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Plagues and Epidemics Caused by D(a)emons in Origen and Porphyry and Potential Interrelations

1. Introduction

Plagues and epidemics affected the early Roman Empire, such as the “Antonine Plague”, testified to by Galen, *De indolentia*, and other imperial writers². Such phenomena, which would intensify in late antiquity, elicited philosophical and religious responses. Those by Origen and Porphyry, and the latter’s relation to that of Origen, are particularly interesting. Therefore, I set out to investigate how Origen, an early Christian writer, theologian, and pastor, referred to plagues, epidemics, and misfortunes, and how he construed these phenomena in his theology, literary works, and pastoral practice. A comparison with Porphyry will be offered, who testified that he met Origen in his youth and knew his works and ideas³, and is likely to

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² R. Flemming, *Galen and the Plague*, in: *Galen’s treatise De indolentia in Context*, ed. C. Petit, Leiden 2018, p. 219-244. See also *L’impatto della ‘Peste Antonina’*, ed. E. Lo Cascio, Bari 2012; I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Theory of Disasters in Mara Bar Serapion*, JRCA 1 (2019) p. 62-85.

³ Analysis in I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism*, VigCh 63 (2009) p. 217-263; further on Porphyry’s biographical and philosophical re-

have drawn part of his daemonology from Origen. Those responsible for plagues in both Origen's philosophical theology and in Porphyry's philosophy are δαίμονες, "demons" or fallen and deceptive angels for Origen, whose action is opposite to that of Christ – who is all virtues – and God, although in their nature they are God's creatures, and "daemons" in the Platonic sense for Porphyry (Origen was also well aware of the Platonic meaning of δαίμων)⁴.

2. Origen: Plagues, Epidemics, Famines, and Demons

Origen is clear that "evil daemons" bring about plagues, famines, stormy seas, or anything similar", as he argues against the 'pagan' Celsus. He adds that Christ, by his voluntary death ("voluntary" is pivotal in Origen's theology of freedom, both in Christ's salvific work, and in a person's adhesion to God and restoration)⁵, destroys the power of demons and their chief, Satan:

It is probable that in the nature of things there are certain mysterious cases, hard for the multitude to understand, that are responsible for the fact that one righteous man, dying voluntarily (ἐκουσίως) for all, may avert the activity of evil daemons (φάτων δαιμονίων) by expiation (ἀποτροπιασμοῦς ἐμποιεῖν), since *it is they who bring about plagues, famines, difficulties and death during navigations, or anything similar* (λοιμοῦς, ἀφορίας, δυσπλοΐας, ἢ τι τῶν παραπλησίων)⁶.

lation to Origen: I.L.E. Ramelli, *Porphyry and the Motif of Christianity as παράνομος*, in: *Platonism and its Legacy*, ed. J. Finamore, Lydney 2019, p. 173-198; I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen and Porphyry: Continuity and Polemics between Psychology and Eschatology*, in: *FS Bogoljub Šijaković*, ed. M. Knezevic, Alhambra (forthcoming). Favourable to Origen's influence on Porphyry also M. Simmons, *Porphyry of Tyre and the Pagan-Christian Debate*, Oxford 2015 and review CJ 2017.05.02.

⁴ On daemons in antiquity and late antiquity, e.g. C. Addey, *Daimones and Divination in Neoplatonism*, in *The Neoplatonic Socrates*, ed. D. Layne – H. Tarrant, Philadelphia 2014, p. 51-72; D. Greenbaum, *The Daimon in Hellenistic Astrology*, Leiden 2016 (Chapters 5-7 on Porphyry, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Hemiticism).

⁵ On Origen's "theology of freedom" (followed by Nyssen) see I.L.E. Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery*, Oxford 2016, p. 190-211; an issue is forthcoming in *Modern Theology*.

⁶ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 1, 31 (with which Porphyry was familiar).

Origen here uses Platonic terminology and adds “evil”, since in Celsus’ view δαίμονες could also be good. Christian “demons” are all evil, as Origen observes in *Contra Celsum*⁷. They are responsible for plagues, famines, epidemics and the like. Origen insists soon after that Christ “died to annihilate a great daemon (ἐπι καθαιρέσει μεγάλου δαίμονος), in fact the ruler of demons (δαιμόνων ἄρχοντας), who held in subjection all the souls of humans who have come to earth”.

The same dialectics occurs when Origen speaks of spiritual famine, which the just will not experience (Psalm 36:19b; Amos 8:11-12); the rain sent by God contrasts famines and is likewise spiritual⁸. This is “the real famine, worse” than the material one, and “spiritual”: τοῦ λιμοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ καὶ χείρονος καὶ πνευματικῶς λιμοῦ⁹. Elias, who was fed by God during a famine (3Reg 17:6; 19:8), and the manna provided by God in the desert are the examples that the just will not experience spiritual famine: “the sinners will be punished, but the just will be fed”¹⁰.

Demons cause epidemics, plagues, and famines just as tempting thoughts, to which a person can assent, turning them into vices and sin: “Such thoughts (λογισμοί) are those which are inspired by demons in human hearts”¹¹. Evagrius, Origen’s follower, will develop the notion of λογισμοί inspired by demons¹². The factor that opens the door to the action of demons on one’s soul is laziness, which is so serious as to have determined the fall of the souls¹³.

According to Plato, each person has a δαίμων, who after death accompanies her to the judgment and the region deserved¹⁴ and is the soul’s most sovereign part (κυριώτατον, *Timaeus* 90A), stemming from heaven. To Socrates “something divine and spiritual” happened (θεῖον, δαιμόνιον)¹⁵,

⁷ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 25.

⁸ Origenes, *Homilia* 3 in *Psalmum* 36, 10.

⁹ Origenes, *Homilia* 3 in *Psalmum* 36, 10.

¹⁰ Origenes, *Homilia* 3 in *Psalmum* 36,10: “Κολάζονται οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί, χορτασθήσονται οἱ δίκαιοι”.

¹¹ Origenes, *Libri X in Canticum canticorum* 4, 3, 4: “Sunt ergo huiusmodi cogitationes (λογισμοί) quae a daemonibus iniciuntur cordibus hominum”.

¹² The nous’ knowledge of God is impeded by tempting thoughts, “which attack it from the irascible (θυμός, θυμικόν) and the concupiscible/appetitive (ἐπιθυμητικόν) faculties of the soul: these assail it, going against what properly belongs to (human) nature” (*Kephalaia Gnostica* 6, 83).

¹³ Origenes, *De principiis* 3, 3, 6; 2, 9, 2; 2, 9, 6; cf. Origenes, *De principiis* 1, 4, 1.

¹⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus* 107DE.

¹⁵ Plato, *Apologia Socratis* 31D

a sign from the divine, a prophetic power from something divine/spiritual¹⁶, a spiritual/divine sign that very few experience (δαμόνιον σημεῖον)¹⁷. If Plato described daemons as invisible gods¹⁸, and Ps-Plato's *Epinomis* contemplated ethereal, aerial, and watery daemons, all passible, Xenocrates posited the existence of good and evil daemons (F23-25 Heinze). Plutarch's identification of daemons with the mysteries' ἐμπαθεῖς θεοί, and of Isis and Osiris with daemons¹⁹, appears similar to the Christian idea of 'pagan' and mystery deities as demons.

Justin was the first Christian who identified 'pagan' gods with demons²⁰, likely on the basis of Psalm 95:5 LXX: "all the gods of the nations are demons (δαμόνια)"; so also Tertullian²¹, and many early Christian authors, including Origen. Tatian, Justin's disciple, also maintained that "demons defined Fate"²², being the "administrators" of Fate²³, and identified them with Greek deities²⁴. Demons are responsible for plagues, epidemics, and illnesses; if they heal, they just pretend to do so²⁵. Demonic responsibility for plagues and epidemics is the same that shortly afterwards we find in Origen – and in Porphyry.

In *Contra Celsum* 8, 31-34 Origen picks up again the topic of demons against Celsus' theories and insists that, according to the Christians, "the entire race of δαίμονες is evil"²⁶, and those who administer food, drink and air are the (good, non-fallen) angels, as Origen clarifies on the basis of Hebrews 1:14, and not δαίμονες, as Celsus maintained. What demons, regarded by Christians as all evil (ὄλον τὸ γένος φαῦλον)²⁷, do is provoking famines, droughts, and plagues, namely turning food, drink and air into evil or nought: they are

responsible for *famines, barren vines and fruit-trees, and droughts* (λιμοὶ καὶ ἀφορίαὶ σταφυλῆς καὶ ἀκροδρύων καὶ ἀύχμοί), as well as for the *pollu-*

¹⁶ Plato, *Apologia Socratis* 40AB: "Τοῦ θείου σημεῖον, μαντική τοῦ δαμονίου".

¹⁷ Plato, *Respublica* 496C.

¹⁸ Plato, *Timaeus* 40D.

¹⁹ Plutarchus, *De Iside* 360D.

²⁰ Justinus Martyr, *I Apologia* 5.

²¹ Tertullianus, *Apologeticum* 23.

²² Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 9, 1: εἰμαρμένη.

²³ Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 9, 3; 11, 1: οἰκονόμοι.

²⁴ Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 8, 2.

