

Paper Abstract
The Unchanging Mind:
Origen's Lifetime Argument and The Dissolution of the Devil
By
Michael S. Domeracki

Typically, scholars have concluded that Origen advocated a universal salvation model where the devil is saved. Many scholars today maintain this position and typically cite *Peri Archon*, composed very early Origen's writing career. There are some scholars, however, who cite *Contra Celsum* to demonstrate that Origen does in fact hold the devil will not be saved, and therefore does not propose universal salvation. But many scholars, lie somewhere in between arguing that Origen is simply inconsistent on the matter. It is the intent of this paper to show that Origen never held the devil would be saved, but was rather misunderstood and misrepresented in his own life and forced to clarify his own position. In tracing Origen's writings and social conflicts, I will show that Origen proposed a universal salvation system, but never believed the devil would actually *choose* to repent and be saved. His later writings do not belie an inconsistent theology, but rather demonstrate a response to misinterpretations regarding his own theology. The paper will begin outlining Origen's salvation model evident in *Peri Archon*, then discuss the social conflicts of Origen, and conclude with a study of his later writings. By following his life and writings chronologically, I will show that Origen did not change his mind, but rather wrote in reaction to his opponents to clarify and further explain his salvation theology.

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“According to them, I say that the father of malice and perdition, and of those who are excluded from the kingdom of God, that is, the devil, will be saved, not even a deranged and manifestly insane person can say this.” – Origen, *Letter to the Alexandrians*¹

Soon after the publication of his famous *Peri Archon* in 225, critics charged Origen with advocating the devil’s restoration. As the above quotation shows, Origen refuted this accusation. Despite this denial, however, the salvation system that Origen outlines in *Peri Archon* does permit the possibility of the devil’s restoration. Origen’s economy of salvation rests on a notion of free will that, unlike Augustine’s understanding of a broken will, allows each individual to freely choose between good and evil equally.² For Origen, no being is naturally disposed or inclined towards evil, and equally so, no one is naturally inclined towards good. Each being is freely able to choose good or evil, and therefore each being decides its own fate – including the devil. However, as Origen spent a lifetime clarifying, he did not believe the devil would ever *choose* to be saved, and therefore, the devil would not be restored. What prompted the persistent accusations that Origen advocated universal salvation is unknown, but these charges were likely intended to slander Origen as he eventually found himself at odds with both the orthodox and Gnostic churches.³ Whether the issue was put to rest in Origen’s life is also unknown. Shortly

¹ Rufinus, *On the Falsification*, 6-8. Translation from Henri Crouzel, “A Letter from Origen to Friends in Alexandria,” trans. Joseph D. Gauthier, in David Nieman and Margaret Schatkin (ed), *The Heritage of the Early Church* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973), 140.

² Augustine’s understanding of free will differed from Origen’s understanding in that it assumed that each human was naturally inclined toward evil because the stain of original sin broke the operative will of humanity. In his system, the effects of original sin prevented a person from identifying and pursuing good over evil. For a brief explanation see J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines, Fifth Edition* (New York: Continuum Press, 2004), 361-366.

³ Theologically, the reasons why orthodox figures accused Origen of advocating the devil’s restoration are difficult to identify. Beyond the assumption that these figures simply did not like the notion of the devil’s salvation or that such an act would undermine the existing salvation economies, Unfortunately, there is no definitive answer to be found as it appears Origen was the first to prompt the discussion of the devil’s salvation. With respect to the Gnostic churches, the issue is slightly simpler as the problem relates to the nature of being and where ‘evil’ comes from. This Gnostic-Origen debate will be the focus of a forthcoming investigation.

after Origen's death his thought became lost in a church-wide debate and his supporters never specifically addressed the issue.⁴

The debate concerning Origen's position on the devil's restoration continues today because many scholars have interpreted Origen's writings as presenting conflicting views regarding the devil's salvation. Scholars typically consider *Peri Archon* as the definitive text of a systematic theologian and argue that the text presents Origen's 'true belief' in a universal salvation model. For instance, Jeffrey Burton Russell refers to *Peri Archon* as Origen's most "powerful work,"⁵ and Tom Greggs calls it "Origen's only directly systematic work. In it is contained his most (in)famous belief in *apokatastasis*, or the universal restoration of all things."⁶ In the introduction to his book of translations, Rowan Greer writes that Origen's "discussions of incorporeality and of matter in Book IV of the *De Principiis* are representative of his point of view both because they demonstrate his firm grasp of the philosophical issues of his day and because they show that he is committed to what is usually called Neo-Platonism."⁷ Peter Brown even goes so far as to state:

Origen felt free to commit himself to his most remarkable book, the *Peri Archon, On First Principles*. He was then in his late forties, an age when a serious philosopher could be thought to be sufficiently anchored in decades of meditation and direct oral spiritual guidance...to make it worth his time to commit his thoughts to writing. In this book, he took the opportunity to lay bare

⁴Origen's theology formed the foundation for almost all eastern Mediterranean theology much in the same way Augustine did for western theology. After Origen's death, in an attempt to expurgate heresies, many orthodox figures would disparage both Origen and his thought. Sadly, Origen's own theology was lost to centuries-long controversy that amalgamated various theologies and ascribed them all to Origen. Moreover, his detractors would continue to argue that Origen believed in the devil's restoration, regardless of Origen's own writings to the contrary. Why his supporters did not address this issue is unknown, the likely reason is they were concerned with more relevant issues of his theology. The negative stigma his detractors created for Origen lasted a long time, and it was not until relatively recently that scholars considered Origen as a theologian worthy of study and did not dismiss him as a heretic.

⁵ For example Jeffrey Burton Russel, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 124.

⁶ Tom Greggs, "Exclusivist or Universalist? Origen the 'Wise Steward of the Word' (*CommRom.V.I.7*) and the Issue of Genre," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9.3 (2007), 315-327, 317.

⁷ Rowan A. Greer, *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers* (Mahwah N.J.: Paulist Press, 1979), 5.

the assumptions about the position of human being in the universe that had underlain his personal alchemy as an exegete and guide of souls.⁸

These scholars contend that *Peri Archon* offers a systematic and complete view of Origen's theology so much so that they often ascribe the theology of *Peri Archon* to Origen's entire corpus. They argue that *Peri Archon* presents a universal salvation model and claim that other texts in which Origen explicitly condemns the devil represent only brief episodes of inconsistency.⁹ As Greggs puts it, Origen "finds it necessary, dependent on the genre the work, to cover over at times a belief which he clearly did hold."¹⁰

Although this attempt to understand Origen by emphasizing *Peri Archon* above his other writings may seem a reasonable, it is not without problems. First, Origen's *Peri Archon* is a theoretical book that explores different issues of Christian thought and was not intended as a conclusive treatise of theology. Second, Origen is not a completely systematic theologian and *Peri Archon*, written very early in his career, is not indicative of his entire scheme of thought.¹¹ And third, as is my formal contention in this paper, there is an evolution in Origen's thought that evinces not a change or inconsistency, but rather a clarification of his original, misunderstood and maligned, position against universal salvation. By tracing Origen's theological arguments beginning in *Peri Archon* and his *Commentary on John* in the 220s, through his debate with Candidus and his *Letter to the Alexandrians* in the 230s, and concluding with his *Homily on Leviticus* and *Contra Celsum* in the 240s, I will show how Origen's seemingly conflicting

⁸ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 162-163.

