church Father in this respect.¹³⁴ To his second main biblical reference, the “everlasting gospel” in Rev. 14:6, Petersen again invoked Origen – and only him – because “already Origen in his time has perceived this everlasting gospel and has explained it in view of the restoration of all things”.¹³⁵ To demonstrate this, Petersen quoted (in Latin, without translation) at length the concluding paragraphs of the third book of *On First Principles* wherein Origen summarises his ideas about the end and links the “everlasting gospel” of Rev. 14:6 to the consummation and restoration of all things.¹³⁶ This key text is again quoted by Petersen

133 Dionysius the Areopagite (after the long chapter on Origen): *ibid.* I, Gespräch I, lxxxviii p. 72–74; Gregory of Nyssa: *ibid.* xc p. 74–76.

134 *Ibid.* I, Vorrede §1 (unnumbered p. 1): “Es sind zwar zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten einige gewesen, welche die von dem H. Apostel Petro in dem dritten Capitel der Apostel-Geschicht benennete ἀποκατάστασιν πάντων, oder Wiederbringung aller Dinge, erkannt und die darinnen verborgene Weisheit und Barmhertzigkeit Gottes gegen alle seine Geschöpfe erblicket haben, absonderlich hat sich unter den H. Vätern der berühmte Origenes und die vom Augustino also genannte Väter der Barmhertzigkeit hervorgethan ...” For the hint to Augustine, *civ.* XXI 17 (II p. 521 DOMBART/KALB), cf. *ibid.* Gespräch I, lxxxv §1 p. 65; see below p. 254 n. 109.

135 *Ibid.* Vorrede §3 (unnumbered p. 2): “Gott sey Danck, daß die Zeit erbohren, darinnen dieses grosse Evangelium schallet, davon schon vor so vielen hundert Jahren der H. Apostel Johannes in der Offenbarung am XIV. 6. 7. im Geiste gezeuget und also geschrieben hat: [follows Greek quote of Rev. 14:6 f. with German translation of Petersen] welcher Spruch in diesem Wercke mit mehrern außgeleget und erläutert ist, nur dieses erwehne hiebey: daß schon Origenes zu einer Zeit eingesehen und solches ewige Evangelium von eben dieser Sache, nemlich von der Wiederbringung aller Dinge erkläret hat.”

136 Origen, *princ.* III 6,8 f. (GCS Orig. 5, 290 f.): “Just as on this earth the Law was a sort of pedagogue to those who were duty bound to be led by it to Christ, being trained and instructed by it, so that they might more easily, after the ordinances of the Law, be able to receive the more perfect ordinances of Christ, so also that other earth, when it receives all the saints, first imbues and educates them in the ordinances of the true and everlasting Law, that they may more easily bear those perfect ordinances of heaven to which nothing can ever be added; in which there will truly be that which is called *the eternal Gospel* (Rev. 14:6) and that testament ever new, which shall never grow old. In this way, then, *it is thought to be in the consummation and restoration of all things*, that those gradually making progress and ascending in order and measure shall arrive first at that other earth and the training that is in it, in which they may be prepared for those better ordinances to which nothing can ever be added. For after the stewards and guardians (Gal. 4:2), the Lord Christ, who is king of all, will himself assume the kingdom; that is, after their training in the holy virtues, he himself will instruct those who are capable of receiving him in respect of his

towards the end of the long chapter on Origen as the last one in a series of citations from *On First Principles*.¹³⁷ A few pages later in the preface, Petersen defended Origen's concept of an "everlasting gospel" against Jerome's misinterpretation that Christ had to suffer and to die again in heaven for the salvation of the fallen angels.¹³⁸ After having quoted at length (in Latin, without translation) the relevant passage in Jerome's *Letter to Avitus*,¹³⁹ Petersen exculpated Origen against Jerome's charges by relying on the latter's own words. Origen does not say that there will be a new passion of Jesus Christ, but only, that it might be not unjust to assume that the fallen angels will be redeemed through his passion as well.¹⁴⁰ This text of

being Wisdom, reigning in them until he subjects them to the Father, who has subjected all things to himself; that is, when they shall have been rendered capable of God, then God will be to them all in all. Then, therefore, it follows that even bodily nature will receive that highest condition to which nothing more can ever be added." Translation: p. 453–455 BEHR (italics according to Petersen's Latin quote).