²⁵ Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos* 12, 10; 16, 8; 16, 18; 18, 1; 18, 5-6.

²⁶ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 31.

²⁷ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 31.

tion of the air (τοῦ ἀέρος διαφθορά), causing damage to the fruits (λύμη τῶν καρπῶν), and sometimes even the *death of animals* (τῶν ζώων θανάτω) and *plague among humans* (τῶν ἀνθρώπων λοιμῶ). Of all these things demons are the direct creators: like public executioners (δήμιοι), they have received power by divine decision (κρίσει τινὶ θεία) to bring about such disasters at certain times²⁸.

As Bardaisan did with the notion of fate, which he made dependent on God (not an independent force, as astrologers, Stoics, and “Gnostics” did)²⁹, so did also Origen envisage the action of demons as allowed by God, as ever with a positive aim, “either for the conversion of humans (εἰς ἐπιστροφήν ἀνθρώπων),³⁰ when they incline towards the culmination of evil, or with the object of training the race of rational beings (εἰς γυμνάσιον τοῦ λογικοῦ γένους)”³¹. Citing Psalm 77:49, Origen remarks that “grim disasters (τὰ σκυθρωπότερα) are, by divine appointment (θεία κρίσει), directly produced (αὐτουργεῖται) by some wicked angels (ὑπὸ τινῶν πονηρῶν ἀγγέλων) [...] demons (οἱ δαίμονες) are sometimes allowed (ἐπιτρέπονται) to bring about other disasters”³². God had not allotted any control of earthly things to demons, but the latter, out of their evilness, divided among themselves the regions of people who do not know God; or perhaps – Origen proceeds by alternatives, as often – the Logos appointed them to rule those who have subjected themselves to evil and not to God³³.

Origen refutes Celsus’ theory that daemons have received authority each over a part of one’s body and it is necessary to worship them all to ob-

²⁸ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 31.

²⁹ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and A New Interpretation*, Piscataway 2009; further I.L.E. Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa, Origen, and Imperial Philosophy*, “Aram” 30/1-2 (2018) p. 337-353; I.L.E. Ramelli, *Intellectual Responses to Collective Disasters and Freewill* (forthcoming).

³⁰ On the concept of “conversion” in Origen see I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Question of Origen’s Conversion and His Philosophico-Theological Lexicon of Ἐπιστροφή*, in: *Greek and Byzantine Philosophical Exegesis*, ed. J.B. Wallace – A. Despotis, Leiden 2021 (forthcoming). In early Christianity: I.N. Mills, *Pagan Readers of Christian Scripture*, VigCh 73 (2019) p. 481-506.

³¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 31. This is one more of the many affinities between Origen and Bardaisan, including anti-determinism and the doctrine of apokatastasis, as Ramelli argues in *Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation* (HThR 102 (2009) p. 135-168).

³² Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 32.

³³ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 33.

tain health³⁴, whereas only Jesus can save fallen angels, who need correction, healing, and conversion from evil³⁵. Rather than worshipping demons to obtain “health (ὕγεια) and fortune in life (ἐν βιωτικοῖς εὐτυχία)”, Origen claims, “we would prefer to be ill (νοσεῖν μᾶλλον) and have misfortunes in life (ἐν βιωτικοῖς δυστυχεῖν)” but worship God alone in purity³⁶. This is consistent with Jesus’ correction of ancient views of illness and misfortunes, which Origen adopted, as will be argued, and with Origen’s claim that misfortunes such as illnesses, poverty or lack of honours usually happen to the just, who are not abandoned by God, as examined below. Those who worship demons to obtain health, honour, and wealth, instead, will be abandoned by God to such demons³⁷.

Notably, Origen opens *Contra Celsum* 8, 34 condemning the dedication of firstfruits to δαίμονες. In the same work, on the basis of 1 Corinthians 10:20 (“pagan sacrifices are offered to demons (δαίμονις), not to God, and I don’t want you to have communion with demons”), Origen often claims that demons’ bodies feed on sacrifices: “burnt-offerings, blood, and vapours of sacrifices”³⁸; “drink-offerings and burnt-offerings” in which they “greedily delight”³⁹; “burnt-offerings and sacrifices” in which “evil daemons delight”⁴⁰; they “greedily partake of the portions of the sacrifices”⁴¹ and “are absorbed in burnt-offerings and blood”⁴², “greedy for sacrifices and blood” (λίχνοι καὶ περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τὰ αἵματα)⁴³. Both Celsus and Origen state that δαίμονες are “captivated by blood and burnt-offerings”⁴⁴. Rufinus continued Origen’s denunciation of bloody sacrifice to demons⁴⁵.

Daemons were those who, according to “a Pythagorean” who allegorised Homer (Numenius?), dispensed the pestilence that Apollo sent upon the Greeks according to *Iliades* 1,34-53⁴⁶. The Greek worship of gods on

³⁴ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 58.

³⁵ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 59.

³⁶ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 62.

³⁷ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 61.

³⁸ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 7, 36.

³⁹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 3, 29.

⁴⁰ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 7, 6.

⁴¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 7, 64.

⁴² Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 62.

⁴³ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 3, 37.

⁴⁴ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 60.

⁴⁵ M.P. Hanaghan, *Rufinus’ Bloody Pagan Tyrants*, VigCh 75 (2021) p. 22-42.

⁴⁶ Cf. Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 7, 5; 4, 32; 3, 29.

altars for sacrifices was in fact offered to δαίμονες⁴⁷. Origen refutes Celsus, who encouraged people to eat meat offered to idols, and, basing his argument on 1 Corinthians 8–10, he observes that the offerings are sacrificed to demons; thus, as Paul already claimed, those who partake of the table of demons become partakers of the demons⁴⁸. Therefore, “we ought not to sacrifice to demons” (οὐδὲ καλλιεργετέον δαίμοσι)⁴⁹. This prescription is repeated in 8, 30, with quotations from 1 Corinthians 15:20-21: “That which its offered to idols is sacrificed to demons (δαίμονις), and a person of God (τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπον) should not become a partaker of the table of demons (δαίμονιων)”, since demons “are nourished by the vapours (ἀναθυμιάσεσιν)” of blood⁵⁰.

This is why Origen states that demons are “gluttonous” and dissimilar from angels, while admitting that some people, even among Christians, agree with them that call themselves “gods (θεούς), God’s angels (ἀγγέλους θεοῦ), good daemons (δαίμονας ἀγαθούς), or heroes (ἥρωας) resulting from the transformation of a good human soul”, since there are “some among souls without bodies, angels and daemons who named themselves gods”, but they do all this “deceptively (ἐξ ἀπάτης)”, since God is one⁵¹. Thus, some Christians, like ‘pagan’ Platonists, thought that there were also good daemons, what Origen denies in his polemic against Celsus. Origen argues that daemons are deemed gods by people not well steeped in demonology⁵². Demons are overcome by the names of God⁵³. In Platonism, the existence of good daemons was admitted by Apuleius⁵⁴, Porphyry⁵⁵, Iamblichus⁵⁶, and others.

As we shall see, Porphyry also condemned the killing of animals as sacrifices for daemons, who feed on such offers. Origen concludes: “Even we do not deny that there are many demons on earth, but we maintain that they exist and have power among bad humans on account of the wickedness of the latter, but have no power against those who have put on the

⁴⁷ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 7, 69.

⁴⁸ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 24.

⁴⁹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 26, tr. Chadwick, p. 470.

⁵⁰ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 30, tr. Chadwick, p. 473.

⁵¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 3, 37.

⁵² Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 3, 29.

⁵³ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 5, 45.

⁵⁴ Apuleius, *De deo Socratis* 12, 146.

⁵⁵ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 6-43.

⁵⁶ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 2, 7; 3, 13; 4, 7.

whole armour of God”⁵⁷. Moreover, Porphyry’s insistence on daemonic deception (“calumnies”⁵⁸; “qualified to deceive [...] deception [...] falsehood”⁵⁹) parallels Origen’s characterisation of demons as deceptive and the devil as the father of lies, based on John 8:44, opposite to Origen’s ubiquitous characterisation of Christ as Truth and Justice⁶⁰.

3. Porphyry: Plagues, Epidemics, Daemons, and Dependence on Origen: Support from Lexical Details, Eusebius, and Cyril

Porphyry knows both good and evil daemons, endowed with pneumatic bodies⁶¹. The former cause beneficial things, while the latter are malefic and responsible for plagues, sterility, earthquakes, drought, and such disasters⁶². Porphyry specified many classes of daemons, including even “archangels”⁶³, possibly identifiable with the “divine daemons”, the highest of the three categories of daemons in another passage⁶⁴, in which Proclus ascribes to Porphyry an exegesis of the Atlantis myth that combines those of Origen (possibly identifiable with the Christian Origen) and Numenius, with whom both Origen and Porphyry were acquainted: thus, it is not odd that Porphyry combined Origen’s and Numenius’ exegesis. The classification in the first passage is based on his identification of each class of people in Atlantis, such as priests, warriors, hunters etc., with a category of daemons (within his allegorical exegesis of the Atlantis myth reported by Proclus)⁶⁵. The first and highest class, “the priests, correspond to the archangels (ἀρχάγγελοι) in heaven, which are turned towards the gods, whose

⁵⁷ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 8, 34.

⁵⁸ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 40.