⁹ For example Russell, *Satan*, 128; Jennifer L. Heckart, "Sympathy for the Devil? Origen and the End," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 61.3-4 (2007), 49-63; Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church: The Story of Emergent Christianity from the Apostolic Age to the Dividing of the Ways Between the Greek East and the Latin West, Revised Edition* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 109-110; Greggs, "Exclusivist or Universalist?," 315-327.

¹⁰ Greggs, "Exclusivist or Universalist?," 327.

¹¹ Although Brown is right to note Origen's age in writing the text, he fails to acknowledge that *Peri Archon* was one of Origen's earliest writings and reflects more a foray into the discipline than an accomplished writer composing his *magnum opus*.

opinions about the devil's restoration are actually Origen's attempt to clarify his original position – which denies the devil's salvation – and to defend it against the mischaracterizations of his detractors.

In this paper I will first briefly outline Origen's life as his social context is directly related to the theological controversies surrounding his system of salvation. Second, I will outline Origen's understanding of creation and salvation generally as described in *Peri Archon*. Third, I will examine Origen's particular demonology in *Peri Archon*, and fourth, I will consider Origen's clarification in thought as revealed in his arguments during the 230s and 240s.

PART I: The Historical Origen

To understand Origen's thought over in his lifetime we must first consider his historical situation, career, and conflicts. Origen was born in 186 in Alexandria and raised in a Christian family.¹² According to Eusebius, Origen's father Leonidas was martyred when Origen was seventeen leaving his mother to care for seven children.¹³ At Leonidas' martyrdom, the Imperial treasury seized his property and left his family destitute.¹⁴ A wealthy woman in Alexandria, aware of the family's plight, took Origen in and paid for him to continue his education.¹⁵ Origen began teaching grammar while he continued his studies, and when he was eighteen, he became the director of the Catechetical School. As director, Origen offered catechumens the Christian education necessary for baptism.¹⁶ Eventually, Origen withdrew from his catechetical

¹² Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.2.

¹³ Eusebius says the martyrdom occurred when Laetus led the Alexandrian See in the tenth year of Severus' reign. Origen was seventeen when his father was killed; therefore, following Hanson's dating, Origen's father was martyred in 203, and Origen was likely born in 186. R.P.C. Hanson, D.D., *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1954), 1. See also Danielou who opts for 202 and 185 respectively. Jean Danielou (trans. Walter Mitchell), *Origen* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 7.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.2.

¹⁵ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.2. No further mention is ever made of his family.

¹⁶ Danielou, *Origen*, 9.

responsibilities and formed a university-like institution where he taught advanced students in theology, philosophy, and other subjects.¹⁷ As Eusebius records, it was at this point when Origen decided to devote more energy towards his own writings:

But he himself saw that he did not have sufficient time to study with depth the things of the divine or interpret the sacred writings unless he stopped instructing those who approached him to learn from him...and choosing Heraclas from his pupils...he turned over to him the instruction of the rudimentary lessons for beginners, saving for himself the instruction of more learned.¹⁸

Origen started the advanced school following the tradition of Pantaenus and Clement.¹⁹ As Origen explains:

But then I was devoted to the Word while the popularity of our good work was growing, when heretics approached me, and others of those with Greek learning and especially philosophy, and it seemed appropriate to examine both the dogma of heretics and the declaration that philosophers speak concerning truth. And in this we followed the example of Pantaenus who before us assisted many.²⁰

Origen's school taught many forms of philosophy and learning and paid no deference to Christian students or studies. With the exception of Epicurean philosophy, which denied "the existence of providence,"²¹ Origen believed that all knowledge was good, worthy of study, and should be taught to all.²²

¹⁷ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.15.

¹⁸ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.15. Unless otherwise noted, all Greek translations are my own. ὁ δ' ὡς ἑαυτὸν ἑώρα μὴ ἐπαρκούντα τῇ τῶν θεῶν βαρθυτέρα σχολῇ τῇ τε ἐξετάσει καὶ ἐρμηνεία τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων καὶ προσέτι τῇ τῶν προσιόντων κατηγήσει μὴ δ' ἀναπνεύσαι συγχωρούντων αὐτῷ...τὸν Ἡρακλᾶν τῶν γνωρίμων προκρίνας...τῷ μὲν τὴν πρώτην τῶν ἄρτι στοιχειουμένων εἰσαγωγὴν ἐπιτρέψας, αὐτῷ δὲ τὴν τῶν ἐν ἔξει φυλάξας ἀκρόασιν. Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History* (Volumes 1-2 in Loeb series. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932).

¹⁹ Danielou, *Origen*, 14. The Catechetical School had a successor model for directors as Pantaenus handed control over to his famous student Clement, who likewise, relinquished the reigns to his popular student, Origen, who was then succeeded by his student, Heraclas.

²⁰ Eusebius, *H.E.* VI.19.12-13 ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀνακειμῆ μοι τῷ λόγῳ, τῆς φήμης διατρεχούσης περὶ τῆς ἕξεως ἡμῶν, προσήεσαν ὅτε μὲν αἰρετικοί, ὅτε δὲ οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν μαθημάτων καὶ μάλιστα τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ, ἔδοξεν ἐξετάσαι τὰ τε τῶν αἰρετικῶν δόγματα καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν φιλοσόφων περὶ ἀλθείας λέγειν ἐπαγγελλόμενα. Τοῦτο δὲ πεποιήκαμεν μμησάμενοί τε τὸν πρὸ ἡμῶν πολλοὺς ὠφελήσαντα Πάνταινον.

²¹ Origen's understanding of knowledge and education are clearly in line with his predecessor Clement who teaches that "truth" is disseminated throughout all philosophy and only through a thorough education may one find "truth." Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, I.61-65.

²² Danielou, *Origen*, 15-22.

It was during his time as the leader of the ‘advanced’ class of the Catechetical School in 225 that Origen wrote *Peri Archon* and his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.²³ Around the same time, the Bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius, attempted to consolidate his control over the Alexandrian See and took issue with Origen’s autonomous actions over the school.²⁴ Demetrius was angered by the fact that Origen’s school taught both Christians and non-Christians and was funded by Origen’s patrons. Such funding meant that the school was able to act without reliance on the diocese and therefore without the need to recognize the bishop as an authority.²⁵ Furthermore, as Danielou explains, Demetrius became increasingly frustrated with Origen’s separation of the catechetical school and growing popularity.²⁶ Demetrius appointed Origen to be a catechetical director, not a philosophical teacher, and was irritated at Origen’s independent success that popularized Origen and the school, but not his bishopric.²⁷ These jealousies became a major source of tension between Origen and Demetrius,²⁸ and although many of the specific details about the conflict are lost, we know for sure Demetrius expelled Origen from Alexandria in 230²⁹ on the premise that he participated in a debate in Arabia without the bishop’s approval.³⁰

²³ Eusebius records that Origen published *Peri Archon* and the first five books of his *Commentary on John* before he left Alexandria in 230. Hanson, *Origen’s Doctrine of Tradition*, 8-24. Although other dates have been suggested, all agree these books were some of the earliest of Origen’s career written between 217-230. However, Heine suggests that Origen finished the first four books of his commentary between 230-231 and his fifth book in Antioch between 231-232 where Origen also began his sixth book. Ronald Heine, “Introduction,” in *The Fathers of the Church: Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 4.

²⁴ Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 109.

