The Remnant

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Romans 11.5

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ORIGENES ADAMANTIUS, OR ORIGEN: THE ORIGIN OF A LOT OF HERESIES

I. Prologue

By the middle of the Dark Ages, Roman Catholicism's amillennial, universal, visible Kingdom of God was calling itself "The Church" while its goons were beheading and burning alive Jews, Moslems, independent Christians, and all other non-Romanists right and left.

"The Church" was not always so. Torture and persecution to the death? This was not the way of Jesus Christ or His apostles. Neither He nor they burned people to death, beheaded them, or told the church (as "the Kingdom of God on earth") to commit such atrocities. Read the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7). Read all four gospels and the book of Acts. Search in vain for instructions on how to convert or cremate non-believers. Scan Paul's epistles and those of Peter, James, John, and Jude in vain for a how-to manual on the fine points of imprisonment, confinement, and excruciating torture of simple peasants—men, women, and children who do not believe in or submit to

an amillennial, universal, visible, Roman, "kingdom of God" on earth.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

"If the 'church fathers' had only **known** how their efforts would turn out...." One might speculate about various outcomes and revisions of the course of history, but by the decree of God they did not know. Speculation about "what-ifs" is useless. "This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes (Psalm 118.23)." God has a reason for the way things were and are. "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter (Romans 8.36)."

Killing those who disagreed with the Roman rulers was so *logical* (to the Roman rulers), so *politically correct*, especially when the amillennial, spiritual, physical, visible "Kingdom of God on earth" had all political and religious power behind it, centered upon and within itself. It was so easy to terrorize poor, uneducated, superstitious serfs, so why not do it? Even as he claimed to be "the Vicar of Christ," the pope could now additionally claim that "All power in heaven and in earth is given to me, too!"

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Since Rome claimed "the visible Kingdom of God" was the Roman Catholic (*Catholic* means *universal*) Church, it was only a matter of time before someone else came along and said, "You can have your universal 'visible' church; we have the universal *invisible* church."

Nowadays, we don't hear about a universal invisible church as much as we used to, doubtless because in these days invisible congregations, invisible songbooks, invisible preachers, invisible deacons, invisible baptisms, invisible church-buildings, and invisible parking lots are all in such short supply.

The "Dark Ages." The very name stirs uneasiness in the hearts and minds of the descendants of Rome's victims.

The Dark Ages covered about one thousand years, one millennium, spanning the thousand years from AD 500 to AD 1500, approximately. It was Rome's heyday; for the in-crowd it was their heaven on earth. For the others, it was, *figuratively* speaking, a thousand years of hell on earth: Rome's Millennium, the Kingdom of God on earth, Roman style.

Hundreds of thousands of independent Christians, Jews, Arabs, and pagans were beheaded, crucified, drowned, or burned to death. Perhaps the ones who suffered least were

those who were beheaded. Their suffering was not so much the physical pain, which was over in an instant, as it was the dread and the fear, the anticipation of "What will go through my severed brain after its pain-sensing nerves are permanently, fatally severed from my body?"; the poignant musings of what my life might have been, had I been allowed to live; the leaving behind of loved ones, most of whom would suffer a similar or even worse ordeal and death; the fear of the unknown, assuaged only by the hope in Christ of the resurrection and the encouragement of the knowledge of His certain divine retribution in their behalf at His return: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled (Revelation 6.9-11)."

*

People believe the amillennial theory today, even though they would never believe it if they knew the basics of its underlying evil, the facts of how it originated, where it came from, who was behind it, and where it leads—and except for the fact that God has judicially delivered men over to believe it.

Amillennialism begins with not taking God's word at face value, which is to say not taking His word literally. Either God said what He means and means what He said, or He did not.

To the rational, thinking, reasoning carnal mind, full of depraved and preconceived

notions, much of the Bible does not make sense. The depraved natural mind is never at a loss to criticize God and His word, producing, to its own satisfaction, much better ideas and explanations of what God should have said, how He should have said it, how He could have said it better, what He was really *trying* to say, and what He really meant, and, as is so popular to say today, "what He was *trying* to tell us."

Improving on God's word did not start in the twentieth century, or even in the Dark Ages, which were only the results of God's word's having already been supplanted by the worldly wisdom of men who were corruptly powerful and powerfully corrupt.

Richard Dawkins, bellwether of the "new" atheists, said in his book, *The God Delusion* (page 31):

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: Jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."

But such unimaginative blasphemy did not start with Dawkins and his kind; long ere he thought to say God was a bully, it had already been said by modernist "Christian" theologians, if they may be called that. Dawkins was merely echoing voices from the "Christian" left wing pulpit; there is nothing original in Dawkins but the way he says things.