⁵⁹ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 42.

⁶⁰ E.g. Origenes, *Homilia* 2 in *Psalmum* 36, 1; 38, 2; *Contra Celsum* 6, 64; 6, 44; Origenes, *De Principiis* 2, 9, 4. On this topic see below.

⁶¹ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 38-39.

⁶² Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 40.

⁶³ *Apud* Proclum, *Commentarii in Platonis Timaeum* 1, 152, 12-14 = fr. XVIII Sodano.

⁶⁴ *Apud* Proclum, *Commentarii in Platonis Timaeum* 1, 77, 9-15. Attribution to Porphyry in 77, 23.

⁶⁵ On this allegoresis see I.L.E. Ramelli, *Proclus and Christian Neoplatonism*, in: *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. M. Knežević, Alhambra 2015, p. 37-70; I.L.E. Ramelli, *Proclus of Constantinople and Apokatastasis*, in: *Proclus and His Legacy*, ed. D. Butorac – D. Layne, Berlin 2017, p. 95-122.

messengers (ἄγγελοι) they are”⁶⁶. Likewise, Philoponus, a Neoplatonist who commented on Aristotle and converted to Christianity around 520, in his commentaries mostly displays “pagan” philosophy and speaks of ἄγγελοι not as Christian angels, but as intermediate entities between divine, transcendent intellects and souls and different from them both⁶⁷: ἄγγελοι are intelligible⁶⁸, immortal⁶⁹ and simple substances⁷⁰. Celsus did not admit of “angels” in the taxonomy of beings alongside the gods, daemons, and humans⁷¹. I am not surprised that Iamblichus, as Proclus reports soon after, criticised Porphyry’s classification “as neither Platonic nor true, claiming that ‘archangels’ (ἀρχάγγελοι) were never considered worthy of mention by Plato [...] This kind of speculation is not philosophical; rather, it is rife with foreign humbug (βαρβαρική ἀλαζονεία)”⁷². He was probably aware that Porphyry derived the inclusion of “archangels” in his classification from the Christians, likely from Origen (see below).

In Porphyry’s view, angels are ethereal-empyreal, (other) daemons aerial⁷³. Angels come in three classes: those always with God, messengers/angels, and those bearing God’s throne⁷⁴. If Porphyry called good daemons “angels”⁷⁵, like Martianus 2, 153, he was adopting Origen’s Christian terminology. Interestingly, it has been convincingly argued that Martianus was influenced by Origen⁷⁶. The Hellene of Macarius’ *Apocriticus*, who seems to reflect Porphyrian ideas, identified Christian angels with gods: both stand besides God, are ἀπαθεῖς, immortal, and incorruptible⁷⁷.

Now, Porphyry, after presenting a taxonomy of first God, world soul, visible gods, and invisible gods or daemons, attributes *his own* description

⁶⁶ Proclus, *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus I*, ed. H. Tarrant, Cambridge 2007, p. 249.

⁶⁷ Johannes Philoponus, *In Aristotelis De intelligentia sive mente* 25, 6-9, Johannes Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Ethicam Nicomacheam* 1, 15, 24.

⁶⁸ Johannes Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* 52, 9-10.

⁶⁹ Johannes Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* 159, 8; Johannes Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Analytica Posteriora commentaria* 209, 20-21.

⁷⁰ Johannes Philoponus, *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* 24-26.

⁷¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 5, 4.

⁷² *Apud* Proclum, *Commentarii in Platonis Timaeum* 1, 152, 28-31; 153, 10-11; Tarrant, p. 250, with changes.

⁷³ Porphyrius, F293 Smith, from Augustine’s *De regressu animae*.

⁷⁴ Porphyrius, *Philosophia ex oraculis* F325 Smith.

⁷⁵ See Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 10, 26 and *ap.* Proclum above.

⁷⁶ Argument in I.L.E. Ramelli, *Martianus Capella*, new edition for the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. R. Bagnall, Oxford 2020.

⁷⁷ Macarius, *Apocriticus* 4, 20-21a.

of daemonology in *De abstinentia* to “some of the Platonists”: “I shall expound to the reader *what some of the Platonists have divulged* (ἃ δ’ οὖν τῶν Πλατωνικῶν τινες ἐδημοσίευσαν), that the things proposed to be discussed may become manifest to the intelligent. What they have unfolded, thus, is the following”⁷⁸. Porphyry’s chapters 37-42 detail “the following”. Very probably, they are based on *Origen’s* work on daemons, in *Contra Celsum*, as seen, and probably (as “divulged” intimates) Περὶ τῶν δαιμόνων⁷⁹. This suggests that Porphyry regards Origen as a Platonist, as he also does in F39, where he appreciates Origen’s metaphysics and philosophy but complains that Origen’s life was “against the law” qua Christian⁸⁰.

Porphyry, unlike Plotinus and previous Platonists, but like Origen, maintained that animal sacrifices were performed to daemons (earthly, ethereal, and heavenly), who fattened their pneumatic bodies⁸¹, not gods. Daemons “rejoice in libations and the savour of sacrifices, through which their pneumatic vehicle is fattened; for this vehicle lives through vapours and exhalations, and the life of it is various through various exhalations. It is likewise corroborated by the savour of blood and flesh”⁸². Porphyry maintains that blood sacrifices are wanted by evil demons and not gods⁸³, and in 2, 5-32 he draws on Theophrastus to argue that animal sacrifice is a perversion of the authentic Greek religious tradition. Gods have no needs, let alone of bloody offerings; bloodless offerings are better for simple people, while for the philosopher the best is contemplation, ἀπάθεια, and pure

⁷⁸ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 36, 6.

⁷⁹ E.g. P.F. Beatrice, *Porphyry’s Judgment on Origen*, in: *Origeniana V*, ed. R. Daly, Leuven 1992, p. 362, P.F. Beatrice, *Porphyry at Origen’s School at Caesarea*, in *Origeniana Duodecima*, ed. L. Perrone et al., Leuven 2019, p. 267-284 and H. Marx, *High priests of the highest God*, “Journal of Early Christian Studies” 18 (2010) p. 498, ascribe this work to Origen the Christian. Porphyry certainly knew it according to H. Marx, *Spiritual Taxonomies and Ritual Authority*, Philadelphia 2016, p. 22-23, and drew on it about blood sacrifice targeting evil demons (p. 27-28). T. Proctor, *Demonic Trickery, Platonic Mimicry*, VigCh 68 (2014) p. 416-449 (without attention to the “divulging” detail or the addition of *Contra Celsum* to the dubious treatise on daemons, etc.) hypothesised that Porphyry’s daemonology in *De abstinentia* depends on Origen; followed by G. Smith, *How Thin is a Daemon?* JECS 16 (2008) p. 485-486; Marx, *Taxonomies*, Ch. 1. C. Hecht, *Porphyry’s Daemons as a Threat for Christians*, in: *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, ed. P. Pavlos et al., Abingdon 2019, p. 49-59 does not consider Origen’s probable influence.

⁸⁰ Analysed in Ramelli, *Origen, Patristic Philosophy*, p. 217-263.

⁸¹ A claim rejected by Iamblichus (*De mysteriis* 5, 4).

⁸² Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 42.

⁸³ Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 2, 40.

thought⁸⁴. Also, it is demons, not gods, who want sacrifices⁸⁵ and produce theurgical inspiration⁸⁶.

Referring to *De abstinencia*, Eusebius confirms: “[Porphyry] acknowledges that all beings, to whom the Greeks used to offer bloody sacrifices by the slaughter of senseless animals, are demons, not deities, and declares that it is neither right nor pious to offer animal sacrifices to deities”⁸⁷. Porphyry regarded Homer’s passible gods as daemons⁸⁸. All this was shared by Origen⁸⁹ and Christian apologists. Iamblichus replies to this opinion of Porphyry in *De Mysteriis* 3, 31, labelling it as a position of “atheists”: if it derived from Origen and Christianity, this is understandable.

If Porphyry’s demonology depended on Origen (as Iamblichus and Proclus also seem to confirm), Porphyry’s attribution of this daemonology to “certain Platonists” who “divulged” these theories situates Origen within the Platonic school. I suspect that Porphyry was influenced by Origen’s *Contra Celsum* and probably *On Daemons*, since Porphyry’s terminology of “divulging” corresponds to that used in his own anecdote in *Vita Plotini* 3 about Origen who, notwithstanding the oath not to divulge (ἐκκαλύπτειν) Ammonius’ esoteric doctrines, nevertheless did so in *On Daemons* and *The King Is the Only Creator*⁹⁰. This indirectly confirms that Porphyry was speaking of the same Origen. Surely, Porphyry’s conviction that evil daemons are responsible for plagues, epidemics, and natural disasters is the same as Origen’s⁹¹.

Eusebius knew both Origen’s and Porphyry’s d(a)emonologies. Eusebius’ view of demons, their physical presence as recipients of the smoke of sacrifices and close to tombs, initially angels, now envious and deceptive, but who cannot overrule human προαίρεσις⁹², directly depends on Origen, who influenced Porphyry. Eusebius significantly cites both together in his

⁸⁴ Porphyrius, *De abstinencia* 2, 34, 2-3.

⁸⁵ Porphyrius, *De abstinencia* 2, 37-43.