²⁵ Alistair Stewart-Stykes, “Origen, Demetrius, and the Alexandrian Presbyters,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 48:4 (2004), 415-429, 416. See also, Joseph W. Trigg, “The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen’s Understanding of Religious Leadership,” *Church History* 50 (1981), 5-19.

²⁶ Danielou, *Origen*, 22-23.

²⁷ Danielou, *Origen*, 10.

²⁸ Stephen J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2004), 25.

²⁹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.19.

³⁰ C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity: From its Origins to 451 CE* (Boston: Brill, 1990), 61.

During this exile, Origen, in large part because of the very popularity that got him expelled, was invited to preach to the bishops in Caesarea.³¹

After Origen's departure, Demetrius chastised the episcopal leadership in Jerusalem and Caesarea for permitting Origen, a layperson, to preach in the presence of bishops.³² Demetrius then rescinded his expulsion and permitted Origen to move back to Alexandria,³³ and although he did return briefly to the city, Origen left for good in 231 and was officially ordained in Caesarea.³⁴ Demetrius, believing this ordination was an affront to his office as bishop, denounced the act and convened a council to excommunicate Origen from the church.³⁵ He wrote vociferously to the other Mediterranean dioceses denouncing Origen's ordination under the pretext of jurisdictional infraction and on the grounds that Origen's self-castration invalidated him from the priesthood.³⁶ Demetrius gained enough support to convene a Roman synod for Origen's condemnation.³⁷ Throughout this time, Origen remained in Caesarea and continued to preach, teach, and write despite the censure of the Roman church.³⁸ Origen was most likely in Caesarea when he wrote his *Letter to the Alexandrians* sometime around 232.³⁹ In 233 Demetrius died and his successor was Origen's former student and colleague, Heraclas, who perplexingly continued to enforce Origen's ban from Alexandria.⁴⁰ Origen then wrote *Contra Celsum* in 248⁴¹

³¹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.19.

³² Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.19.

³³ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.19. Curiously, there is no evidence that Demetrius placed restrictions on Origen for his return.

³⁴ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.23.

³⁵ Davis, *Early Coptic Papacy*, 26.

³⁶ Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI.8. Although there has been debate regarding the legitimacy of his self-castration, it need only be known that Demetrius used it against him. R.P.C. Hanson, "A Note on Origen's Self-Mutilation," *Vigiliae Christianae* 20.2 (1966), 81-82. And Daniel F. Caner, "The Practice and Prohibition of Self-Castration in Early Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae* 51.4 (1997), 396-45.

³⁷ Jerome, *Ep.* 33.4. It should be noted that his condemnation was opposed by the Palestinian, Arabian, Phoenician, and Achaian bishoprics

³⁸ Davis, *Early Coptic Papacy*, 27.

³⁹ Crouzel, "A Letter from," 148-150. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, 26.

⁴⁰ Davis, *Early Coptic Papacy*, 26.

⁴¹ Henry Chadwick, "Introduction," In *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), xiv-xv.

and composed his *Homily on Leviticus* sometime between 246-255 before passing away in 255 in Tyre.⁴²

Accusations that Origen advocated the restoration of the devil arose in the midst of these controversies, and at least some of these accusations were likely due to the political battles caused by Origen's popularity. Before we consider the impact of these events, however, we must first consider the theology itself as presented in *Peri Archon*. In this book Origen outlined the salvation system that he spent a lifetime defending, and although many controversies arose concerning his theology, no question was more contentious than whether the devil would be saved. To understand Origen's position on the devil's restoration, however, we must first consider his theology of creation and salvation generally as presented in *Peri Archon*.

PART II: Peri Archon: Creation and Salvation

The earliest writing we have of Origen, *Peri Archon*, discusses the fall of creation and the means of salvation. Origen opens this work with the following preface:⁴³

Many of those, however, who profess to believe in Christ, hold conflicting opinions not only on small and trivial questions but also on some that are great and important; on the nature, for instance, of God or the Lord Jesus Christ or of the Holy Spirit, and in addition on the nature of those created beings, and the demons and the holy powers. In view of this it seems necessary first to lay down a definite line and unmistakable rule in regard to each of these.⁴⁴

He then outlines, almost in list form, a series of Christian beliefs, noting where there was confusion or where some ideas were incompletely understood. His list includes the monotheism and eternity of God; the divine but created son-ship of Jesus Christ; Jesus' actual resurrection

⁴² Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, 8-24.

⁴³ Unless otherwise noted, all translations taken from Origen, *On First Principles*, Trans. G. W. Butterworth (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973).

⁴⁴ Origen, *Princ.*, Preface. 2. Although the issue will be addressed in more detail later, I find no issue using Rufinus' transmission of Origen's work for this particular project. As Rombs argues, we may comfortably rely on Rufinus' adherence to Origen with the exception of caution for softening, though not changing, certain problematic passages which are not related to the devil. Ronnie J. Rombs, "A Note on the Status of Origen's *De Principiis* in English," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007), 21-29.

from the dead; the divine presence of the Holy Spirit as united with the Word and God (although he says “it is not yet clearly known whether he is to be thought of as begotten or unbegotten”); and the notion that the soul will either receive reward or punishment for its behavior on earth. He also affirms bodily resurrection; defends free will; legitimates the existence of demons and the devil; confirms this world’s eventual dissolution; and discusses the presence of angels and good powers though he is quick to note that such beings are ill understood.⁴⁵

Rather than being a systematic, comprehensive book of theology, Origen’s *Peri Archon* is an exploration of these main (*first*) principles of Christian belief.⁴⁶ With this work, Origen hoped to provoke a discussion about the major tenets of Christian faith.⁴⁷ Origen reminds readers that he is speculating rather than dictating his beliefs in *Peri Archon*.⁴⁸ Furthermore, there is evidence that *Peri Archon* was published earlier than Origen had intended. Jerome records Origen’s frustration with a certain Ambrose⁴⁹ for publishing the work before he was ready.⁵⁰ Therefore, however much the text lends itself to being read as a systematic theology, or however much we may want to read it as such, we must always bear in mind that *Peri Archon* is a theological exploration released before the author deemed it complete; it was not intended to be a dogmatic *Summa Theologica*. With this caution in mind, we can examine Origen’s speculative theology in *Peri Archon* to ascertain his early concepts about salvation.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Origen, *Princ.*, Preface. 2.

⁴⁶ One might even surmise that these discussions were in response to the sorts of questions his catechumens were asking him as their director.

⁴⁷ Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 46.

⁴⁸ Origen, *Princ.*, VI.1.

⁴⁹ Ambrose was a wealthy friend of Origen’s and former Valentinian. Apparently at Ambrose’s urging, Origen began composing commentaries on the scriptures and Ambrose paid scribes to copy and disseminate these texts. Eusebius, *H.E.* VI.18, 23.

⁵⁰ Jerome, *Ep.* 134.9.

⁵¹ Crouzel notes that Origen’s speculative style in *Peri Archon* is an established form of philosophical literature, though offers no further note on the statement. Crouzel, *Origen*, 46.