Methodist bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, one of the first presidents of the World Council of Churches, approved calling the God of the Old Testament a "Dirty Bully" in his 1944 book,

Preaching in a Revolutionary Age. Oxnam wrote on page 79:

"Hugh Walpole ["A discreet homosexual," according to one of Walpole's biographers; hardly a worthy source of Christian theology and doctrine—CCM], in Wintersmoore, tells of a father and son at Church. The aged rector read from the Old Testament, and the boy learned of the terrible God who sent plagues upon the people and created fiery serpents to assault them. That night, when the father passed the boy's bedroom, the boy called him, put his arms around his father's neck, and, drawing him close, said, 'Father, you hate Jehovah. So do I. I loathe Him, dirty bully!' We have long since rejected a conception of reconciliation associated historically with an ideal of Deity that is loathsome. God, for us, cannot be thought of an angry, awful, avenging Being who because of Adam's sin must have his Shylockian pound of flesh. No wonder the honest boy in justifiable repugnance could say, 'Dirty Bully.'"

If self-declared atheists did not concoct the blasphemy of calling God a "dirty bully," and since, as is the fact, Bishop Oxnam published his "dirty bully" book when atheist Dawkins was a three-year-old toddler, then how did such sacrilege seep into the organized "church"?

In a way, we can almost understand how atheists can say such things about a God whom they think does not exist; but how do we explain "Christian ministers" like Oxnam, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Ralph Sockman, Harry Ward, George Buttrick, and countless others of their kind, in their generations and our own, railing against the God they profess to worship

and represent, while they undermine the doctrine of the One who is the supposed Founder of the modern social-club "churches" that pay (or paid, in their day) their lucrative salaries?

The answer to this puzzle goes far back in church history to the times of the apostles themselves, and even before, and the two or three centuries that followed the apostles' lives and deaths. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son (1 John 2.22)." "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4.3)." These words the apostle John said in the closing days of his ministry, the latter years of the apostolic age. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (2 John 1.7)."

II.

The Catechetical School of Alexandria

We would do well if, by God's enlightening grace, we were enabled to examine how the Christian church, in the broadest, most nominal sense, fell from its lofty position of the New Testament era into an apostate Roman killing machine barely more than two centuries after the death of the apostle John, the last living apostle of Christ.

The city of Alexandria, Egypt, named after the conqueror Alexander the Great, was the home of the Alexandrian School of religion and philosophy. That school would have been an Ivy League college of its day, had ivy grown on pyramids. Ranking equally with Athens, the home and center of the Greek philosophers, the Alexandrian school drew to its classrooms some of the greatest minds of its day, both as teachers and as students.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says of the School of Alexandria, "the first Christian institution of higher learning, founded in the mid-2nd century AD in Alexandria, Egypt. Under its earliest known leaders (Pantaenus, Clement, and Origen), it became a leading centre of the allegorical method of biblical interpretation, espoused a rapprochement [combining, uniting] between Greek culture and Christian faith, and attempted to assert orthodox Christian teachings against heterodox views in an era of doctrinal flux."

Note that, according to secular historians, this was the beginning of *Bible Colleges and Seminaries in "Christianity*." To those who oppose Bible colleges and "an educated ministry" and also hold to an amillennial spiritualizing of every text they stumble upon, we would say, "Look to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged": Origen and the Alexandrian School. For all practical purposes, seminaries and spiritualizing both started at the same time and place: second and third century Alexandria. Pharaoh's revenge.

Pantaenus was "a **Stoic** philosopher who taught in Alexandria. He converted to the Christian faith[?], and **sought to reconcile his new faith with Greek philosophy**. His most famous student, Clement...was his successor as head of the Catechetical School" (wikipedia on Saint_Pantaenus).

"The *Universalist Church of America* historian J. W. Hanson (1899) argued that Pantaenus "must, beyond question" have taught Universalism to Clement of Alexandria and Origen...(*ibid.*)."

Universalism teaches that all humanity and all angels, demons, and devils, including Satan, will eventually be saved.

Clement of Alexandria

Titus Flavius Clemens (c.150 - c. 215), known as Clement of Alexandria (to distinguish him from Clement of Rome), was a Christian theologian and the head of the noted Catechetical School of Alexandria... (wikipedia on Clement of Alexandria). He developed a "Christian Platonism," that is, Plato's philosophy revamped and updated, uniting Greek philosophy with Jewish and Christian doctrine.

Clement valued *gnosis*, or a "special knowledge" given to those who attain the "deeper meaning," i.e., the *allegorical or figurative* understanding of Scripture. Like so many in his day and ours, his position was, simply, that those who agreed with him had attained to the "deeper meaning" of the Scriptures, and those who disagreed with him had not. He opposed the Gnostics, but in so doing, he fell into his own pit: he developed his own brand of *gnosis* Gnosticism.

Clement's young student Origen devoured whatever Pantaenus and Clement taught, later going far beyond his teachers.

The School of Alexandria was a key turning-point in the destruction of the doctrine and practice of the first-century church of Christ and His apostles. After Clement of Alexandria, the pivotal leader of that school was the man named Origen.

III. ORIGEN THE MAN

This is the story of a genius who, at the age of eighteen, became the headmaster of one of the most prominent colleges of religion and philosophy in the Roman world in his day, the Alexandrian School, or the Catechetical School of Alexandria, Egypt.

His name was Origen. Not "origin," as "a beginning or source," although he was the *origin* and source of some of the church's biggest errors; but Origen with an *e*, as in Origenes Adamantius, his official Roman name.