⁸⁶ Porphyrius, *Epistula ad Anebonem* 2, 7.

⁸⁷ Eusebius Caesariensis, *Praeparatio evangelica* 4, 8, 4-5.

⁸⁸ Porphyrius, *De Styge* F377 Smith.

⁸⁹ E.g. Origenes, *Protrepticus ad martyrium* 45.

⁹⁰ Analysis in Ramelli, *Origen, Patristic Philosophy*, p. 217-263.

⁹¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 1, 31; 8, 32, seen above, which Porphyry knew.

⁹² H. Johannessen (*The Demonic in the Political Thought of Eusebius*, Oxford 2016, p. 43-74, 99-138) recognises Origen’s inspiration on Eusebius on the basis, among else, of Ramelli’s works (49). H. Moscicke (*Eusebius’ Fall Narrative*, JECS 26 (2018) p. 1-24) shows that *Demonstratio evangelica* 4, 6-10 creatively elaborates on Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 5, 2-31.

compendium of Middle-Platonic daemonology based on Plutarch, to show that many myths referred not to deities, but to “evil daemons”⁹³, opposed to “gods” and “good daemons”⁹⁴. This is “pagan” terminology used by Eusebius, with which already Origen was familiar; in Christianity there are no “good demons”. Like Origen, Eusebius personally maintains that in Christian traditions demons are never good⁹⁵. The resemblances between Eusebius’ and Porphyry’s daemonologies⁹⁶ likely depend on their derivation from Origen’s. The continual threat that demons pose to humans⁹⁷ was already denounced by Origen: before the eventual apokatastasis, rational creatures can always fall back into evil – what demons encourage: “they lead humans astray (πλανώντων), distract and drag them down from God and the world beyond the heavens (τῶν ὑπερουρανίων) to earthly things”⁹⁸. Angels also can influence humans, but the reversal is the case as well: a wicked person’s guardian angel can be a demon, but if this person converts, this demon can become a good angel⁹⁹. This squares with Origen’s theory of the possibility of moral and spiritual improvement always open to all rational creatures¹⁰⁰.

Cyril, who used Porphyry in his refutation of Julian, and knew Origen, recognised that Porphyry expounded a “Christian” daemonology: “Porphyry, who shares Julian’s philosophy [Neoplatonism] and religious superstition [‘paganism’], exposed *truthful theories on d(a)emons*”¹⁰¹. Probably because Porphyry depended on Origen here.

⁹³ Eusebius Caesariensis, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 5, 4-5: in Eusebius’ words, δαίμοσιν πονηροῖς (5, 4, 4; GCS 228, 15); τοῖς πονηροῖς δαίμοσιν (5, 4, 6, GCS 229, 2); τοῖς φαύλοις (δαίμοσιν) (5, 4, 7; GCS 229, 7).

⁹⁴ Eusebius Caesariensis, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 5, 4, 7: “οὐκ ἄρα θεοῖς οὐδ’ ἀγαθοῖς δαίμοσιν”.

⁹⁵ Eusebius Caesariensis, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 4, 5, 4.

⁹⁶ Pointed out by Johannessen, *Demonic*.

⁹⁷ Analysed in Eusebius by Johannessen, *Demonic*, p. 139-170.

⁹⁸ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 5, 5, Chadwick, p. 267.

⁹⁹ Origenes, *Commentarii in Matthaeum* 13, 26-28.

¹⁰⁰ Extensive discussion in I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, Leiden 2013, p. 145-176.

¹⁰¹ Cyrillus Alexandrinus, *Contra Iulianum* 4, 14. “Demons” for Cyril, “daemons” for Porphyry and Julian.

4. Origen, Rational Creatures, δαίμονες, and Ammonius

For Origen, after God, rational creatures are angels, fallen angels or demons, and humans¹⁰². His teacher Ammonius¹⁰³ divided the incorporeal nature into heavenly beings or gods; intermediate rational beings, namely ethereal, good daemons, interpreters, and angels; and the last rational beings: terrestrial, human souls, the immortal parts of humans. In 462a the focus is again on the three classes of λογικά or νοερά γένη, parallel to Origen's νόες and λογικά/λογικοί: the convergence extends even to their definition as εικῶν τοῦ νοητοῦ θεοῦ and, in 462b, their freewill, which in Origen became the core of his theology of freedom. The same is repeated in Ammonius' fragment preserved by Hierocles¹⁰⁴. Ammonius' daemonology inspired Origen, who in turn inspired Porphyry. Origen, against 'Gnostic' divisions of natures, posited the same nature for angels, humans, and demons (all belonging to the λογική φύσις)¹⁰⁵; perfect humans are equal to angels (ισάγγελοι)¹⁰⁶. Origen maintained that demons are ontologically good, embraced evil out of freewill, and will eventually return to adhere to the Good¹⁰⁷.

Proclus reported Origen's exegesis of Plato's Atlantis myth in reference to good and evil daemons: "others referred this myth to an opposition of daemons, some good and some evil, some more numerous and some more powerful, some triumphant and others submitting, as Origen interpreted/supposed"¹⁰⁸. I argued for the possible attribution of this exegesis to 'our' Origen¹⁰⁹ and further note here that στάσις, μάχη and πόλεμος, "opposition, contrast, strife, conflict, war", are also used by Eusebius – who likely knew Origen's exegesis of Atlantis, as well as Plutarch, whom he cites – to describe battles and oppositions among var-

¹⁰² E.g. Origenes, *De principiis* 2, 9, 1.

¹⁰³ Photius, *Bibliotheca* 251, 461b-462a.

¹⁰⁴ Photius, *Bibliotheca* 214, 172a.

¹⁰⁵ Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem* 2, 23, 146.

¹⁰⁶ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 4, 29.

¹⁰⁷ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism*, VigCh 61 (2007) p. 313-356.

¹⁰⁸ Proclus, *Commentarii in Platonis Timaeum* 1, 76, 31-77, 9: "Οἱ δὲ εἰς δαιμόνων τινῶν ἐναντίωσιν, ὡς τῶν μὲν μεινόνων, τῶν δὲ χειρόνων, καὶ τῶν μὲν πλήθει, τῶν δὲ δυνάμει κρείττονων, καὶ τῶν μὲν κρατούντων, τῶν δὲ κρατουμένων, ὥσπερ Ὀριγένης ὑπέλαβεν".

¹⁰⁹ I.L.E. Ramelli, *Proclus and Christian Neoplatonism and Origen to Evagrius*, in: *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity*, ed. H. Tarrant – D. Baltzly – D. Layne – F. Renaud, Leiden 2018, p. 271-291.

ious daemons: τὰς ἐκείνων μάχας τὰς τε πρὸς ἀλλήλους διαστάσεις καὶ τοὺς πολέμους¹¹⁰.

It was remarked:

Origen construed the war between Athens and Atlantis in the *Timaeus* as a struggle between good and evil daemons: Ramelli rightly observes that it was characteristic of the Christian Origen to find allegorical references to both un-fallen and fallen angels in enigmatic passages of scripture. The word in Proclus, however, is ‘daemon’, not ‘fallen angel’: the Christian Origen held that angels and daemons are ontologically of one nature, but in his own vocabulary the name ‘daemon’ accrues to a being of this nature only after it has fallen. Proclus (and, according to him, the Origen of whom he is speaking) divided the race of daemons into the good and malign: to the Christian Origen a daemon is by definition an evil specimen of its nature [...]. Ramelli has demonstrated that there is an important sense – albeit not the institutional sense of his day – in which Origen of Caesarea could fairly be characterised as a Christian Platonist.

It is significant that this is recognised. “But if he is to be the Origen of the Neoplatonists, he must have given a meaning to the word ‘daemon’ in one treatise (or at most two) which it does not bear anywhere in his extant writings”¹¹¹.

In fact, Origen frequently mentions δαίμονες and even “evil daemons”, as seen above, and not “fallen angels” (as suggested in the first lines of the citation), when he means “demons” (angels who have chosen evil rather than the Good-God). Origen was well aware of the ‘pagan’ use of δαίμων, as is clear in *Contra Celsum* (his exegesis of the Platonic Poros myth in *Commentary on Genesis*, and briefly in *Contra Celsum*, dealt with Eros δαίμων μέγας). If Περὶ τῶν δαιμόνων is his, he probably used Neoplatonic terminology, as Ammonius did, since this treatise expounded Ammonius’ esoteric teaching. What is more, Proclus was using his own vocabulary in his paraphrase (good and bad daemons = angels and demons), which presents this hypothesis as one shared by other Platonists. Origen, who allegorised other Platonic myths as well, probably allegorised the Atlantis myth as a strife between good daemons (angels: terminology taken up by Porphyry) and bad daemons (demons/devils). Proclus, who sided with Iamblichus’ criticism of Porphyry’s adoption of the “angel” lexicon, employed the Platonic terminology of good and evil δαίμονες.

¹¹⁰ Eusebius Caesariensis, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 5, 4, 10.

¹¹¹ M. Edwards, *One Origen or Two?* “Symbolae Osloenses” 89 (2015) p. 95.