137 [Petersen], *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton I*, Gespräch I, lxxxvi § 12 p. 71 (text below p. 278–281).

138 Ibid. Vorrede § 6 (unnumbered p. 5): "Wann ich kurtz vorher geschrieben, daß der Schall des ewigen Evangelii und dessen Krafft endlich über die gefallene Engel ergehen werde, so lehre ich nicht, daß Christus noch einmahl müste sterben, auff daß er die gefallenen Engel erlöse, sintemahl er mit seinem einmahligen Opfer eine ewige Erlösung erfunden hat und immerdar seelig machen kan, *Hebr. VII. 15. c. vers. 12*, sondern das will ich nur damit behaupten, wie das ewige Evangelium, das bey Herannahung der letzten Zeit wird verkündigt werden und krafft dessen das gantze menschliche Geschlecht, doch ein jeglicher in seiner Ordnung, seelig werden soll, auch einmahl für den gefallenen Engeln zu ihrem besten erschallen werde, wohin die Meynung des *Origenis* gegangen, wann er hievon solche Wort, die *Hieronimus in Epistolâ 59. ad Avitum* anziehet, nach der Länge auffgezeichnet hat."

139 Jerome, epist. 124,12 (CSEL 56, 114 f.): "For just as he fulfilled the shadow of the Law through the shadow of the Gospel, so also, because all law is a pattern and shadow of the heavenly ceremonies, it must be carefully inquired whether we ought not to understand rightly even the heavenly law and the ceremonies of the heavenly worship not to possess completeness, but to need *the truth of the Gospel* which in the Apocalypse of John is called *the eternal Gospel* (Rev. 14:6), in comparison, that is, with this Gospel of ours, which is temporal and was preached in a world and an age that shall pass away. But if we wish to continue our inquiries as far as the passion of the Lord and Saviour, although it is an audacious and impetuous thing to seek for his passion in the heavens, nevertheless if there are spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavens (Eph. 6:12), and if we are not ashamed to confess that the Lord was crucified in order to destroy those whom he destroyed through his passion, why should we fear to suspect that something similar may happen in the heavenly realms at the consummation of the ages, that the nations of all realms may be saved by his passion?" Translation: p. 615 BEHR (italics according to Petersen's Latin quote). The passage belongs to Origen, princ. IV 3,13 (GCS Orig. 5, 344).

140 [Petersen], *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton I*, Vorrede § 6 (unnumbered p. 6): "Hie saget ja *Origenes* nicht, daß eine neue und abermahlige Passion und Leyden unsers Herrn Jesu Christi vor sich gehen solle, wie den *Hieronimus* selbst in eben dieser Epistel kurtz vorher gestehet, daß *Origenes* dieses mit klaren deutlichen Worten nicht geschrieben habe: *Licet*

Jerome is again quoted at the end of the chapter on Origen, accompanied by the same argument.¹⁴¹ Therefore, in the preface of *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton*, Origen is the first author mentioned and quoted for the idea of a restoration of all things in the end. And already in these opening pages it becomes clear that Petersen was defending him against accusations which he considered to be mistaken.

At the beginning of his engagement with the critical notes of an unnamed “commentator” (*Anmercker*) against the apokatastasis, Petersen again protected “this holy father Origen” (*H. Pater* or *heiliger Vatter Origenes*), as he called this “excellent teacher of the Christian churches”¹⁴² throughout his treatise,¹⁴³ against the insult that the “everlasting gospel” as it was understood by the Alexandrian, i. e. applied to the restoration of all things, should be dubbed “devil’s gospel” (*Biblia Diaboli*).¹⁴⁴ Petersen quoted two passages from *On First Principles* to provide Origen’s correct understanding of the redemption of the fallen angels, especially of the devil:¹⁴⁵ not the “substance” (*substantia*) of the “last enemy” (*novissimus inimicus*), as he said following 1 Cor. 15:26, will be destroyed but his “hostile purpose and will” (*propositum et voluntas inimica*),¹⁴⁶ and this process will last many aeons.¹⁴⁷