No one knows exactly when he was born or when he died. The dates usually given are between AD 182 and 185 for his birth. He died around AD 251 to 254, in his late sixties or early seventies, of injuries caused by imprisonment and torture inflicted upon him by the Roman Emperor's persecutors.

Origen was the son of Leonides, a teacher who educated his son in the Bible, in elementary secular studies, and in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, with perhaps a few other languages for good measure. Origen's well-rounded education, which he continued throughout his lifetime, included the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures (the Old and New Testaments) and other religions, including Greek and Roman mythology and philosophy, Gnosticism, Zoroasterism, and other pagan religions.

During the devastating persecutions under the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus, his father Leonides was martyred in AD 202. Ever an impulsive lad, Origen wanted to be martyred too, along with his father. Humanly speaking, the only thing that kept him from fulfilling his rash intentions to die as a teenaged martyr was that his mother hid his clothes, the accounts say, so that he could not go out in public. Being a modest lad, he could not bring himself to go nude to his own martyrdom.

After the death of his father, Origen continued his studies under Clement. The death of Leonides left his wife and their many children in extreme poverty. Young Origen tried to support his mother and his siblings, but was unable to do so. Soon, since he had the mind of

a genius and was extremely well educated, Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria, appointed him as the headmaster of the Alexandrian School in AD 202 to succeed Clement, who had fled the Roman persecutions that killed the Origen's father that same year. By most accounts Origen was eighteen years old at the time he was made President of Alexandria Bible College.

Origen was one of the most controversial figures in church history. Untold numbers of books praise him; they are mostly written by Arminians, Pelagians, Universalists, and Modernists because they all share common ground with this ancient writer who is called "The father of theology." Theologians, take note.

Other writers condemn him as a not-toosubtle fountainhead of heresy. I say plainly from the outset, I am one who is of this latter persuasion. My reasons, I trust, will be made plain soon enough.

Origen was a genius, without a doubt. His genius, however, was perverted and worldly. His brilliant mind roamed much too far into paganism, and his writings contributed little to furthering the truth of God's word. Rather, he undermined the plain teaching of the Bible in his day, and his subversive influence has continued in "Churchianity" until now.

From the beginning of his career, Origen was a popular teacher and a prolific writer. He taught classes that brought him into close contact with desirable young women and girls as his students, and he employed many of them as stenographer-secretaries to write the many books, letters, and articles he dictated to them. The young ladies liked Origen, perhaps too much; and he liked them—again, perhaps too much. He and they were increasingly attracted to each other. Origen found himself surrounded by the natural temptations of the flesh which

threatened his spiritual endeavors and became for him a growing concern.

The young man was an impulsive extremist. He became ever more preoccupied with the one and only solution that he could see to his main temptation, the pretty-girls problem: According to his understanding of Matthew 19.12, which he took literally, he must make himself a eunuch.

In the days of his youth Origen understood the Scriptures literally. He had to do so for him to literally castrate himself, as he did, which will be addressed later. He based his selfemasculation on his literal understanding of Matthew 19.12, which reads:

"For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

It was this last part, "...and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it," that became his overpowering obsession.

HANDFULS OF PURPOSE

Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth....Isaiah 41.15

Did he or didn't he?

Some writers favorably disposed toward him, who would deny the historical account of Origen's fanatical act, have said that the story of his self-emasculation may have been invented by writers hostile to him. Even his friends and supporters who believe he did castrate himself criticize his impulsive act of self-mutilation.

One summed it up this way: "It was to remove any hint of scandal as he taught young women their catechism that Origen castrated himself, literally following Matthew 19:12. He later came to see his action as ill-advised and not to be taken as an example." [emphasis supplied.] He did later write against self-emasculation (the voice of experience, no doubt), but only in general terms, not referring directly to what he had done to himself.

Some of his Arminian supporters agree that Origen castrated himself in response to Matthew 19.12 when he took it literally. One of them added, "An omniscient deity should have known what Origen had in mind when he was inspired by Matthew 19:12 to pick up that knife." Sadly, however, this Arminian's deity, being not all that omniscient, could not read Origen's mind before it was too late.

Origen's self-mutilation is such a delicate subject that it was seldom discussed in detail in the historical and biographical accounts. Finding answers to puzzling questions about the details is almost impossible. Questions like:

- 1. Did he do this alone, to himself, by himself, or did someone assist him?
- 2. If someone did the cutting for him, did someone else hold him down, like men had to do when a man's leg must be sawed off without anesthesia?
- 3. Or did he gnaw on a block of wood or something else because of the pain?
- 4. What kind of cutting instrument did he use?
- 5. Did he or someone cauterize his new wound with a red-hot iron?
- 6. How and where was the severed body part(s) disposed of?

As for the first three questions, he probably did by himself alone what he felt compelled to

do. Any friends who might have helped him would more than likely have tried to talk him out of his folly.

We are not told what he did to alleviate the pain any more than we are told the other details. The cutting instrument was probably the sharpest knife or razor available to him. To stop the bleeding, he probably did cauterize the wound with red-hot metal, prepared in advance, because he certainly knew once the deed was done there would be no turning back. He certainly must have known the truism of every age: What is worth doing is worth doing well.