Philo, with whom Origen was conversant, was already familiar with both Platonic and Biblical terminology and equated δαίμονες with angels and human souls, noting that Scripture calls angels what ‘pagan’ philosophers call δαίμονες: souls flying in the air¹¹². Origen was similarly aware of this terminological correspondence. Maximus of Tyre’s *Dissertatio* 11, *Who Is God according to Plato*, begins with noting the disagreement, στάσις, of Platonist accounts about daemons¹¹³. One account of δαίμονες/δαίμονια is in conflict with the other, because of their classification: “their nomenclature is unclear, their nature obscure, and their powers a matter of dispute”¹¹⁴. Indeed, some thought that there were both good and evil δαίμονες, and others that δαίμονες were only evil – which is also the Christian position. This reflects the disagreement on δαίμονες’ classification, nature, and power.

In *Περὶ τῶν δαιμόνων*, if his, Origen likely used Platonic terminology (δαίμονες) to refer to angels, good or evil, and humans. This is possible both because for him all λογικά share in the same nature, as seen, and in light of his usage of δαίμων/δαίμονες in *Contra Celsum*. In 5, 6 Zeus is identified with a daemon “who is no friend of humans or God”; in 1, 31 and 2, 51, Origen adds a qualifier, φαῦλοι, to designate *evil* daemons, which implies that there are also *good* daemons, at least for his interlocutor Celsus (the same expression, “evil daemons”, is used by Porphyry¹¹⁵ and even on Rabbinic incantation bowls¹¹⁶). In 3, 37, Origen identifies angels

¹¹² Philo Alexandrinus, *De gigantibus* 6; 12; 16. The “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2 – regarded as fallen angels from the New Testament onwards, in 1Pet 3:19-20; 2 Pet 2:4, and Jude 6, Justin and other early Christian authors – are called ἄγγελοι, whom the Creator uses as “servants and διάκονοι”. In *Gig.* 12 Philo discusses Gen 6:2 and notes, like Origen after him, that these ἄγγελοι are called δαίμονες by “pagan” philosophers. He distinguishes some who descend into bodies, as in the case of the angels of Genesis 6, and others who do not mingle with bodies: In *Gig.* 14-16, Philo goes on to say that the latter kind of angels, those who never get embodied, have two tasks: to philosophise before God, and function as ambassadors, πρεσβευτάς between God and humans. See also Philo Alexandrinus, *De somniis* 1, 134-141; Philo Alexandrinus, *De plantatione* 12-14; Philo Alexandrinus, *Quaestiones in Genesim* 4, 188; Philo Alexandrinus, *De confusione linguarum* 174-177; Philo Alexandrinus, *De Cherubim* 6, 20-10, 31. The expression “sons of God” refers to angels already in the Old Testament, in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7.

¹¹³ Maximus Tyrius, *Dissertatio* 11, 1.

¹¹⁴ Maximus of Tyre, *The Philosophical Orations*, ed. M. Trapp, Oxford 1997, p. 96.

¹¹⁵ Above and *ap.* Augustinum *De civitate Dei* 19, 23.

¹¹⁶ The Bowl of Rav Ashi bar Mahlafta, v. 7, asks that this Talmudic scholar be freed from an illness by dispelling a “spirit of the daemon/Satan”; another incantation bowl, JBA9 (MS2053/183), v. 7-8: “evil spirit” (בישתא רוחא).

with “good daemons”, δαίμονες ἀγαθοί, in a Christian “esoteric and mystical” doctrine by which daemons call themselves “gods, angels of God, good daemons, or heroes” and that some among “the bodiless souls, angels, and daemons call themselves gods”. In 5, 5, Origen observes that *only* in Scripture is δαίμονες “always applied to evil powers without the grosser body”, ἐπὶ τῶν φαύλων ἔξω τοῦ παχυτέρου σώματος δυνάμεων¹¹⁷.

In 4, 24 Origen accepts both terminologies:

the good and blessed beings, whether, as you say, the *good daemons* (οἱ ἀγαθοὶ δαίμονες), or, as we usually call them, *God’s angels* (οἱ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄγγελοι) or whatever other natures that are superior to humans (ὑπερέχουσαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσεις), since in any case the rational element (λογικόν) in them has been perfected (τετελείωται) and endowed with every virtue (κατὰ πᾶσαν ἀρετήν)¹¹⁸.

Origen adopts Platonic terminology on δαίμονες, for example in 5, 2, where he describes Apollo and Asclepius as “certain daemons (τινες δαίμονες), far inferior (πολλῶ χειρους) to wise humans (τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις σοφῶν) who ascend on account of their virtue even to the vault of heaven”¹¹⁹: he does not say “evil demons” and refers to Plato’s *Phaedrus*¹²⁰, although he notes again that in Scripture, and *only* there, evil angels alone are called δαίμονες: “demons”¹²¹.

Rational creatures can change status according to their moral choices, depending on their merits or demerits: they “originate in and emerge out of change and their own choice and thus determine their own nature”¹²². “The freedom of decision has determined everybody’s nature (*arbitrii libertas naturam fecerit unicuique*)”¹²³, whether one is an angel, a human, or a demon, and of what kind. Both fallen and unfallen angels are νόες/λογικά, like humans. Origen contemplates passages from one category to another over the aeons, depending on their moral choices, while within the present life humans can become angels or demons only metaphorically: they acquire the moral characteristics of angels or demons, depending

¹¹⁷ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 5, 5, tr. Chadwick, p. 200.

¹¹⁸ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 4, 24, tr. Chadwick, p. 267 with changes.

¹¹⁹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 5, 2, tr. Chadwick, p. 265.

¹²⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus* 247B.

¹²¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 7, 5.

¹²² Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem* 20, 21, 174.

¹²³ Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos* 8, 10, 11.

on their choices. On the one side, indeed, speaking of the span of aeons before the eventual apokatastasis (“both in these aeons that are seen and temporal and in those that are unseen and eternal”), Origen states that “Every rational creature can pass from one order to another (*ab uno in alterum ordinem transeuntem*) and reach all, one by one, because each rational creature, by virtue of its freewill (*pro liberi arbitrii facultatem*), makes progresses or regresses depending on its movements and impulses”¹²⁴. This is Rufinus’ translation; both Jerome in his anti-Origenian phase and the scholia on Dionysius the Areopagite emphasise the passage of rational creatures from an order to the other, without end¹²⁵, while Origen posited an end at the eventual apokatastasis¹²⁶. In other places Origen expresses the same concept, again with a view to the long span of aeons, speaking of passages of class “in another aeon (*in alio saeculo*)”¹²⁷: in Rufinus’ translation, “I deem it possible that the soul, which I have repeatedly described as immortal and eternal (*immortalis anima et aeterna*), through infinite spaces and innumerable and different aeons (*per immensa et diuersa saecula*), either will fall from the supreme Good to the deepest evil, or will be restored from the deepest evil to the highest Good”. Likewise elsewhere:

heavenly, terrestrial, and infernal creatures [Phil 2,10 = angels, humans, and demons] [...] having had one and the same origin, being variously pushed each one by its own impulses, have been distributed into different orders according to their merits, because in all of these the Good was not present in a substantial manner, as instead it is in God [...] Huge is the variety of falls by which one decays from its condition, depending on the movements of its intellect and will. One descends less and another more¹²⁸.

The angelic hierarchy is arranged not “accidentally (*non fortuito*)”, but on the basis of “God’s righteous judgment”¹²⁹. The *ordines* of rational creatures are: angels, who are such, and of a certain rank, according to the degree of their merits (*pro meritis*), demons, who are demons,

¹²⁴ Origenes, *De principiis* 1, 6, 3.

¹²⁵ Hieronymus, *Epistula* 124, 3, 6; Hieronymus, *Scholia in Dionysii De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* PG 4, 137A.

¹²⁶ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen in Augustine*, “Numen” 60 (2013) p. 280-307.

¹²⁷ Origenes, *De principiis* 3, 1, 23.

¹²⁸ Origenes, *De principiis* 4, 6, 2.

¹²⁹ Origenes, *De principiis* 1, 8, 1.

and of a certain rank, according to their choices (*pro motibus suis*), and human souls, which, because of their progress (*per profectum*), can be “assumed into the order of angels” (*in illum angelorum ordinem assumi*), in reference to those who are “children of God”¹³⁰. Immediately afterwards, in the same chapter, Origen rejects metempsychosis, which points to transformations between one’s lives and suggests that the change from the human to the angelic order mentioned immediately before also refers to this.

In *Commentarii in Canticum* Origen does not mention the perspective of aeons or the initial fall: in this life, “through freewill”, *per arbitrii libertatem*, each one can move either to the side of God or to that of demons (*ad daemonum portionem*), by choosing malignity and falsity (*maligna uirtus et dolosa*) through deception and fraud (*deceptiones et fraudes*). The last passage seems to refer to a metaphorical transformation within the present life, while the former ones seem to refer to the class of rational creatures and rank that each one picks up in a given aeon, depending on this *logikon*’s moral progress or regress¹³¹.