For Origen, the end is much like its beginning, and therefore we must first investigate his ideas regarding creation.⁵² Origen understands God to exist eternally as the Father of all of creation, purely as intelligence without being.⁵³ God is united as Oneness exhibiting no diversity, as the font of all intelligence, and as one that is beyond ‘being.’ God is not a physical reality; God does not exist, but rather God is.⁵⁴ God has no place or location; God is united with all and is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere.⁵⁵ Implicit in God’s fatherhood is a son-ship, for one cannot be a father without a child. However, Origen also wishes to maintain that God is exclusively eternal and therefore asserts that while the *idea* of the Word (wisdom) eternally existed with God,⁵⁶ the *actualized* Word (will) is the first of creation.⁵⁷ Origen understands the Word to be an emanation united with the wisdom of the Father, and it is through this emanation that all of creation was formed.⁵⁸ It is important to note that in this system, creation does not exist eternally, but was in fact, created. Origen himself writes, “we shall maintain a reverent belief about God, neither asserting that his creatures were unbegotten and coeternal with him nor on the other hand that he turned to the work of creation to do good when he had done nothing good before.”⁵⁹

⁵² Henri Crouzel *Origen*, 205.

⁵³ Origen, *Princ.* I.I. 6. Gerald Bostock offers an excellent consideration of Origen’s creation theology; however, to make his case, Bostock is forced to cite texts written well after *Peri Archon* and therefore exceeds the confines of this specific analysis. Gerald Bostock, “Origen’s Philosophy of Creation,” *Origeniana Quinta: Historica, Text and Method, Biblica Philosophica, Theologica, Origenism and Later Developments: Papers of the Fifth International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1992).

⁵⁴ Origen, *Princ.* I.I. 6.

⁵⁵ Origen, *Princ.* I.I. 8.

⁵⁶ Origen, *Princ.* I.II.1-3.

⁵⁷ Origen, *Princ.* I.II.1. Origen identifies the Word as the first of creation, indicating that it was created, and therefore, not eternal.

⁵⁸ Origen, *Princ.* I.II. 5-6.

⁵⁹ Origen, *Princ.*, I.IV.5. While it is true that Origen intends to disavow himself of the notion that a period of ‘time’ passed where God was without creation as well, he does this not by saying creation is eternal, but rather that the intention to create and the pre-figurement of creation existed within the Wisdom of God. his stands in contrast to Bostock’s contention that all creation is eternal with the Father as well. Gerald Bostock, “Origen’s Doctrine of Creation,” *The Expository Times* 118.5 (2007): 222-227.

All beings were originally created in a state of νοῦς,⁶⁰ in equality,⁶¹ and in constant devotion to God.⁶² In this state, all minds existed as a collection in an actively contemplative communion with the divine.⁶³ This union was mediated by the presence of the Word who distanced God from creation and simultaneously connected creation with God.⁶⁴ Furthermore, all beings were naturally endowed with free will; as Origen explains, “‘in the beginning’ he [God] created what he wished to create, that is rational beings...he created all his creatures equal and alike...endowed with the power of free will.”⁶⁵ Creation, at this point, was completely unified, conceptually mirroring the unity of God. To maintain that God is unity in spite of the diversity of creation,⁶⁶ Origen ascribed the cause of diversity to creation itself, as God would have no inclination for distinction.⁶⁷ Hence, at a certain point “the devil, being one, since he had free will, desired to resist God and God expelled him.”⁶⁸ This free willing act of rebellion disrupted the unity of creation and forced other minds to choose between themselves or the divine. This act of choice forced distinction within creation. As Origen writes:

Endowed with the power of free will it was this freedom which induced each one by his own voluntary choice either to make progress through the imitation of God or to deteriorate through negligence. This, as we have said before, was the cause of diversity among the rational creatures, a

⁶⁰ This is continuing with Crouzel’s assertion to use νοῦς instead of νοές, who points out that nowhere in the extant Greek corpus of Origen does he use the plural. Crouzel, *Origen*, 206 n. 7.

⁶¹ There is no distinction between Jesus, angel, human, devil, or otherwise – all existed in complete equality.

⁶² Origen, *Princ.*, II.9.6.

⁶³ Origen, *Princ.*, 1.8.1. The original status of creation was in mind (νοῦς), not soul (ψυχή) though both typically are rendered as ‘soul’ in English. Rowan Williams, “Origen on the Soul of Jesus” in *Origeniana Tertia: The Third International Colloquium for Origen Studies*, ed. Richard Hanson and Henri Crouzel (Rome: Edizioni Dell’Ateneo, 1985), 132.

⁶⁴ Jacobsen writes, “The Logos is thus an intermediary between God and the inner man, thereby ensuring both the relationship and the distance between God and man. Anders Lund Jacobsen, “Genesis 1-3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008): 213-232, 231.

⁶⁵ Origen, *Princ.*, II.9.6.

⁶⁶ Gerald Bostock, “Origen and the Pythagoreanism of Alexandria,” in *Origenia Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition: Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress Pisa, 27-31 August 2001: Volume One*, L. Perrone (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003).

⁶⁷ For a more complete discussion of this see, Brown, *Body and Society*, 163.

⁶⁸ Origen, *Princ.*, I.8.1. My own translation. Ὁ δὲ διάβολος εἰς ὧν, ἐπειδὴ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον εἶχεν, ἠθουλήθη ἀντιστῆναι τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ ἀπόσατο αὐτὸν ὁ Θεός· (Migne, 86,1264).

cause that takes its origin not from the will or judgment of the Creator, but from the decision of the creature's own freedom.⁶⁹

Because all of creation was unified, it was singularly focused on the contemplation of the divine, but when the devil turned, his action became a distraction; the devil's action created a second object on which beings could focus. Each mind had to reconcile its contemplation between the divine, itself, or something else (i.e., the devil).⁷⁰ With this act, rational creation stratified itself, shattering the equality of creation and communion with the Divine in a single instance.⁷¹

For Origen, the fall into distinction served not only to further separate creation from God, but also to instill a hierarchical stratification within creation in relation to each being's moral activity⁷² (or inactivity).⁷³ In *Peri Archon*, Origen accounts for these varying levels of creation, writing, "[s]ome sinned deeply and became demons, others less and became angels; others still less and became archangels; and thus each in turn received the reward for his individual sin."⁷⁴ Origen further elaborates on those who sinned less and the gifts and responsibilities they received. Origen writes:

Certain of those, indeed, who have continued in that beginning which we have described as being like the end that is to come, have allotted to them in the ordering and arrangement of the world, the rank of angel, others that of powers, others that of principalities, others that of authorities (clearly in order to exercise authority over those who 'need to have authority above their head'); while others have the rank of thrones, the duty of judging and ruling those who need this, and others have lordship, doubtless over slaves. All these privileges the Divine providence, by a fair and just judgment, has conferred upon them as a reward for their merit and for the progress they have made in imitating and participating in God.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Origen, *Princ.*, II.9.6.

⁷⁰ This is not to suggest that each being focused on only one of these three objects. Each being divided its attention among these three and the degree to which one focused on things other than the divine determined how far a being fell.

⁷¹ Origen, *Princ.*, I.8.1.

⁷² For a complete discussion of Origen's celestial understanding see Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of An Idea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

⁷³ Danielou, *Origen*, 209-220.

⁷⁴ Origen, *Princ.*, I.8.1.

⁷⁵ Origen, *Princ.*, I.6.2.