A possible scenario, then, might have been:

The young man Origen was at first fascinated by the text, Matthew 19.12, and then he became morbidly preoccupied with it. After months of prayer, meditation, mental preparation, evading the pretty girls, and a growing conviction that he must indeed make himself a eunuch, he secluded himself in a vacant room in an isolated building. If it had been during the frontier days of America's wild west, the grisly act might have taken place at the bottom of an abandoned mineshaft or in a dark and dusty, cob-webby, abandoned blacksmith shop in some ghost town.

With him he took his cutting instrument, a goodly piece of metal (brass or iron) for cauterizing the wound, possibly some oil and wine (Luke 10.34) to doctor himself, and a block of wood to grip in his teeth, for he knew men in intense pain have been known to bite their tongues off; rags to staunch the flow of blood; bandages—lots of bandages—and a brazier (if there was not one already in his deserted hiding place), in which he could heat his cauterizing iron to glowing hot.

He built his fire, and, while the iron was heating, he laid the bandages conveniently close by. He moved slowly, thoughtfully, deliberately. No doubt he prayed a lot as he prepared and waited for the iron to heat. He examined and tested the blade.

When the iron glowed most brightly he knew the time had come. It was now or never. A final check: The block of wood he grasped tightly in his teeth. The iron, oil, wine, and the bandages were all within easy reach. The knife. He moved resolutely. Laying the knife's edge in place against his tender skin, he mentally rehearsed the necessary motion. No second thoughts, no looking back. Just do it. Then, in one swift snatch, his self-mutilation was irreversibly completed.

Almost certainly Origen's thought-pattern changed within a split second after the deed was done. Until then, he was thinking, "I shall make myself a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven...it may be painful, but not nearly as much agony as my Lord endured for me on the cross..not nearly as painful as the fires of Hell...."

The cutting edge had scarcely sliced through his tender flesh but his thoughts completely reversed in a way that altered the course of the church, its doctrine, and the thinking of countless theologians and preachers in centuries to come. Now he was thinking: "O Lord, my God! What have I done? This is so irreversible! Too late now, too late now...I cannot undo it....O my God, were there no other alternatives? Of course there were! Stupid, stupid, stupid me! I can't believe I did that! How foolish of me to take that verse literally! If every man did what I have just done, the race would die off in a generation. What a fool I was to take it literally! That verse must be symbolic...figurative...of course it is. That makes so much more sense...symbolic gives me the best of both worlds...I could have

married and fathered children...but not now...The blood. Too much blood...Must stop all this bleeding...."

Such may well have been some of the thoughts that in retrospect filled his mind.

The pain was unbelievably intense. He bit harder into the wood and reached for the glowing metal, which he thrust upon the wound where his own blood flowed like a fountain.

The cauterizing fire immediately brought a new unbearable pain of a different kind. He was distracted somewhat by the stinking odor of his own flesh and blood burning into wisps of steamy smoke rising about his face. A sardonic joke involuntarily flitted through his paincrazed brain: I bet I'll never do that again!

Nothing broke the silence but the sound of the sizzle of his burning flesh mingled with the groans escaping around the wood-block in his clenched teeth. There was nothing else to do but to apply the oil, wine, and bandages as well as he could and collapse on the floor in a nightmarish faint, gasping from his ongoing pain and the stress of his self-imposed ordeal.

This was an act he immediately regretted, and which he continued to regret until his dying day. We are forever indebted to him, however, for his foolhardy, if brave, literal act, in this respect: his self-castration resulted in his never having produced any physical offspring to figuratively follow in his figurative footsteps. It is bad enough that he has had figurative followers from his figurative day until ours, without his also having fathered a long line of heretics bearing his literal name and propagating his literal genes.

"Sin in haste," the old proverb says, "and repent at leisure." It is no wonder, then, that Origen, contemplating what he had done, concluded that the Scriptures are not to be taken literally. In true manic, all-or-none, either-or

thinking, he went from one extreme to the other: from "everything is literal" to "nothing is literal."

His contrition following this act of selfmutilation serves as a side-lesson to all who have lived since his day, reminding us that, although repentance and sorrow may be utterly complete, most acts of folly cannot be undone.

I know of only one case in modern times (this happened in the 1950s) that a young man took such a verse literally and applied it to himself: "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matthew 5.30)."

We do not know what about his right hand had offended him, but he was sure he must sever his right hand. He went to the Fort Worth freight yards, where boxcars were being "humped," or sorted into trains for other parts of North America. On the "hump," a boxcar may roll down a track for nearly a mile as switchmen route the cars to the proper sidings. The young man went to a siding with an unattended boxcar rolling in his direction and, crouching, he laid his right wrist on the rail. The heavy steel wheels mashed his hand off above the wrist and rolled on.

Whatever Matthew 5.30 actually means is not being debated here. Our point here is: From that day until now, I have never heard of anyone endorsing what he (or Origen) did; although he made a "literal application" of the text, no matter how his right hand had "offended" him, never have I heard of anyone's saying that he made a correct application of the text.

IV.