5. Plagues, Epidemics and Misfortunes Mostly Befall the Just

Origen is far from necessarily seeing plagues and epidemics, illness and misfortunes, as punishments. In a homily for church public, *Homilia 4 in Psalmum 36*, he comments on the verse, “I have never seen a righteous person abandoned, or his or her offspring beg”¹³². He remarks that one cannot think that the righteous are abandoned by God when illness, poverty or persecution (*ἀσθένεια σώματος, πτωχεία, τὸ διώκεσθαι*)¹³³ befall them, because such things usually happen to the just, such as prophets or apostles, who are always accompanied by a host of angels. Origen, thinking of the Theology of the Cross, grounds this idea in Isa 28:9-11, “accept tribulation upon tribulation” with a view to life eternal¹³⁴, and follows Jesus’ criticism of the ancient view of illness and misfortunes, as I argue in the last paragraph. Nemesius will elaborate on Origen’s reflections: “the good for the most part suffer injustice, are hu-

¹³⁰ Origenes, *De principiis* 1, 8, 4.

¹³¹ Origenes, *Commentarii in Canticum* 4, 3, 21.

¹³² Origenes, *Homilia 4 in Psalmum 36*, 3.

¹³³ Origenes, *Homilia 4 in Psalmum 36*, 3.

¹³⁴ Origenes, *Protrepticus ad Martyrium* 1, 1.

miliated and surrounded by countless evils, whereas the bad and violent grow in power, wealth, authority and all the other good things in life”¹³⁵.

Origen continues to observe that the just are not abandoned by God, only by humans: “the righteous is never alone, but a whole army of heavenly powers is at his or her disposal”. The goods of which the just is never deprived are not health, wealth, power and the like, but spiritual goods. An example is Paul, who took pride in his infirmities and tribulations (2Cor 12:10). Origen concludes: “all the saints suffer bodily, but are not damaged thereby”¹³⁶. The saints are the just, who often suffer illness, poverty, and persecution. Origen remembers Plato’s *Respublica* on the persecution of the Just, tortured, scourged, and crucified¹³⁷: Clement already stated that Plato “almost prophesied” Jesus’ death¹³⁸. Abandoned by God, Origen continues, are those who “are abandoned in spirit” and are full of injustice, malignity, greed, envy, hostility, falsity, and the like¹³⁹.

Similarly, in another pastoral work, Origen notes that the just are often ill, humble, and rejected; this gives rise to the ignorant’s complaints against God¹⁴⁰. Proverbs 13:25 (“A righteous man eats and fills his soul, but the impious’ souls are needy”) refers to “the soul’s food”. Origen thereby reconciles Proverbs with Jesus’ encouragement not to think about what one will eat (Matt 6:25-28), an exhortation to practice a “simple life” that has also a “deeper” meaning.

A spiritual interpretation of infirmity also emerges in Origen’s interpretation of 1Cor 11:30¹⁴¹. Paul warns the Corinthians against taking the Eucharist in a state of sin and remarks: “this is why many among you are infirm and ill, and several are dying (κοιμῶνται)”. Origen interprets this

¹³⁵ Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 43, 350, 12-351, 23.

¹³⁶ Origenes, *Homilia 4 in Psalmum* 36, 3: “Corporaliter [...] pati omnes sanctos et non laedi”. See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Disability in Bardaisan and Origen. Between the Stoic Adiaaphora and the Lord’s Grace*, in: *Disability als hermeneutische Leitkategorie biblischer Exegese*, ed. W. Grünstäudl – M. Schiefer, Stuttgart 2012, p. 141-159.

¹³⁷ Plato, *Respublica* 361E4-362A1.

¹³⁸ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromateis* 5, 108, 2-3.

¹³⁹ Origenes, *Homilia 4 in Psalmum* 36, 3: “Derelinquantur vero spiritu illi [...] repletos omni iniquitate, nequitia, avaritia, plenos invidia, homicidiis, contentione, dolo, susurratores, detractores, Deo odibiles, contumeliosos, superbos, elatos”.

¹⁴⁰ Origenes, *Homiliae in Leviticum* 14, 4.

¹⁴¹ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Cor 11:30*, JBL 130 (2011) p. 145-163.

illness and death spiritually¹⁴². The illnesses of the soul are, for instance, greed for money, glory, women, youths, etc. instead of God; Jesus cures them, removing what are symbols of spiritual illness¹⁴³.

Christ's miracles symbolise the healing of the soul's illnesses and impairments¹⁴⁴; they perform the cure that philosophy performs, chasing passions, vices, and evil. For Christ, the Logos, personifies true philosophy and its therapeutic effectiveness. Additionally, through its Incarnation, the Logos has appropriated all human infirmities, so as to cure them "from the inside"¹⁴⁵. Christ-Logos cures the soul's infirmity¹⁴⁶, even a mortal one (*Contra Celsum* 8, 72). This buttresses Origen's apokatastasis theory¹⁴⁷.

Not only spiritual illness is more serious than physical illness, but also spiritual death is much worse than physical death and the only kind of death deemed by Origen a real evil. Origen provides a survey of the meanings of θάνατος in Scripture in *Dialogus cum Heraclide*¹⁴⁸ (listing the death of the body, the death of the soul, a big evil, and the death to sin, which is good) and in *Commentarii in Romanos*¹⁴⁹: "death" in Scriptures has many meanings: (1) the separation of the body from the soul (*separatio corporis ab anima*), which is neither evil nor good, being "indifferent" (*indifferens*, the Stoic ἀδιάφορον); (2a) the separation of a soul from God (*separatio animae a Deo*), called "the wages of sin", which is clearly evil (*mala*); (2b) the devil, the author of 2a –

¹⁴² Origenes, *Commentarii in Matthaeum* 10, 24.

¹⁴³ Origen classifies the soul's ailments, from the least to the most life-threatening, in *Commentarii in Ioannem* 9, 13, 82; 85; I.L.E. Ramelli, *KOIMΩMENOYΣ ΑΠΙΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΥΠΙΗΣ*, ZNTW 102 (2011) p. 59-76.

¹⁴⁴ Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem* 6, 33, 166; Origenes, *Commentarii in Matthaeum* 13, 4: "every illness and weakness that our Saviour healed at that time in the people (of Israel) refer to the various diseases of the souls"; Origenes, *Fragmenta in Lucam* 220: "in good health' means that he has cast off his spiritual sickness by repentance".

¹⁴⁵ Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem* 13, 57, 392. Cf. Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem* 28, 19, 165; 2, 26, 164: "he himself assumed our own infirmities and bore our illnesses: the infirmities of the soul and the illnesses of our inner human, in the recesses of the heart"; 6, 56, 290; 32, 7, 83: "He himself bears our infirmities"; 28, 18, 160; Origenes, *Homiliae in Ieremiam* 14, 9: "he took upon himself the infirmity of our sins".

¹⁴⁶ Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem* 2, 18, 129.

¹⁴⁷ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen and Apokatastasis*, in: *Origeniana Decima*, ed. S. Kaczmarek – H. Pietras, Leuven 2011, p. 649-670.

¹⁴⁸ Origenes, *Dialogus cum Heraclide* 25-28.

¹⁴⁹ Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos* 6, 6, ed. C.P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes, Kritische Ausgabe Buch 4-6*, Freiburg 1997, p. 480-481, ll. 29-43. See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception*, "Augustinianum" 48 (2008) p. 59-78.

death (*auctor mortis huius*), called “death” and the very last enemy of Christ, bound to be destroyed¹⁵⁰; (2c) hell (*inferni locus*), in which souls are imprisoned by death; (3) the death by which a person dies to sin (*qua peccato quis moritur*) and is buried together with Christ, which is praiseworthy (*laudabilis*): a soul improves and acquires eternal life. The three main meanings (bodily death, an ἀδιάφορον; spiritual death; and death to sin) are the same in *Dialogus* and in *Commentarii in Romanos*¹⁵¹, which lists: (1) “mors ista communis” or *bodily death*; (2) “peccati mors, quoniam ‘anima quae peccat ipsa morietur’”¹⁵², and (3) “istam mortem qua, cum Christo, peccato morimur”. Origen was inspired, I think, by Romans 6, and by philosophical and popular philosophical reflections on “spiritual death”¹⁵³. Analogously, spiritual resurrection coexists with physical resurrection. The former is not a resurrection of “bones, skin, and nerves”, but a resurrection from the death caused by sin, which hands humans to the powers of evil. This is why Jesus calls sinners “sepulchres”¹⁵⁴. But “it becomes God to open the sepulchre of each of us, and bring us out, alive again, just as the Saviour brought out Lazarus”.

Thus, physical illness and impairment for Origen is a Stoic ἀδιάφορον, like richness or poverty, power or lack thereof. It is no evil – *spiritual* illness is – and therefore is no punishment. It may even be a good, sent by God to people who are extraordinarily gifted, intellectually and/or spiritually, to have them realise that their gifts come not from them, but from God: this was the case with Paul. Suffering becomes a richness if it is offered as a participation in the Cross, to whose redemptive work it contributes (in the “theology of the Cross”). Some souls, primarily Christ’s soul, even *choose* to suffer, to assist in the process of salvation.

Like illness, poverty and the like, persecution in Origen’s view is also often undeserved and due to the meanness and envy of persecutors, inspired by demons and the devil, qua false and calumniator. Origen’s homilies on Psalms 36, 37 and 38, translated by Rufinus and partially available in Greek

¹⁵⁰ 1Cor 15:26. See I.L.E. Ramelli, *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*, StPatr 44 (2010) p. 259-274; I.L.E. Ramelli, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology in In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, in: *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism*, ed. V.H. Drecoll – M. Berghaus, Leiden 2011, p. 445-478.