While some beings condescend into bodily form for the benefit of humans, it is important to note that these beings did not ascend as Jesus did.⁷⁶ Rather, their elevation over other souls is simply because they maintained their position from original creation.⁷⁷ If Origen's concept of sin is a lapse in energetic devotion to God,⁷⁸ Origen's description of the beings who "have continued in the beginning which we have described as being like the end that is to come" would indicate that such beings persevered in a level previously enjoyed, such as in the original state of $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$.⁷⁹ Additionally, Origen takes particular concern to identify the unique ascent of the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ of Jesus to a higher union with the Divine against the unchanging position of the highest beings;⁸⁰ in other

⁷⁶ Crouzel reads this passage to indicate that Origen did not see the fall universally and argues that Origen believed Jesus' $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ was not the only one to ascend toward the Divine (Crouzel, *Origen*, 211-212). Jean Danielou, however, maintains Origen's universal conception of the fall and argues that every $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ besides Jesus descended in some capacity as all were afflicted by distraction; it was only the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ of Jesus that ascended towards the divine Danielou argues that Rufinus added the phrase "some remained true to the principle" (i.e., some did not sin) to *Peri Archon* I.6.2 as the extant Greek does not have this phrase, and assumes that all creation either descended or ascended (Jean Danielou, *Origen*, 216). While it is possible that Rufinus did add these comments, such an explanation is not necessary as Origen explains his post-fall cosmology in more detail in his *Commentary on John* written at the same time. Origen writes in *Commentary on John* that, "In this way, John was sent from heaven, or out of paradise, or some other quarter, to this place on earth" (*Comm.Jo.*, II.24) and that one "It is necessary to accept John's soul is older than his body, and previously submitted itself to be sent concerning the ministry of the witness of the light." (*Comm.Jo.*, II.24). Origen further elaborates on the status of John and similar beings, explaining that, "Then those at the beginning were distinguished having some separation from humanity and being much greater than the remaining souls, have condescended from being angels into human nature." (*Comm.Jo.*, II.25). Origen maintains that John was elevated above other $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ even though he descended into corporeality. Origen states, "there is no mystery, the firstborn of all of creation, assumed corporeality for his love of humanity, and some were inspired and became imitators of Christ, loving through a similar body to minister kindness to them." (*Comm.Jo.* II.25). Origen here explains that the condescension of certain $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ into human bodies is exclusively for the benefit of humanity, acting in a similar – though not the same – capacity as Jesus did with his descent. Thus, what Danielou understands Rufinus to have added in *Peri Archon*, does not affect Origen's meaning, for the text actually agrees with Origen's explication in his *Commentary on John*. Origen in 225, as evinced by both *Peri Archon* and his *Commentary on John*, understood the highest $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ to be placed into corporeality for the aid of humans and not as punishment for any failure in devotion.

⁷⁷ The same is applicable to Rabinowitz's proposal; she argues that some beings attain Paradise before others, because they had ascended as well as Jesus. Celia E. Rabinowitz, "Personal and Cosmic Salvation in Origen," *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984), 319-329.

⁷⁸ As has been addressed previously, Origen, *Princ.*, I.4.1.

⁷⁹ Origen, *Princ.*, I.6.2.

⁸⁰ Origen, *Princ.*, II.6.2. "But whereas, by reason of the faculty of free-will, variety and diversity had taken hold of individual souls, so that one was attached to its author with a warmer and another with a feebler and weaker love, that soul of which Jesus said, 'no man taketh from me my soul,' clinging to God from the beginning of creation and ever after in a union inseparable and dissoluble, as being the soul of the wisdom and word of God and of the truth and the true light, and receiving him wholly, and itself entering into his light and splendor, was made with him in a pre-eminent degree one spirit."

words, he clearly distinguishes between unfallen angels and the ascending νοῦς of Jesus.⁸¹ The hierarchy of creation is not limited to broad categories of good, human, and evil; instead, several levels exist in direct correlation to one's choices even within the highest order of devotion.

Beings that fell away from God did so in similarly varying degrees of selfish devotion,⁸² laziness, or distraction from Divine contemplation.⁸³ For these beings, the level of material existence attained after the fall was proportional to the degree of self-indulgence and deflection from God:

Hence it is in whatever degree one declines from the good, one descends into an equal degree of wickedness. And so each mind, neglecting the good either more or less in proportion to its own movements, was drawn to the opposite of good which undoubtedly is evil. From this source, it appears, the Creator of all things obtained certain seeds and causes of variety and diversity, in order that, according to the diversity of minds, that is, of rational beings (which diversity they must be supposed to have produced from the causes we have stated above) he might create a world that was various and diverse.⁸⁴

In the fall each being cooled from νοῦς into ψυχή⁸⁵ and assumed material existence.⁸⁶

For Origen, much like any theologian, salvation is found in undoing the consequences of sin, and sin, in Origen's model, is the cause of distinction. Therefore salvation is found in undoing the diversity of creation and in moving towards creation's original unity. In order to overcome this diversity, each being must ascend through the hierarchy of beings and return to a state of devotion. To accomplish this ascension, Origen envisions an assistance-model of salvation by which beings closer to God help those further below. Origen writes:

But when they fell, as the New Testament puts forth, from the unity with God, they were given rule and lordship over the many that oscillate, and "they were sent to minister to those who will

⁸¹ Joseph W. Trigg, "The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen's Theology," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 pt. 1 (1991), 35-52, 45.

⁸² Origen, *Princ.*, 1.8.1. For more elaboration see John Clark Smith, "Conversion in Origen" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 32:3 (1979), 217-240.

⁸³ Origen, *Princ.*, 1.3.8. For further explanation of 'satiety' see Cruzel, *Origen*, 210.

⁸⁴ Origen, *Princ.*, II.9.2.

⁸⁵ Origen, *Princ.*, II.8.3. This is an etymological word-play between cold (ψύχος) and soul (ψυχή). See Anders-Christian Lund Jacobson, "Origen on the Human Body," in *Origeniana Octava*, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven University Press: Leuven, 2003), 649-656, 650.

⁸⁶ Origen, *Princ.*, 1.8.1. It is also of note that Jesus likely assumed a ψυχή as well in order to properly assume a human body. Origen, *Commentary on John*, X. 5-6. See also Williams, "Soul of Jesus," 132-133.

inherit salvation,”⁸⁷ ... How zealous they were for those who abandoned the good seed laid out by the lord, and they sought to be entrusted by the lord with their restoration, although they rejected the purity of the first seed.⁸⁸

In this model, the highest order of beings help Christ in the salvation of all beings by offering aid to the lower ψυχάς.⁸⁹ This help is given through education, fortification, and direction of the lower ψυχάς to aid in their ascent of the hierarchical levels.⁹⁰ Although humanity was placed on earth in bodily form,⁹¹ Origen does not view corporeality as only a form of punishment.⁹² Rather, God created the earth for the human body to assist in learning. Furthermore, God created materiality for all beings to provide a vehicle for the ψυχή. As Crouzel explains, “The blessed at the resurrection do not put on another body of an ethereal nature but it is their earthly bodies themselves which become ethereal: the ‘substance’ remains the same only the ‘quality’ changes from earthly to heavenly.”⁹³ The material body enables movement between realms as Origen explains:

But in the meantime, both in those temporal worlds which are seen, as well as in those eternal worlds which are invisible, all those beings are arranged, according to a regular plan, in the order and degree of their merits; so that some of them in the first, others in the second, some even in the last times, after having undergone heavier and severer punishments, endured for a lengthened period, and for many ages, so to speak, improved by this stern method of training, and restored at first by the instruction of the angels, and subsequently by the powers of a higher grade, and thus advancing through each stage to a better condition, reach even to that which is invisible and eternal, having traveled through, by a kind of training, every single office of the heavenly powers. From which, I think, this will appear to follow as an inference, that every rational nature may, in passing from one order to another, go through each to all, and advance from all to each, while made the subject of various degrees of proficiency and failure according to its own actions and endeavors, put forth in the enjoyment of its power of freedom of will.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Hebrews 1.14

⁸⁸ Origen, *Princ.*, I.8.1. Αποστάντες δὲ, κατὰ τὴν γενομένην νέαν Γραφήν, τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνώσεως, ἄρχειν τε καὶ κυριεύειν τῶν ἐπὶ πλείω σαλευθέντων λαχόντες, καὶ εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενοι διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν... Πῶς δὲ καὶ ἐξήλωσαν διὰ τοὺς ἀπολέσαντας τὸ καλὸν παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου καταβληθὲν σπέρμα, καὶ τὴν αὐτῶν διόρθωσιν ἐπιτραπῆναι παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἐξήτουν αὐτοὶ, τοῦ πρώτου σπέρματος τὴν καθαρότητα ἀποβαλόντες (Migne, 96, 504-505).