In the days, weeks, and years to come, Origen would have time enough to weigh the relative merits of a "literal" versus a "spiritual" understanding of Matthew 19.12 and of the Bible more generally. Bolstered by his extensive knowledge of the philosophies of the Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians, but most of all by his own rash experience, in accord with his impulsive, all-or-nothing, manic nature, he immediately and forever traded his literal understanding of the Scriptures for a figurative, allegorical, "spiritual" application of the Bible. He concluded, without a doubt, that a *figurative* understanding of a text is much better than the literal.

And that, briefly, is how we got amillennialism.

Origen went on to be one of the most prolific writers in the history of the church. He could now dictate his thoughts to his young female stenographers without tempting them or being tempted. This he did, dictating volumes of books, letters, sermons, and other writings that became the new foundation (compare 1 Corinthians 3.11) of the Roman Catholic church, Protestantism, and all others who follow their amillennial footsteps.

V. What Did Origen Say?

Historians say that Origen wrote as many as 6,000 books, but many of those "books" were short articles and letters. Remember, we call 3 John "a book," but it only has 293 words. The "book" of Philemon has only 430 words. It was thus also with many of Origen's writings. (For comparison, this column, top to bottom, has about 278 words.)

He did write many much larger books and treatises, but much of what he said is uncertain. His writings were hand-written, either by himself or by his stenographer girls. In order to be circulated, his manuscripts, large or small, had to be hand copied. It is well

known that some copiers after his death (whether friend or foe) liberally changed or omitted what they did not like, or added their own thoughts to his words. **Rufinus** is one well-known example among others who did so.

In the centuries that followed Origen's death, he was condemned as a heretic by a few (Roman Catholic) "church councils" and many of his writings were burned.

We do, however, have many of his complete writings that history says are authentic. There is at least one Internet web site that claims to have all of Origen's writings posted. We will briefly draw from what is recorded and what his friends and disciples declare he said and taught:

1. Origen rejected a literal understanding of the Scriptures. He believed they were "allegorical" and could only be penetrated by those who were "enlightened" (*a la* Gnosticism) to see the inner, deeper meaning, beyond the surface meaning. The following famous quote from him is readily available from various sources:

Now what man of intelligence will believe that the first and the second and the third day, and the evening and the morning existed without the sun and the moon and the stars? And that the first day, if we may so call it, was even without a heaven? [i.e. here he is referring to the time before Genesis 1.15—CCM] And who is so silly as to believe that God, after the manner of a farmer, "planted a paradise eastward in Eden," and set in it a visible and palpable "tree of life," of such a sort that anyone who tasted its fruit with his bodily teeth would gain life; and again that one could partake of "good and evil" by masticating the fruit taken from the tree of that name? And when God is said to "walk

in the paradise in the cool of the day" and Adam to hide himself behind a tree, I do not think anyone will doubt that these are figurative expressions which indicate certain mysteries through a semblance of history and not through actual events.

In his ridiculing the literal understanding of the Scriptures, concerning Exodus 21:22-25 he questions "...how an unborn child can lose an eye or have his/her teeth knocked out. How can a pregnant woman be burnt while witnessing a fight between two men?" [Origen, Homily on Exodus 10.2]

Origen rejected a literal view of many passages, such as Zechariah 9:10; Isaiah 7:15 and 11:6-7, that he said 'obviously' cannot be intended literally [Origen, *Principles* 4.1.8]. This seems to have been due to his view of end time prophecy (eschatology). Most early Christian writers were premillennialists, believing in a literal 1,000 year rule of Christ on earth: e.g., Papias [taught]... that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth." [Also: Eusebius, History, 3.39.12-13]; Epistle of Barnabas (15:1-9), Justin Martyr (*Dialogue*, 80f.); Melito (see Polycrates in Eusebius' History, 5.1), Irenaeus (Heresies, 5.31.1); Hippolytus of Rome (Commentary on Daniel, 4.23), Julius 'Africanus,' Tertullian (Against Marcion, 3; On the Resurrection of the Flesh), Cyprian and Lactantius (Divine Institutes, 6.14, 24, 26; 8.11ff. esp. 24). Origen's opposition to premillennialism probably arose in part due to (a) the excessive claims of the Montanists in the second century, (b) attempts to calculate the date of Christ's Return, and (c) in response to Gnostic ridicule of the doctrine of a literal 1,000-year

reign on earth. (The Gnostics rejected anything connected with the physical world.) Origen rejected such a "carnal belief" [Origen, *Principles* 2.11.2]; his views greatly influencing later writers, especially Eusebius of Caesarea.

Again he says, "How can even the simplest of believers explain literally the meaning of the account of Lot lying with his daughters? How could Abraham have had two wives; two sisters be married to Jacob, and two handmaids be given to him by his wives? Are not all these things forbidden in the Law?" [Origen, Principles 4.1.9]

- 2. Because he could not conceive of God letting much "time" go by without His demonstrating His creative power (which he said is essential to His nature), he said the material universe was created from all eternity. Why God would let *pre-creation time pass* **did not make sense** to Origen's natural reasoning.
- 3. He taught that the souls of men were pre-existent, and that they were at present temporarily confined to material bodies for some sin committed in their previous existence.
- 4. He taught that all mankind and all demons, devils, and fallen spirits, including Satan himself, would eventually be saved.