¹⁵¹ Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos* 6, 5.

¹⁵² Ez 18:4, a verse very dear to Origen, since it links sin to death.

¹⁵³ Analysis in I.L.E. Ramelli, *1 Tim 5:6 and the Notion of Spiritual Death*, “Aevum” 84 (2010) p. 3-16.

¹⁵⁴ Origenes, *Commentarii in Matthaem Series* 139: “Sepulchres are the bodies of the souls that sin and are dead to God”.

in Codex Monacensis Gr. 314 (only the first four on Psalm 36)¹⁵⁵, are a good example of Origen's engagement with this topic. In his preface Rufinus emphasises that these Psalms are an invitation to purification and moral progress, and Origen in his homilies insists especially on the gravity of sins such as envy, calumny, corruption, and iniquity. Rufinus' preface sharply denounces envy and corruption¹⁵⁶, and those who attain undeserved positions through corruption and injustice, at the expense of others. Origen, likewise, blamed those who obtain riches and undeserved positions through corruption: "people who amassed wealth through various subterfuges and shrewd tricks; who tried to obtain positions, honours, or consulships through various stratagems or even violence"¹⁵⁷.

Origen denounces *invidia et livor*, envy and hostility against intellectually and spiritually gifted people¹⁵⁸. These are calumniated out of envy, and calumny is inspired by the chief of demons: διάβολος means "calumniator, slanderer" (Origen quotes from the LXX). False testimony is a mortal sin, against the Eighth Commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour", and was execrated by Philo¹⁵⁹. Origen warns that calumny turns against the slanderers; defaming righteous people is dangerous, being tantamount to defaming Christ and being subject to divine punishment¹⁶⁰. Slanderers will have to give account of this to God.

Origen indicates envy of Christ's rational arguments and miracles as causing his condemnation¹⁶¹. Envy engendered both the devil's deception of humanity and the first murder¹⁶²; hence, Jesus in turn deceived the devil. The righteous, who are victims of false testimony and injustice, "are even regarded by people as sheep and trash"¹⁶³, reminiscent of 1Cor 4:11-13, but

¹⁵⁵ Comparison between the original Greek and Rufinus' Latin in Prinzivalli, *L'originale*, p. 35-58.

¹⁵⁶ Rufinus, *Praefatio ad homilias in Psalmos* 1: "Genus hominum proclive est ad zelotypiam et perfacile ad vitium istud inclinatur".

¹⁵⁷ Origenes, *Homilia 2 in Psalmum* 38, 9.

¹⁵⁸ Origenes, *Homilia 3 in Psalmum* 36, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Philo Alexandrinus, *De specialibus legibus* 4, 8, on the Eighth Commandment, against those who falsely accuse humans (ἀγένητα κατηγοροῦσιν) and disseminate falsity (ψεῦδος) against humans and even God (Philo Alexandrinus, *De specialibus legibus* 4, 8, 49-50).

¹⁶⁰ Origenes, *Homilia 3 in Psalmum* 36, 5; 12.

¹⁶¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 2, 39.

¹⁶² Origenes, *Homilia 4 in Psalmum* 36, 1.

¹⁶³ Origenes, *Homilia 1 in Psalmum* 38, 4.

they will be exalted by God¹⁶⁴. Also alluding to himself¹⁶⁵, Origen repeatedly denounced hostility, envy, and slander against those who are better than the slanderers: “They exult when they see the righteous in some difficulty [...] they wish evil to the righteous [...] those who machinate against the righteous, those who speak evil, the slanderers, who calumniate, denigrate, vilify, accuse [...] Our brothers speak ill of us, defame us; we are covered with abuse and insults even directly in our face”; “a sinner put himself up against me, spoke evil of me and disparaged me”; “the voice of one who speaks ill and slanders”; “the arrows of denigration, abuse, or insults are cast against us”¹⁶⁶.

The prophets and Christ were hated too, but unjustly¹⁶⁷. Origen notes that corrupt people seem to prosper in this life, but warns that it is impossible to obtain material goods in this world along with spiritual goods in the next, since for one to have spiritual goods in the next, one must choose spiritual goods in this world, and this will not bring about material goods¹⁶⁸. Other homilies as well contain reflections against corruption in attaining undeserved honours and positions, against iniquity in general¹⁶⁹, and copious references to Origen as a victim of calumny. In *Homiliae in Genesim*, his denigrators are dubbed “Philistines”, Christians who did not want him to speculate, for instance, about the causes for Jacob’s election and Esau’s repudiation – which lie in Origen’s doctrine of the *logika*: “I also wanted to ask him: ‘Lord, who sinned, this man, Esau, or his parents, that he should be born all full of hair like this, and supplanted by his brother already in the womb?’”¹⁷⁰ But if I want to ask God’s Logos about this and make an investigation, some Philistines

¹⁶⁴ Origenes, *Homilia 3 in Psalmum* 36, 10.

¹⁶⁵ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Autobiographical Self-Fashioning in Origen*, in: *Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity*, ed. M. Niehoff – J. Levinson, Tübingen 2019, p. 273-292.

¹⁶⁶ Origenes, *Homilia 2 in Psalmum* 37, 1-2; Origenes, *Homilia 1 in Psalmum* 38, 4; Origenes, *Homilia 1 in Ps. 38*, 4; Origenes, *Homilia 2 in Ps.38*, 6 respectively, in Rufinus’ version.

¹⁶⁷ Origenes, *Homilia 2 in Psalmum* 37, 8.

¹⁶⁸ Origenes, *Homilia 2 in Psalmum* 36, 2.

¹⁶⁹ E.g., Origenes, *Homiliae in Iudices* 3, 1 against corruption: “ad potestates atque ad dignitates saeculi prosilit et artes quibus haec assequi nititur, etiamsi contra fidem et religionem sint, non refugit nec horrescit, dummodo quod cupit obtineat, inde evenit ut faciat malignum in conspectu Domini”; 6, 5 (against iniquity): “aut per iustitiam superamus, aut per iniustitiam vincimur”.

¹⁷⁰ See the last section in this article for the same question on the man born blind healed by Jesus.

will immediately *attack me and level calumnies against me*¹⁷¹. These people opposed Origen's spiritual exegesis and his theology, which was grounded in the former¹⁷².

6. Christ as All Virtues vs. Demonic Vices

Origen identifies Christ-Logos with all virtues, as opposite to demons who instigate sin through temptations and provoke plagues, epidemics, and famines. This principle relies on the Stoic tenet that the Logos is the moral law, and on the 'Middle Platonic' concept of the Logos of God as the seat of all Ideas¹⁷³, including the Ideas/Forms of all virtues: Justice itself, Wisdom itself, etc. All Virtue-Forms are in the Logos as models, "Christ, i.e. Logos, Wisdom, and all virtues"¹⁷⁴. Origen's principle that Christ-Logos is all virtues will be developed by Maximus: Christ "is the essence/substance (οὐσία) of all virtues"¹⁷⁵. This derives from Origen literally ("ipsarum virtutum substantiam Christum")¹⁷⁶.

Christ is *all* virtues because all virtues are so closely interrelated as to form a unity. After Wisdom and Logos, Origen prioritises cardinal virtues – Justice, Wisdom, Fortitude, and Temperance – which from Plato

¹⁷¹ Origenes, *Homiliae in Genesim* 13, 4.

¹⁷² Origenes, *Homiliae in Genesim* 13, 4; 13, 2-3; see also I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen's Philosophical Exegesis of the Bible*, in: *Studia Patristica CIII: The Bible in the Patristic Period*, ed. M. Szram – M. Wysocki, Leuven 2021, p. 13-58.

¹⁷³ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Logos/Nous One-Many*, StPatr 102 (2020) p. 175-204.

¹⁷⁴ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 3, 81.

¹⁷⁵ Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua* 7, PG 91, 1081D.