⁸⁹ Origen, *Princ.*, I.8.1.

⁹⁰ Crouzel, *Origen*, 211-214.

⁹¹ Origen, *Princ.*, I.8.1.

⁹² Origen, *Princ.*, I.8.1.

⁹³ See Crouzel, *Origen*, 251.

⁹⁴ Jacobsen, “Human Body,” 649.

Creation is fluid, and ψυχάς migrate between the various realms based on their righteous devotion to God and virtuous living.⁹⁵ However, as Danielou observes, “These various classes of spirits or souls are not shut up in watertight compartments; they simply represent different degrees of the same downfall. If they take themselves in hand they will pass into the hierarchy next above them, and inversely, they may also fall into the one below.”⁹⁶ This movement of beings is entirely dependent on the willful choices of each individual. Just as each being falls in relation to its lack of devotion, in the same way, each being ascends relative to its dedicated focus on God. In Origen’s economy, salvation is found in ascending these levels⁹⁷ and returning to the original state of unified contemplation of the Divine.⁹⁸ For Origen, each individual being bears total responsibility for movement within these realms because each possesses a completely operative free will.

PART III: Peri Archon: Demonology

Having discussed the general economy for Origen in *Peri Archon*, we can now address how this material relates to demons and the devil specifically. For Origen, all beings operate equally in their transmigration, i.e., angels, humans, and demons all possess the capacity to become other than their present state by either moving up or down the ontological ladder. To be sure, demons are the same as any other being; they freely chose to be apart from God. Origen states that all beings “may descend to such state (if any shall come to so great a pitch of

⁹⁵ Origen, *Princ.*, I.6.3.

⁹⁶ Danielou, *Origen*, 217.

⁹⁷ Origen’s most complete exposition of the journey of the soul is found in his *Twenty-Seventh Homily on Numbers* likely written between 246-255.

⁹⁸ Origen, *Princ.*, I.5.2-3. Although she draws on material outside of *Peri Archon*, Rabinowitz offers an excellent assessment of his salvation model and it would appear that Origen’s economy remains consistent through his life. Rabinowitz, “Personal and Cosmic Salvation in Origen,” 319-329.

negligence) as to be changed into what is called an opposing power.”⁹⁹ Origen explains how “differences of movement and will in either direction will lead to different states; that is angels may become men or daemons, and on the other hand daemons may become men or angels.”¹⁰⁰

Origen, demonstrating that the devil is not an exceptional being in this system, describes how the fall and placement of the devil occurred:

In this way, then, even Satan was once light, before he went astray and fell to this place, when ‘his glory was turned into dust,’ which is the peculiar mark of the wicked as the prophet also says. And so he is called the ‘prince of this world,’ for he exercises his princely power over those who are obedient to his wickedness, since ‘this whole world ‘ (and here I take world to mean earthly place) ‘lieth in the evil one,’ that is, in this apostate.¹⁰¹

As Lisa Holliday rightly observes her article, “Will Satan be Saved? Reconsidering Origen’s Theory of Volition in *Peri Archon*,” Origen recognizes the devil and demons as the same as any other being, and therefore as capable of restoration as dissolution.¹⁰² Notably, however, Origen only notes that *some* of the demons may meet their salvation:

Justinian:

But I think that, from among those that have been made subject to the worse kind of rulers and authorities and world powers, in each world or in certain worlds, there are some who, by reason of their good deeds and their desire to be transferred from these powers, will speedily attain manhood.¹⁰³

Rufinus:

But whether among those orders that live under the chieftainship of the devil and conform to his wickedness there are some who will one day in the ages to come succeed in turning to goodness by reason of the power of free-will which is in them, or whether it be true that long-continued and deep-rooted wickedness turns at last from a habit into a kind of nature, you, reader, must judge; that is, this portion of the creation shall be utterly and entirely out of harmony even

⁹⁹ Origen, *Princ.*, I.V.5.

¹⁰⁰ Origen, *Princ.*, I.VII.5.

¹⁰¹ Origen, *Princ.*, I.V.5.

¹⁰² Lisa R. Holliday, “Will Satan be Saved? Reconsidering Origen’s Theory of Volition in *Peri Archon*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009), 1-23.

¹⁰³ Origen, *Princ.*, I.VI.3. Taken from Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam*, 9. See also Jerome, *Ep.*, 124, 3. “Moreover, the very demons and rulers of darkness in any world or worlds, if they are willing to turn to better things, may become human beings and so come back to their first beginning. That is to say, after they have borne the discipline of punishment and torture for a longer or a shorter time in human bodies, they may again reach the angelic pinnacles from which they have fallen. Hence it may be shewn that we men may change into any other reasonable beings, and that not once only or on emergency but time after time; we and angels shall become demons if we neglect our duty; and demons, if they will take to themselves virtues, may attain to the rank of angels.”

with that final unity and concord,
both in the ages that are 'seen' and
'temporal' and in those that are 'not
seen' and eternal.¹⁰⁴

Clearly, by his own words in *Peri Archon*, Origen accepts the possibility of salvation for some demons if they *choose* to return to God. The system Origen has outlined, where all beings begin equally and possess free will, requires the possibility of demonic, even Satanic, salvation. If the matter in question is based purely on choice, and all possess free will to choose as each is inclined, and if one is not confined by a single lifetime, then there must be a universal possibility of every being to seek salvation – regardless of current status. Just as angels and humans may seek communion with the divine, so may some demons including the devil himself. Thus, definitively, the possibility of salvation for the devil does exist in *Peri Archon*. However, the question then must be posed, does Origen assert that the devil *will* be saved? This question is much more difficult to answer, though fortunately Origen did respond to it in his own lifetime.

PART IV: Origen's Defense

As previously discussed, Origen often found himself embroiled in conflict. After writing *Peri Archon* and his *Commentary on John* in 225, restructuring the Catechetical School, and challenging the authority of the Alexandrian bishop, Origen was forced to leave Alexandria. In the span of only two years, Origen lost his position at the school, gained it again, had to flee the city and his home, was ordained, excommunicated, and finally found a semi-permanent residence in Caesarea. It was in the midst of this turmoil that Origen was accused of advocating the devil's salvation. The first accusation against Origen occurred in 229, shortly after the publication of *Peri Archon*. The Christians of Achaia invited Origen to debate the Valentinian

¹⁰⁴ Origen, *Princ.*, I.VI.3.