VI.

What Others Have Said About Origen
The translators of the King James
Version (1611): "...it is written of Origen that
he was the first, in a manner, who put his hand
to write commentaries upon the Scriptures, and
therefore no wonder if he overshot himself many
times." (From the translators' article, "The
Translators To The Reader," published in the
first edition of the KJV.)

Christopher Love (1653): "It was the great mistake of Origen, though hee holds for the coming of Christ againe, that he pleades for the

coming of Christ in spirit, therefore the Text where it is said, you shall see the Sonne of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, Origen understands by the Cloudes, to bee the Saints, because it is mentioned in Scripture, that the Beleevers are a cloud of witnesses. Now this is to pervert the whole letter of the Bible and turne all the Scripture into an Allegory and Metaphoricall sense. I onely mention this to confute those that follow the conceit of Origen, meerly to make Christs coming to be but a spiritual coming, a coming in the hearts of Saints." (Penitent Pardoned, page 175)

William Cunningham (1805-1861), in his *Historical Theology*, Chapter VI., "The Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries, Section 4 (Origen), says:

In the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, the question whether Origen was a heretic was discussed in several councils, and the decisions were generally adverse to him. At last he was conclusively pronounced to be a heretic by the fifth general council held at Constantinople in the year 553. The decision was unquestionably a right one, for there can be no reasonable doubt that Origen grievously perverted some of the most important doctrines of the gospel. He was more deeply imbued with the principles of the eclectic or neo-Platonic philosophy than Clement, and applied it more boldly and unscrupulously than his instructor had ventured to do, in many daring speculations about God and the creation of the world, about angels and demons, and about the souls and destinies of men, —very much as if he had thrown

off all regard to the authority of Scripture, and thought himself at full liberty to indulge without restraint in his own baseless speculations, even in regard to subjects which are plainly revealed to us.

He believed in the eternity of matter, upon the ground that God could not have existed for any period of duration without putting forth the creative energy; thus setting a paltry piece of metaphysical speculation, upon a point of which man can know nothing except what God has been pleased to reveal, in opposition to the plain declarations of what he still professed to regard as the word of God. He believed in the preexistence of human souls, and taught that they were confined in human bodies as a punishment for sins committed in some previous condition; and he believed in the ultimate salvation of all God's intelligent creatures, devils well as men. He has spoken sometimes about the Trinity, and the person of Christ, in a way that has occasioned considerable difficulty to the defenders of the orthodoxy of the ante-Nicene fathers upon this point.

G. H. Orchard's History of the Baptists (1855): "Origen was a man of sober morals: but he was an eccentric genius, and his theological speculations were the most wild and extravagant in the world. It was held as a maxim in this school, and Origen supported it, 'that it was not only lawful, but even praiseworthy to deceive, and even to use the expedient of a lie, in order to advance the cause of truth and piety.' About the time Origen went to school, the affairs of religion underwent a very considerable change. As the old pas-

tors were removed by death, the new ones, and particularly those from the Alexandrian school, were for introducing the new doctrines and discipline, so that a mixture of Jewish, Gentile, and Christian modes, formed a code of laws for religious affairs. Origen embraced eagerly this new species of doctrines, explaining the Scriptures in the most licentious manner, which proved exceedingly pernicious to the interests of true religion. His symbolic views were auxiliary to his own mutilation. He advocated strongly the new system of education, and though many of the pious opposed it, from their convictions of its pernicious consequences on the minds of ministers, yet Origen's influence prevailed, and [the mixture of] Platonism and Christianity triumphed!"

John Gill (1697–1771): In his *The Cause* of God and Truth, Part 2, Chapter 5, Section 5, commenting on Romans 7:18, 19 (For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do), demonstrates that in this text Paul was referring to himself [Paul] after his conversion, as a regenerate man. Gill says under his tenth point: "10. "Origen, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and others, interpret these words of men under the thralldom and dominion of sin, through a long use and custom." This interpretation of the words was indeed first given by Origen, was greedily catched at by Pelagius, revived by Socinus and his followers, and some popish writers, and at last adopted by the Arminians."

In Part 4, Chapter 1, "Of Predestination," introduction, Gill says, "...Origen led most of the Greek and Latin writers into that gross

error, that the foresight of works is the cause of election."

In his book, *Prophetical Landmarks*, **Horatio Bonar** referred to Origen twice, and neither comment was complimentary: "Many seem to think that spiritualising is interpreting. I cannot think so. To adopt or at least to carry out such a system, would soon land us in the dreams of Origen, if not in the wild mysticism of Behmen or Swedenborg." (page 107)

"Why are they so afraid of literality? We know of no instance in which the literal system has injured the Church, or introduced heresy; but from the days of Origen downwards, to the era of modern Neology, all manner of evil has attended the departure from the literal sense of the Scripture." (page 152)

In his *The Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ* Bonar remarks concerning **the first resurrection**, "Millennarians...in after years their opponents could only get rid of the testimony of this passage [Revelation 20.4] by denying the whole Apocalypse. It was held to be the stronghold of the [first resurrection] doctrine then, both by friends and enemies; and as Origen had not yet taught the latter the art of spiritualizing, they [the enemies of the resurrection doctrine] had no alternative but either to receive the doctrine or reject the Apocalypse. They did the latter."