hoc non dixerit (Christum pro salute Daemonum etiam in aëre, & in supernis locis esse passurum) tamen quod consequens sit, intelligitur [Jerome, *ibid.* (CSEL 56, 114)], warum folgert den Hieronymus solches? Origenes saget nur, daß, weil die *spiritualia nequitiae*, die Geistlichkeiten der Bößheit in den Himmlischen, durch Christum und sein Leyden zerstöhret seyn, deswegen nicht unrecht sey, wann man sagte, daß bey Erfüllung der Zeiten oder *aeonen* dergleichen etwas zu muthmassen sey, nemlich daß auch die gefallenen Geister durch seine Passion, die alsdann auch ihnen zum besten geschehen zu seyn wird bezeuget und erkant werden, einmahl selig würden.”

141 *Ibid.* Gespräch I, lxxvi § 13 p. 72 (text below p. 282 f.).

142 *Ibid.* lxxviii § 4 p. 55: “der vortreffliche Lehrer der Christlichen Kirchen *Origenes*”.

143 *Ibid.* lxxviii § 6 p. 55; § 7 p. 56; lxxix p. 58; lxxxii § 1 p. 61; § 3 p. 62: “der große heilige Mann”; § 5 p. 63; lxxxiv § 1 p. 64; § 2 p. 64: “der liebe Origenes”; lxxxvi § 8 p. 69.

144 *Ibid.* lxix p. 41 f. and lxx § 1 f. p. 42.

145 *Ibid.* lxx § 4 f. p. 43. Petersen quoted both passages in Latin and provided a German translation.

146 Origen, princ. III 6,5 (GCS Orig. 5, 286 f.): “The destruction of the last enemy, indeed, is to be understood in this way, not that its *substance*, which was made by God, shall perish, but that *the hostile purpose and will* which proceeded not from God but from itself shall disappear. It is destroyed, therefore, not in the sense that it shall not be, but that it shall not be an enemy and death. *For nothing is impossible to the Almighty, nor is anything beyond healing by its Maker, for it was on this account that he made all things, that they might exist; and those things which were made that they might exist cannot not exist.*” Translation: p. 447 BEHR (italics according to Petersen’s Latin quote).

147 *Ibid.* III 6,6 (5, 287 f.): “It must be understood, however, that this shall happen not suddenly, but gradually and by degrees, during the passing of infinite and immeasurable ages, with the improvement and correction being accomplished slowly and by degrees, some hastening on in advance and tending towards perfection by a quicker route, and others following behind at a close distance, with others far behind: and so, through the many and innumerable ranks of those making progress and being reconciled, from enmity, to God,

Both passages are again quoted in the chapter on Origen.¹⁴⁸ So, we are already in the midst of the theme which Petersen discussed intensively in his chapter on Origen.

In this long chapter,¹⁴⁹ Petersen dwelt at length on the life and works of Origen before coming to the restoration of all things.¹⁵⁰ He devoted too much attention to an odd cause for offence on the part of the “commentator” (*Anmercker*), that Marcion in the second century had been the first who propagated the apokatastasis and that Origen depended upon Marcion, which is obviously a flat insult implying heresy.¹⁵¹ But apart from this, Petersen took up the same aspects of Origen’s legacy that Pico della Mirandola had already dealt with: the sanctity of his life, defended by Petersen basically according to the life of Origen which Eusebius of Caesarea had written in his *Ecclesiastical History*,¹⁵² the falsification of his writings by heretics according to the theory of Rufinus of Aquileja¹⁵³ and the salvation of the devil as a crucial question of the apokatastasis.¹⁵⁴ Petersen mentioned Pico by name and sided with him in defence of Origen.¹⁵⁵ It thus seems highly probable, on the one hand, that he used Pico’s *Apology* on the salvation of Origen for his own account. But, on the other, Petersen also quoted many other authors, and he drew on Origen’s works in a masterly fashion, based on his own reading. He quoted extensively all of the relevant passages from *On First Principles* in order to prove that Origen had taught the apokatastasis.¹⁵⁶ Here, Petersen shows a remarkable knowledge of Origen’s book, as important as it was controversial, which he

until the last enemy, which is called death, is reached, so that it too may be destroyed and no longer be an enemy.” Translation: p. 449.