Gnostic, Candidus, who claimed that Origen advocated the devil's salvation.¹⁰⁵ Jerome records a portion of this exchange:

Candidus asserts that the devil is of a nature wholly evil which can never be saved. Against this Origen rightly asserts that he is not of perishable substance, but that it is by his own will that he fell and can be saved. This Candidus falsely turns into a reproach against Origen, as if he had said that the diabolical nature could be saved.¹⁰⁶

Against Candidus, Origen clarified that he was not maintaining that the devil would be saved, but only that the possibility of salvation exists. Origen's point was that the devil did not possess an innately evil disposition, but came to evil on his own accord by freely choosing to turn away from God.¹⁰⁷ In effect, Origen was isolating evil from God and arguing the devil's demise is not due to an evil nature, as Candidus held, but to evil choices, and should the devil ever decide to choose God, he would be able to find salvation.¹⁰⁸

Shortly thereafter, Origen had to clarify his position further. Both Jerome and Rufinus record a letter that Origen wrote to "the Alexandrians" just three years later in 232, after his final departure and excommunication.¹⁰⁹ Responding to the accusation that he was maintaining the devil's restoration, Origen asserted his position in no uncertain terms:¹¹⁰

Jerome:

Some of those who take pleasure in finding [occasions for] disputes ascribe to us and to our doctrine a blasphemy. Concerning which let them consider the way in which they heed: "Neither drunkards nor

Rufinus:

Some of those persons who gladly accuse their neighbors ascribe to us and to our doctrine the charge of blasphemy, which they have never heard from us. Let them take heed to themselves about this, how they are unwilling to observe

¹⁰⁵ W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 280.

¹⁰⁶ Jerome, *Apol.adv.Ruf.*, II.19.

¹⁰⁷ Crouzel, "A Letter from Origen," 147.

¹⁰⁸ A more complete analysis of Origen's debate with Gnostic understandings of nature and evil will be examined in another paper.

¹⁰⁹ Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, 26. Although no specific date is offered, a similar date is suggested by Crouzel, "A Letter from Origen," 147-150.

¹¹⁰ Although the later Origenist Controversy greatly complicates the issues, it is here sufficient to note that Jerome and Rufinus were opposed to each other, so that their recording of the same letter is significant. For a detailed assessment of the controversy, see Elizabeth Clark, "The Place of Jerome's Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist Controversy: The *Apokatastasis* and Ascetic Ideals," *Vigiliae Christianae* 41.2 (1987), 154-171; Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

slanderers [or blasphemers] will possess the kingdom of God,” though they say that the father of the malice and perdition of those, who will be excluded from the kingdom of God, is able to be saved. Even one who has lost his mind cannot say this.¹¹¹

that commandment which says, “Revilers shall not possess the kingdom of God.” They say that I claim that the father of wickedness and perdition, and of those who are cast out of the kingdom of God, that is, the devil, is to be saved. This is something which not even a madman and some who is manifestly insane can say.¹¹²

Rufinus’¹¹³ quotation is taken from his *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen*, an attachment to his translation of Pamphilus’ *Apology for Origen*.¹¹⁴ Jerome’s selection comes from his *Apology for Himself Against the Books of Rufinus*.¹¹⁵ Although the quotations are different enough to make us wonder if they are even from the same letter,¹¹⁶ the sentiment remains the same in both: Origen is responding to critics who accuse him of advocating the salvation of the devil, a position that he passionately denies.

Furthermore, as Jerome explains, Origen wrote this letter specifically against the accusations of Bishop Demetrius who had recently expelled him from Alexandria and convened

¹¹¹ Jerome, *Apol.adv.Ruf.*, II.18.

¹¹² Rufinus, *On the Falsification*, 7.

¹¹³ Rufinus was a monk well versed in Origen theology and avid student of his works. He emerged as the chief proponent of Origen during the controversy and would continue to translate Origen’s writings until his death in 410. The difficulty here is that Rufinus admits to editing parts of the texts to remove heretical interpolations and summarizing other parts due to their length, forcing us to question the veracity of Origen’s writings. However, scholars have been increasingly willing to accept Rufinus’ transmission of Origen’s work, especially if the work is preserved by Jerome as well. For further discussion of Rufinus see Francis X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345-411): His Life and Works* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945).

¹¹⁴ Thomas P. Scheck, *St. Pamphilus: Apology for Origen. With the Letter of Rufinus on the Falsification of the Books of Origen* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 10.

¹¹⁵ Jerome complicates the historical situation considerably. Jerome traveled widely, was well educated, and at one time, he was an avid student of Origen’s writings. He translated a great many of Origen’s works, cited Origen often in his own works, and praised Origen frequently for his abilities and thoughts. Yet, when confronted with the charge of Origenism, a serious charge of heresy to be sure, Jerome ceded his position and condemned Origen. With this condemnation, Jerome not only turned his back on his own theological formation, but also spurned a close friend, Rufinus of Aquileia, with whom he spent nearly fifteen years quarreling. However, we must be aware of how serious Origenist accusations were and Jerome’s very real and sincere desire to be seen as orthodox. His need to be recognized as orthodox might have prevented him from proclaiming Origen’s innocence about the devil, as to do so, might have been seen as sympathy for Origen. For more see J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth Publishing, 1975).

¹¹⁶ Crouzel is assured of their authenticity as both are clearly translations of the same Greek letter. Crouzel, “A Letter from Origen,” 136.

a synod to excommunicate him.¹¹⁷ Jerome writes that, “The object of the whole letter is to assail Demetrius the Pontiff of Alexandria, and to inveigh against the bishops throughout the world, and to tell them that their excommunication of him is invalid.”¹¹⁸ This suggests that Demetrius, exploiting Origen in a point of ecclesial weakness after his excommunication, accused him publically of believing in the devil’s salvation. Origen, lamenting that some of his work was lost in his haste to leave Alexandria,¹¹⁹ writes about his dealings with Demetrius in his *Commentary on John*:

And at that time, the cruelty of our enemy was warring through his recent writings (which are truly opposed to the gospel), and arousing all the winds of evil in Egypt against us, but reason encouraged me to take a stand in the struggle and guard my guiding principle, lest the mistaken reasoning would have the strength to bring a storm upon my soul...I am compelled more easily to bear the plots against me...¹²⁰

Supporting Jerome’s reading of the *Letter to the Alexandrians*, we can see Origen’s ire towards his ‘enemy,’ who would be none other than the leader of the Egyptian church, Demetrius. As Origen recounts, Demetrius not only turned the entire Egyptian church against him, but apparently misrepresented his theology to do so. Origen then wrote his *Letter to the Alexandrians* not only to validate his membership in the church in response to his excommunication, but also to explain his own theology against those misrepresenting his position. Origen’s social battles with Demetrius coalesced around his theological explorations in a battle that would consume his life. Within roughly seven years of *Peri Archon*’s publication,

¹¹⁷ Although there is no specific mention of Demetrius in the letter, given Jerome’s knowledge of Origen’s historical situation and the mention of excommunication, the identification of Demetrius may come from Jerome and not the letter itself. Crouzel, “Letter from Origen,” 144.

¹¹⁸ Jerome, *Apol.adv.Ruf.*, II.18.

¹¹⁹ Origen, *Comm.Jn.*, VI.2.12 “Be assured that I am most eager to begin book six a second time, because, that which I dictated in Alexandria, for some unknown reason, has not been brought with me.” ἴσθι δὲ ὅτι ἀπὸ πολλῆς προθυμίας δευτέραν ταύτην ἀρχὴν ποιῶμαι ἕκτου τόμου, διὰ τὸ τὰ προουπαγορευθέντα ἡμῖν ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρίᾳ οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅπως μὴ κεκομίσθαι. Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. In *The Commentary of Origen on St. John’s Gospel*, ed. A. E. Brooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896).