And Others...

"He consummated his work of mortification of the flesh by an act of self mutilation, springing from (a) a perverted interpretation of our Lord's words in Matthew 19:12 and (b) the desire to place himself beyond the reach of temptation in the interaction which he neces-

sarily had with youthful female students and stenographers. This act was destined to exercise a pernicious influence upon the rest of his life and his career in the Church. (After an unnamed author on the Internet. Source: http://www.studylight.org/ article on Origen.)

Johann Lorenz Mosheim, German Lutheran; church historian says Chiliasm's [i.e., Premillennialism's] "credit began to decline in the third century...through the influence and authority of ORIGEN, who opposed it with the greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favourite sentiments." (Mosheim, as quoted by Bonar)

Mosheim, Section 12: "This new species of philosophy, imprudently adopted by Origen and other Christians, did immense harm to Christianity. For it led the teachers of it to involve in philosophic obscurity many parts of our religion which were in themselves plain and easy to be understood; and to add to the precepts of the Savior no few things of which not a word can be found in the Scriptures...And finally it alienated the minds of many, in the following centuries, from Christianity itself, and produced a heterogeneous species of religion, consisting of Christian and Platonic principles combined. And who is able to enumerate all the evils and injurious changes which arose from this new philosophy —from this attempt to reconcile true and false religions with each other?"

"...the most distinguished "Christian" teachers of the 4th century looked to Origen and the Platonic philosophy as their model. Any doctrines...formulated at this time are bound to be more pagan than Christian." (Mosheim's Editor's footnote: "That philosophy has injured enormously genuine Christianity will be readily conceded

by all who rest faith solely upon the rock of Scripture.")

VII. ORIGEN'S INFLUENCE FROM THEN UNTIL NOW

Origen had a great influence on **Augustine** (A.D. 354 to A.D. 430), who was born of a Catholic mother and a pagan father at Tagaste, in North Africa. Augustine **became Bishop of Hippo**; he was called "a Doctor of the Church," and he is widely credited with being one of the most influential contributors to "Western Christianity." Augustine addressed the topic of original sin, and wrote about his own lustful desires in *The Confessions*, his autobiography. It is said of him, "He asked God to grant him chastity and continence...but not right away."

For fifteen years, Augustine had a concubine, with whom he had a child. He sent the woman back to Africa from Milan before his conversion to "Christianity." He confessed that he struggled against the wretched sin of lust, which he saw as an impediment to a life of virtue.

Highly regarded among the "great thinkers" of his time, Augustine vigorously opposed the *literal* interpretation of the Bible, even teaching that the universe and everything else was created simultaneously, rather than in six days, as God said.

Some writers have asserted that Augustine's understanding of the Genesis creation story reflected *figuratively* "his personal belief that women were morally and physically inferior to men, a belief he shared with Plato and Aristotle and probably derived from them." Amazingly, however, Augustine did rightly recognize and humbly acknowledge women's value as man's helper in the process of procreation! After all, Augustine's miraculous mind realized, there are some things a man cannot

do without a woman's being involved, and bearing children is one of those things.

Augustine carried Origen's allegorical approach to excess, producing a fourfold "interpretation" of Revelation 20 (A *strange*, confused blend of amillennialism and premillennialism!):

- 1. Jesus "bound Satan at Calvary."
- 2. The saints are "now ruling during the millennium." Since Rome ruled the known world and "Christianity" was the state religion, it would only be a matter of time before Rome's "Christianity" would soon completely rule the world (a perverted form of post-millennialism).
- 3. At some future time, Satan will be released and will persecute the church for three and a half years.
- 4. At the end of that time, Christ will return and fight the battle of Armageddon.

Throughout the Dark Ages, Rome expanded upon the errors of Origen, Augustine and other heretics.

The "Reformers," notably Martin Luther and John Calvin (and others), were primarily concerned with the doctrines of grace as opposed to the free-will works system of Rome. Their area of warfare was largely confined to preaching, teaching, and writing about salvation by grace alone (as opposed to all works-systems), the absolute sovereignty of God, the utter depravity of man, and our dependency on God's sovereign will and pleasure in the salvation of sinners.

Consequently, for all their reforming, the reformers and their followers did not consider reforming Rome's doctrines of church government, prophecy, and her allegorical teachings of a "figurative" millennium. Had they considered these things (speaking after the

manner of men), they would have been compelled to go back to the first-century literal understanding of God's written word, the Bible.

In 1643, the English Parliament called a convocation of "learned Divines" (almost all the "learned Divines" were officials of the Church of England) to meet at Westminster Abbey to produce a confession of faith and acceptable guidelines for worship. Their five years' work produced the strongly Calvinistic Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), which soon became the accepted standard, not only for the Church of England, but also for the Church of Scotland. It formed the basis for the articles of faith for the Presbyterians and several other denominations, including the Baptists' London Confession of 1689. Its amillennialism is carried over from Rome.