- 148 [Petersen], *Mysterion Apokatastaseos* Panton I, Gespräch I, lxxxvi § 12 p. 71 (text below p. 278 f.).
- 149 *Ibid.* lxxvii § 1 p. 52 – lxxxvi § 13 p. 72, reprinted in the present volume together with a cautiously modernised German version and notes, below p. 196–283.
- 150 *Ibid.* lxxxvi § 1–13 p. 66–72.
- 151 *Ibid.* lxxvii § 1 p. 53 – lxxviii § 7 p. 56. Petersen mentioned this fancy theory several times: *ibid.* lxxxiv § 2 p. 64; § 3 p. 65; lxxxv § 1 p. 65.
- 152 *Ibid.* lxxviii § 8 p. 56 – lxxix § 10 p. 61 with a host of citations taken from Eusebius. To these remarks on Origen’s life also belongs Petersen’s defence of Origen against his alleged apostasy: *ibid.* lxxxii p. 61 – lxxxiii § 5 p. 63.
- 153 *Ibid.* lxxxiv § 1–3 p. 64 f.
- 154 The problem is introduced with this question by Philaletha, *ibid.* lxxxv § 2 p. 66, and Agathophilus starts his account of the apokatastasis in Origen’s writings with this aspect: *ibid.* lxxxvi § 1 f. p. 66 f.
- 155 *Ibid.* lxxxv § 1 p. 65: “Ich halte es mit denen”, says Philaletha, “welche mit dem sehr frommen und berühmten Pico, Graffen zu *Mirandula*, den *Origenem* Christlich verthädiget.” As to the themes discussed in Pico’s *Apology* on the salvation of Origen, see FÜRST, *Vernunft und Freiheit* (n. 27) 212–234.
- 156 [Petersen], *ibid.* lxxxvi § 3–12 p. 67–71 with citations from Origen, princ. I praef. 6 (GCS Orig. 5, 13); I 6,1 (5, 78); I 6,1 f. (5, 79 f.); I 6,4 (5, 85); II 3,5 (5, 120); III 1,14 (5, 220 f.); III 1,17 (5, 225 f.); III 1,23 (5, 241 f.); III 5,7 f. (5, 278 f.); III 6,3 (5, 283 f.); III 6,4 f. (5, 286 f.); III 6,6 (5, 287 f.); III 6,8 f. (5, 290 f.).

obviously had read for himself. He had, as he stated at the end of the chapter on Origen, also read some of his other works from which, however, he quoted only a passage from the *Homilies on Joshua*.¹⁵⁷

In contrast to this wide ranging reading, Petersen's apology for Origen focused on only some aspects of his soteriology and eschatology, namely the salvation of the devil and the subjection of the Son to the Father after the Father has subjected all creatures to the Son, which was a special feature of the apokatastasis.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, he discussed the question of whether the return of all creatures to God will be everlasting or the beginning of another fall, and he defended Origen's concept of a definite end against Augustine's fatally highly influential misunderstanding of endlessly recurring cycles of redemption and fall.¹⁵⁹ Petersen was obviously well aware of the standard accusations against and misrepresentations of Origen's deliberations about the apokatastasis, and he defended them based on his own reading of the texts by means of an independent judgement.

Origen's doctrine of freedom, however, is not even mentioned. From his treatise on free will in the third book of *On First Principles*, Petersen used only the famous hardening of Pharaoh's heart, which had played a key role in the late antique discussions about freedom and determinism,¹⁶⁰ but in which Petersen was only interested with respect to the apokatastasis.¹⁶¹ Compared with the broad and thoroughgoing reception of Origen's Christian philosophy of freedom in the Cambridge Platonists' Origenism, Petersen's reception of Origen is restricted to the apokatastasis and within this eschatology to the question of the salvation of the devil. Although this latter question is decisive for the whole concept – if the devil will not or cannot be saved, the whole idea of a restoration of *all* things fails –, Petersen's account of Origen is far from a comprehensive and profound display of the Alexandrian's multifaceted theology. The picture of Origen which emerges out of Petersen's defence is confined to the 'doctrine' of apokatastasis, "the truth of the restoration of all things".¹⁶²