¹⁷⁶ Origenes, *Commentarii in Canticum* 1, 6, 12-13. The ἀκολουθία of all virtues was a Stoic principle (SVF 3,295-304), adopted not only by Origen, but also by Platonists such as Philo (*Vita Mosis* 2, 7), Apuleius (*De Platone* 2, 6), the anonymous commentator on Plato's *Theaetetus* (9, 39; 11, 6), and Plotinus, according to whom the virtues in each set imply one another reciprocally (ἀντακολουθοῦσι), just as the exemplars do within Nous (*Enneades* 1, 2, 19, 7, 1-3). Plotinus' verb is the same used by Origen (*Commentarii in Matthaeum Series* 146, 5): "all virtues are attached to Christ's hypostasis in consequentuality" (ἀντανακολουθοῦσαι ὡς αἱ ἀρεταὶ τῇ ὑποστάσει τοῦ Χριστοῦ). On Origen's notion of Hypostasis: I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis*, HThR 105 (2012) p. 302-350 and *Origen between Apophatic Theology and a New Trinitarian Ontology: Ousia, Will, Hypostasis, and Legacy*, invited lecture, *New Trinitarian Ontologies*, Cambridge University, 13-15 September 2019 (forthcoming).

reached the Stoics¹⁷⁷, who also equated life according to nature (ὀρθὸς λόγος: Zeus) with virtue¹⁷⁸, and imperial Platonists such as Apuleius¹⁷⁹. Ambrose, Origen's follower, called them *cardinales*¹⁸⁰. Virtues are “imitations” of Christ-Logos, who contains all their models¹⁸¹. Both imitation and participation (μίμησις, μέθεξις) express the Platonic relation between beings and their Ideas; μίμησις was also used by the Stoics for the link between the virtuous and the divinity¹⁸². Against Justice and Truth – ἐπίνοιαι of Christ iniquity, corruption, and falsity are most serious sins: “Our Lord Jesus Christ is Justice (δικαιοσύνη). Therefore, nobody who behaves unjustly is subject to Christ, who is Justice. Christ is Truth: no deceitful person is subject to Christ, who is Truth”¹⁸³. Origen identifies Christ primarily with Justice: “Christ is Logos and Wisdom, and also Justice”, so that “all creatures, created in the Logos and Wisdom, were also created in Justice, which is Christ”. Christ is “the very essence of virtues; indeed, he is Justice itself”; according to the category of participation, “Our Saviour is Justice itself, and all the just participate in Christ”; “The Son of God is Justice, Truth, and Wisdom”¹⁸⁴. Christ-Logos is “Truth itself”, “the prototype of Truth”, impressed in those who think and speak truthfully¹⁸⁵. This accords with Plato's imperative, “hate what is false” (τὸ ψεῦδος μισεῖν)¹⁸⁶. Origen describes Christ as the “Sun of Justice”¹⁸⁷. This identification, based on Mal 4:2 (LXX 3:20), was dear to him also because this Sun is here said to rise “with healing/salvation (ἰασις-*salus*) on its

¹⁷⁷ Plato, *Respublica* 4, 427E; Plato, *Leges* 631C. Stoic ascendance: M. Schofield, *Cardinal virtues*, in: *Plato and the Stoics*, ed. A. Long, Cambridge 2013, p. 11-28.

¹⁷⁸ SVF 3, 178. For the Platonic roots of the equation see I.L.E. Ramelli, *Il βασιλεύς come νόμος ἔμπροσθεν tra diritto naturale e diritto divino: spunti platonici del concetto e sviluppi di età imperiale e tardoantica*, Naples 2006.

¹⁷⁹ Apuleius, *De Platone* 2, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Homiliae in Lucam* 62.

¹⁸¹ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Homiliae in Lucam* 8, 17.

¹⁸² I.L.E. Ramelli, *Stoicism in the Fathers*, BEEC, w: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-encyclopedia-of-early-christianity-online/stoicism-and-the-fathers-SIM_036681 (access: 23.01.2021).

¹⁸³ Origenes, *Homilia 2 in Psalmum* 36, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Origenes, *De principiis* 2, 9, 4; Origenes, *Homilia 2 in Psalmum* 38, 2; Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 6, 64; 6, 44.

¹⁸⁵ Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem* 6, 38.

¹⁸⁶ Plato, *Respublica* 485C.

¹⁸⁷ Origenes, *Homilia 3 in Psalmum* 36, 7; Origenes, *Commentarii in Canticum Cantorum* 2, 2, 10; 2, 2, 5; cf. Origenes, *Homilia 1 in Psalmum* 38, 8.

wings”. This supported Origen’s doctrine of apokatastasis and his anti-Marcionite and anti-Gnostic thesis of the unity of justice and mercy in God, since divine justice is here associated with therapy and salvation¹⁸⁸.

7. Origen Follows Jesus’ Criticism of the Ancient View of Illness and Misfortunes

Origen remembered not only Paul’s theology of the Cross and interpretation of his own “thorn in the flesh” (above), but also Jesus’ criticism of the ancient, widespread view of illness and misfortunes as divine punishments for an individual or his parents or ancestors¹⁸⁹. Familial causes of evil are explicitly denied in John, where Jesus rules out that a person’s sin is the cause of one’s illness. In John 9:1-3, Jesus states that the blind man was not blind because of his own sins or those of his parents: “neither he nor his parents sinned (ἤμαρτεν), but in order that the works of God could be manifested in him”. Jesus also problematised responses to collective disasters, such as in Luke 13:1-5: he claims that those who are victims of such disasters are not more culpable than those who are spared; the latter will perish as well, if they do not repent:

Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did (NRSV).

Mainly the philosophers, especially Plato and followers, entertained a view of illness that differed from the “punishment” model. Origen was also remindful of philosophical perspectives. According to Plato, a soul, “which is superior to the body”, if much stronger than its body,

shakes up (διασειύουσα) the whole body from within and fills it with illnesses (νόσων ἐμπύμπλησι). And if the soul studies and researches with intensity,

¹⁸⁸ Argument in Ramelli, *Christian Soteriology*, p. 313-356; further in Ramelli, *Origen and Apokatastasis*, p. 649-670.

¹⁸⁹ See I.L.E. Ramelli, *Jesus of Nazareth*, in: *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (digital edition, forthcoming).

it consumes (κατατῆκει) the body. If, then, it teaches and discusses, publicly and privately, because of disagreement and contentiousness, it enflames (διάπυρον ποιοῦσα) the body and causes it to rock (σαλεύει), and brings about humours (ρέυματα ἐπάγουσα): so it deceives most of the so-called physicians (ιατρῶν), who attribute such humours to other causes¹⁹⁰.

If the body is stronger than the soul, worse: ignorance ensues (ἀμαθία)¹⁹¹. The Stoics regarded bodily illnesses as ἀδιάφορα¹⁹².

The Neoplatonist Plotinus, the fellow-disciple of Origen at Ammonius', maintained like him that illness and poverty are not punishments and can be good: "Are poverty and illness (πενία ἢ νόσοι) punishments for previous errors/sins (ἁμαρτίας)? [...] If the sufferer is good (ἀγαθόν), suffering will turn out for his or her good (εἰς ἀγαθὸν ἢ τελευτή)"¹⁹³. Proclus later remarked that illnesses and infirmity are often sent by divine Providence, "that the body may not brim with strength, sweeping our intellect along"¹⁹⁴. This recalls *Timaeus* 88B.

In his reflections on illness, misfortunes, plagues, famines, epidemics, and their causes, Origen, as pointed out, drew on Jesus, Paul, the Prophets and Psalms, and the Christian tradition, as well as the philosophical tradition, including Plato, Ammonius, and Philo, who was aware of 'pagan' and Christian terminologies and conceptions of d(a)emons, and emphasised individual responsibility and freewill against determinism, like Bardaisan. Clement, Tatian and Origen attributed collective disasters to "evil daemons" (Christian demons) and stressed human freewill, and Gregory of Nyssa would follow and develop Origen's "theology of freedom"¹⁹⁵. But even Porphyry probably derived important aspects of his daemonology – as well as other ideas and theories¹⁹⁶ – from Origen, as I have argued extensively, also adducing confirmations from Eusebius and Cyril.

¹⁹⁰ Plato, *Timaeus* 88A.

¹⁹¹ Plato, *Timaeus* 88B.

¹⁹² Ramelli, *Disability*, p. 141-159.

¹⁹³ Plotinus, *Enneades* 4, 3, 16, 21-22.

¹⁹⁴ Proclus, *De providentia* 36, 5-7. Cf. I.L.E. Ramelli, *Soma* (Σῶμα), RACH 30 (2021) p. 814-847.

¹⁹⁵ Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* (chapters on Clement and Origen) *Social Justice*, Chapter 5.

¹⁹⁶ E.g. the idea of Hypostasis retrojected on Plotinus (argument in my *Hypostasis*) and others: examples in I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen and Porphyry*; other cases are emerging from research.

Plagues and Epidemics Caused by D(a)emons in Origen and Porphyry and Potential Interrelations

(summary)

This essay will address how Origen, an early Christian writer, theologian, and pastor, referred to plagues, epidemics, and misfortunes, and how he construed these phenomena in his theology, literary works, and pastoral practice. A comparison with Porphyry will be offered, who likely drew part of his daemonology from Origen. Those responsible for plagues in both Origen's philosophical theology and in Porphyry's philosophy are δαίμονες (demons or fallen angels for Origen, daemons for Porphyry; Origen knew and referred to the two views). Porphyry's attribution of his daemonology to "certain Platonists" who "divulged" these theories probably alludes to Origen and situates Origen within the Platonic school. I suspect that Porphyry was influenced by Origen's demonology in general and possibly by *On Daemons*, if his. Porphyry's terminology of "divulging" corresponds to that used in his anecdote about Origen who, notwithstanding the oath not to divulge Ammonius' esoteric doctrines, nevertheless did so in *On Daemons* and *The King Is the Only Creator*. This indirectly confirms that Porphyry was speaking of the same Origen. Porphyry's conviction that evil daemons are responsible for plagues, epidemics, and natural disasters is the same as Origen's in *Contra Celsum*, which Porphyry knew. Origen was aware that spiritual plagues are worse than physical ones, that misfortunes mostly befall the just, and took over Jesus' criticism of the ancient view of misfortunes as divine punishments for an individual or his parents or ancestors.

Keywords: Collective misfortunes; Plagues; Epidemics; Evil δαίμονες; Demons; Origen; Porphyry; Ammonius; Eusebius; Cyril; Jesus

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