Remember, while all this was happening in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Baptists, Congregationalists, and other independent churches in England (and in other countries) were still being persecuted to the death by both the church and the state. People among non-approved denominations were still being executed, in the name of God and the king, by drowning, beheadings, crucifixion, and burning alive at the stake.

The majority of these persecuted outsiders, including the Baptists, were happy enough to adopt their "revised version" of the Westminster Confession in order to stop the persecutions of their people. In so doing, many of them abandoned the premillennial views of their forefathers. It was fashionable to "spiritualize" texts, saying, "Oh, Christ is ruling spiritually, now, from His seat in heaven." Such is true enough, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It is not specific enough, for specifics would offend

wicked kings, worldly churchmen, and corrupt politicians, bringing renewed persecution upon any who dared to preach the Bible as it is written.

The pressure on Baptists in England was about as bad as that of the pope of Rome and the Catholic kings in the Dark Ages: Without political and religious freedom, without a Bill of Rights that says (in the first amendment), "Congress [or anyone else!] shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances," without such rights and freedoms, it is exceedingly difficult to publicly preach that a government, a king, or a so-called "church" is anti-Christ, that we have only one King, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of Lords, and that He will return, put down all earthly governments, and demonstrate a righteous, equitable rule over all the nations of this world.

In 1658, the Congregationalists adopted the **Savoy** Confession of Faith, a slightly modified form of the Westminster, changing the section on church government to clarify their practice of a congregational form of governance and adding a section, "Of the Gospel, and of the Extent of the Grace Thereof."

In 1689, to similarly gain acceptance in the public's eyes, the Baptists did much the same: They adapted and adopted the Westminster and Savoy confessions, with changes that included a statement on (adult) believer's baptism as opposed to the Reformed churches' sprinkling of infants. (Baptizing infants was another relic the reformers brought with them, along with the seeds of amillennialism and post-millennialism, from Roman Catholicism.)

When the Baptists were enabled by the grace of God to come out of their hiding places in the caves and woods, wanting as they did to be accepted among the mainstream "reformed" religions, they adapted the Westminster and Savoy Confessions of Faith, with Baptistic modifications. Their confession, which was finally publicly accepted, was known as The [Second] London Confession of Faith of 1689. It, too, failed to return to the literal prophecies of the prophets and apostles.

SUMMARY

The above is a scant overview of how these confessions of faith came about and how the church came to be where it is today. Much has been left out necessarily due to time and space considerations, for which I confess my weakness and desire that more could have been told in a better way. We have tried to address the essential origin of **Origenism**, the historic plague of the church. The tragic truth is that neither the "learned Divines" nor any of the confessions of faith addressed the subject of prophecy. Men have preferred a "figurative interpretation" of all prophecies of Christ's second coming to the plain words of Scripture.

God enabled no one to undo Origen's damage. This too is of the Lord; Origen's heresies are part of the predestinated and prophesied apostasy we see all around us today. "For there **must** be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you (1 Corinthians 11.19)."

In the writings of Origen and Augustine we admit there are many good things; these men would not have otherwise survived in Christianity except for their superficial orthodoxy and their being promoted by likeminded men within the established church. There is some defense of early church doctrine in their writ-

ings, true enough; but there is also much evil. Put one speck of raw sewage or one drop of cyanide in a glass of pure water. How much of these impurities would be acceptable before you would no longer drink that water?

It is unthinkable yet true that the ill-conceived doctrines of two men, Origen and Augustine, should to this day so dominate the thinking and preaching of untold thousands of Baptists, including many Primitive Baptists; yet many do propagate their errors by parroting the post-millennial and amillennial systems.

You may be sure that every person who denies the bodily resurrection of Christ in the past and the resurrection of all humanity in the future, or who denies the all-sufficiency of the blood of Christ and His imputed righteousness to save His people from their sins, or who denies a literal hell, or who believes in the annihilation of the wicked, or who believes the Bible is to be understood as allegorical myths and fables not to be taken as historical or literal truth, or who believes in the universal salvation of all, or who believes Jesus was merely "a good man" but He was anything less than God manifest in the flesh, or who believes in the preexistence or eternality of human souls or of the material universe, or who says the second coming or return of Jesus Christ is only something "spiritual," something only experienced in the hearts of His people—you may be sure all such have traded the Bible for Origen's cunningly-devised Greek philosophy and pagan fables.

One who allegorizes the Scriptures, making whatever he can to be figurative (or as he likes to think, a "spiritual interpretation"), does to the Bible what his role model Origen did to himself: he emasculates, he castrates the very word of God, making it of none effect (Mark 7.13)!

—C. C. Morris

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- 2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;
- 3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes:
 - 4—The absolute predestination of all things;
- 5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall in

their federal head Adam into spiritual death, total depravity, and just condemnation; their utter inability to recover themselves from this fallen state;

- 6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;
- 7—The sovereign, irresistible, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in quickening the elect of God; the new birth is by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit without the use of any means;
- 8—The final preservation, perseverance, and eternal happiness of all the sons of God, by grace alone;
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