157 Origen, in *Ios. hom.* 8,3–5 (GCS Orig. 7, 338–341), partially quoted by Petersen, *ibid.* lxxxvi §13 p. 72.

158 For the latter theme, cf. *ibid.* lxxxvi §10 p. 70.

159 *Ibid.* lxxxvi §7–9 p. 69 f. Cf. Augustine, *civ.* XXI 17 (II p. 521 DOMBART/KALB).

160 See LORENZO PERRONE, *Il cuore indurito del Faraone. Origene e il problema del libero arbitrio*, Genua 1992.

161 [Petersen], *Mysterion Apokatastaseos Panton I, Gespräch I*, lxxxvi §6 p. 68 f. with quotes of Origen, *princ.* III 1,14.17.23 (GCS Orig. 5, 220 f. 225 f. 241 f.).

162 [Petersen], *ibid.* lxxxvi §13 p. 72, last sentence in the chapter on Origen: "Wir halten aber, es sey seine Meinung, oder vielmehr die Wahrheit an der Wiederbringung aller Dinge auß den vorigen gnugsam zu ersehen."

6. Apokatastasis and freedom: some modern perspectives

It might be due to the decline of belief in hell and the support for apokatastasis that the latter idea from the 18th century onwards functioned as an identity marker for Origenism or Origenian influence, in the sources as well as in scholarly research on them, i. e. when scholars look for Origenism, they usually look for apokatastasis. In Pietism, especially in Württemberg, and in many Protestant churches in Europe as well as in the North-American colonies, the defence of universal salvation, though not overtly propagated, was widespread.¹⁶³ An elucidating example is Jeremiah White's treatise *The Restoration of all Things* to whose posthumous publication of 1712 the editor Richard Roach added a preface which consists largely of excerpts from the *Letter of Resolution* concerning the apokatastasis (but without subscribing to the idea of free will).¹⁶⁴ Friedrich Christoph Oetinger proclaimed the restoration of all things publicly in his *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch* of 1776. At least a tendency towards the idea of universal salvation is present in Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock's *Messias*, written und published from 1748 to 1773, as the author himself testified in a letter to his biographer,¹⁶⁵ and the same holds true for Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Faust Part One* of 1808.¹⁶⁶ In Danish theology and literature of the 19th century the idea of universal salvation was quite common.¹⁶⁷ To Christian Gottlob Barth in the middle of the 19th century was ascribed the saying: "Who does not believe in the apokatastasis, is an ox, but who teaches it, is an ass."¹⁶⁸

Whereas the pre-existence of the soul has become outdated in modern philosophy as well as in theology, in 20th-century theology universal salvation was

163 See the examples gathered by Ernst STAEBELIN, *Die Wiederbringung aller Dinge* (Basler Universitätsreden 45), Basel 1960, 19–42.

164 Jeremiah White, *The Restoration of All Things: Or, A Vindication of The Goodness and Grace of God, To be manifested at last in the Recovery of His Whole Creation out of Their Fall*, London 1712. See WALKER, *Decline of Hell* (n. 79) 104–121; cf. *ibid.* 260 f.: "White's book is certainly the most convincing defence of universal salvation among all those mentioned in the present (i. e. Walker's) study."

165 Quoted by STAEBELIN, *Wiederbringung aller Dinge* (n. 163) 28 f.: "Es tut mir leid, dass Sie eine Anmerkung, die Sie hätten machen sollen, nicht gemacht haben, nämlich dass ich die Ewigkeit der Höllenstrafen nicht annehme; ich habe dies ja durch Abbadonas [i. e., the fallen angel's] Erlösung und auch sonst im 'Messias' gezeigt."

166 See Dieter BREUER, *Origenes im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland*, in: *Seminar* 21 (1985) 1–30.

167 See Anders-Christian JACOBSEN, *The Reception of Origen's Ideas about Universal Salvation in Danish Theology and Literature in the 19th Century*, in: *id.*, *Origeniana Undecima* (n. 47) 149–162.

168 Quoted from STAEBELIN, *Wiederbringung aller Dinge* (n. 163) 24: "Wer an die Wiederbringung nicht glaubt, ist ein Ochs; wer sie aber lehrt, der ist ein Esel."

widely accepted as the main avenue of Christian hope.¹⁶⁹ There are even traces of the idea of the apokatastasis in non-theological and non-ecclesiastical, sometimes fully secular, contexts as in such different people as the Italian theological writer Vito Mancuso, the Austrian-American sociologist Peter Berger and the logician Kurt Gödel,¹⁷⁰ or in literature such as the later works of the Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis.¹⁷¹ When it comes to Origen, therefore, many people think first of all of the apokatastasis. This is, of course, not untrue. But in a mitigated and non-heretical manner the close link between Origen and the ‘doctrine’ of apokatastasis is still a legacy of the concept of Origenism forged in late antiquity.

Only during the last decades of scholarly research, the metaphysics of freedom has come to the fore in the image of Origen. To be sure, it was never forgotten that the topic of freedom and free will was central to Origen. Readers of Origen always knew that he wrote a long treatise on this theme in *On First Principles*. But it was only in the course of the 20th century that Origen’s radical concept of freedom was rediscovered. In 1948 – perhaps not by chance in the context of French existentialism – Jean Daniélou first hinted at Origen’s seminal thesis that the nature (or substance) of a rational being is determined by its free decisions: “Pour lui, c’est la liberté qui détermine l’essence, et je n’ai pas besoin de signaler combien cette théorie est moderne.”¹⁷² While in the second half of the 20th century research on Origen focused on his exegesis and spirituality – which is as such absolutely appropriate to the Alexandrian’s intellectual profile –, at the turn of the 21st century the all-encompassing idea of freedom in his Christian philosophy was highlighted again by Eberhard Schockenhoff in a thorough study on the moral theory of Origen¹⁷³ and primarily by Theo Kobusch, who in several seminal articles described the principal aspects of Origen’s concept of freedom and its significance for the history of philosophy and theology.¹⁷⁴ In 2016, Christian Hengstermann published the first comprehensive study of Origen’s anthropology and metaphysics of freedom,¹⁷⁵ which laid the groundwork for future research on this topic.

169 See Eberhard SCHOCKENHOFF, *Die Wirkungsgeschichte des Origenes*, in: FÜRST/HENGSTERMANN, *Autonomie und Menschenwürde* (n. 27) 47–66, 57–65.

170 See Marco RIZZI, *The Revival of the Apokatastasis. Or, Three Ways to Read Origen Today*, in: *ibid.* 275–283.

171 See Leopold KRETZENBACHER, *Versöhnung im Jenseits. Zur Widerspiegelung des Apokatastasis-Denkens in Glaube, Hochdichtung und Legende* (BAW.PH 1971/7), München 1971, 5–18. All other traditions evoked by Kretzenbacher about the salvation of a single soul from eternal damnation through prayer, e. g. the Roman emperor Trajan (*ibid.* 30–40), do not belong to the concept of apokatastasis.

172 Jean DANIELOU, *Origène*, Paris 1948, 204.

173 See Eberhard SCHOCKENHOFF, *Zum Fest der Freiheit. Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origenes* (TTS 33), Mainz 1990.

174 See the articles of Theo Kobusch noted above in n. 15, 32 and 47.

175 See above n. 12.

By this research, the view on Origen has recently – and, of course, in only some parts of Origenian scholarship – again moved from the corollaries of his thought, pre-existence and apokatastasis, to the centre: freedom and self-agency. Read out of this new perspective, the works of the ancient Christian philosopher might, once more in the history of his legacy, be a source of inspiration for contemporary theological and philosophical debates about free will, self-determination and self-realisation. And looking beyond current research and beyond the lifetime of the author of this article – who does not wish to conceal that he is in favour of the new perspective on Origen –, we can be quite sure that the picture of Origen will continue to sway between different perspectives and concerns.