¹²⁰ Origen, *Comm.Jn.*, VI.2.8-12 ἔπειτα τοῦ ἐχθροῦ πικρότατα ἡμῶν καταστρατευσαμένου διὰ τῶν καινῶν αὐτοῦ γραμμάτων τῶν ἀληθῶς ἐχθρῶν τῷ εὐγγελίῳ, καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἀνέμους τῆς πονηρίας καθ’ ἡμῶν ἐγείραντος, στήναι μάλλόν με πρὸς τὸν ἀγῶνα παρεκάλει ὁ λόγος καὶ τηρῆσαι τὸ ἡγεμονικόν, μήποτε μοχθηροὶ λογισμοὶ ἐξισχύσωσι τὸν χειμῶνα καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου ἐπεισαγαγεῖν, ... ὥσπερ εἰ ποσῆς εὐδίας λαβόμενοι οὐκέτι ὑπερτιθέμενοι ὑπαγορεύειν τὰ ἀκόλουθα βουλόμεθα...

Origen had to clarify his understanding of the devil and the nature of evil in both Athens and Alexandria and engage both Gnostic and orthodox Christians. Not only does this speak to the popularity of the text and the tumultuous situation of his orthodoxy, but also to how easily Origen's salvation model was misinterpreted (or misrepresented) as maintaining, rather than permitting, the salvation of the devil.

Origen again addressed the issue of the devil's restoration in 245, when he composed and delivered his *Homily on Leviticus* in Caesarea:

“Death, the last enemy, who indeed was first placed “before the eyes” but “at the last will be destroyed.” This “enemy” therefore is the devil, who indeed was first placed “before the eyes” but “at the last will be destroyed.” But he had been placed “before the eyes” not that we might follow him but that we might avoid him. Whence also I think that by itself his human soul can be called neither mortal nor immortal. But if it should take hold of life, by partaking of life it will be immortal (for death does not fall into life); but if turning itself from life, it should draw to the participation of death it makes itself mortal. And for this reason, the prophet says, “The soul which sins will die,” although we do not think that its death is to the destruction of the substance, but from the fact that the soul is alien and remote from God who is true life, we must believe that it dies.¹²¹

In this homily, following the same logic he applied against Candidus in Athens, Origen maintains that the devil does not possess a naturally evil disposition, but rather has ‘chosen’ death for himself. As Heckart explains, “[t]he angels are not inherently good; they have simply worked harder than we have, and made better choices. By the same token, the demons are not inherently bad...[g]oodness and evil are not intrinsic; neither are they irrevocable.”¹²² Origen unequivocally recognizes that evil does not naturally occur, but rather is the fault of choice, and he claims that ultimately those who choose evil will be destroyed.

Origen further develops this notion of eternal damnation in 246 in his *Commentary on Matthew*. Origen here explains how at the eschaton the angels will oversee the separation between the righteous and wicked.¹²³ Clearly a man of the pulpit, he poetically entreats, “And

¹²¹ Origen, *Hom.Lev.* IX.11.2

¹²² Jennifer L. Heckart, “Sympathy for the Devil?” 51.

¹²³ Origen, *Comm.Mt.*, X.12-13.

before the end, the angels will separate the wicked from the righteous...but would those who will be thrown in the furnace of the fire not number more than the righteous!”¹²⁴ The fact that Origen *hopes* that there will be more righteous beings than unrighteous ones at the end demonstrates that Origen did not envision universal salvation.¹²⁵ Finally, in 248, writing against Celsus and quoting from Ezekiel, Origen definitively closes the matter of the devil’s fate by specifically stating:

And everyone who has chosen evil and to live a life according to it, acting in opposition to virtue is a satan, that is an adversary to the Son of God, who is righteousness, truth, and wisdom. But more specifically, the Adversary is the first of all creatures who, while they were living peacefully and blessedly being carried around, he molted and fell from the blessed state. According to Ezekiel he walked without blame in all his ways, until dereliction was discovered in him, and being “a seal of likeness and a crown of beauty” (Ezk. 28.12) in the paradise of God, as if satiated with good things, he came into destruction, as the Word curiously says to him: “You became destruction and you shall not exist for ever.” (Ezk 28.19).¹²⁶

Here Origen explicitly identifies the mortality of the devil as well as all those who live like the devil. For Origen, ‘evil’ does not exist, but rather results from turning away from God. He argues that beings that habitually turn from God will eventually separate themselves so far from the good they will not find their way back. These beings become so engrossed in their habitual actions of laziness and self-indulgence that they eventually seal their own fates as forever separated from God. This argument is implicitly outlined in Origen’s earlier writings *Peri Archon* and his *Commentary on John*.

¹²⁴ Origen, *Comm.Mt.*, X.13. καὶ πρὸ ἐξελθόντας τοὺς ἀγγέλους ἀφορίσαι τοὺς πονηροὺς ἐκ μέσου τῶν δικαίων ... Ἀλλ’ εἶθε μὴ πλείους οὗτοι τυγχάνοιεν ὄντες τῶν δικαίων οἱ βληθησόμενοι εἰς τὴν κάμνον τοῦ πυρός (Migne, 13).

¹²⁵ However, one may recognize that literally speaking it is a “universal salvation” in that all *beings* are saved and all *non-beings* are destroyed, although such pedantic logic is not necessary here.

¹²⁶ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VI.44. Πᾶς δὲ ὁ τὴν κακίαν ἐλόμενος καὶ τὸν κατ’ αὐτὴν βίον ὡς τὰ ἐναντία πρᾶττων τῇ ἀρετῇ Σατανᾶς ἐστι, τουτέστιν ἀντικείμενος τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὄντι δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀληθεία καὶ σοφία. Κυριώτερον δὲ ἀντικείμενός ἐστιν ὁ πρῶτος πάντων εἰρηνευόντων καὶ μακαρίως διαγόντων περορρησίας καὶ ἐλπεσῶν τῆς μακαριότητος • ὅς κατὰ τὸν Ἰεζεκιήλ περιεπάτησεν ἄμωμος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ, ἕως εὗρεθῆ ἄνομία ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ ὢν ἀποσφράγισμα ὁμοιώσεως καὶ στέφανος κάλλους ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ οἰοῖται κοροσθεῖς τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐν ἀπωλείᾳ ἐγένετο κατὰ τὸν εἰπόντα μυστικῶς πρὸς αὐτὸν λόγον • Ἀπώλεια ἐγένου καὶ οὐχ ὑπάρξεις εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. Origen, *Contra Celsum*. In *Contra Celse, III*, ed. Marcel Borrett, S.J. (Paris: Cerf, 1969).

In *Peri Archon*, as Lisa Holliday addresses, Origen already has a developed notion of cause and habit.¹²⁷ Drawing upon Stoic ideas of action, Origen explains that the natural inclination of animals (such as a spider's inclination to produce a web) exists in rational beings as well; however, the enactment of these desires occurs only at the acquiescence of the reason.¹²⁸ All rational creatures are responsible for their actions as rationality learns to discern every impulse as either evil or good.¹²⁹ All rational creation, Origen explains, is naturally endowed with a general recognition of moral good and evil, and therefore, bears fault for its choice towards evil.¹³⁰ The issue with free choice, however, is complicated by the tendency of creatures to become engrossed in habitual acts.¹³¹ For those who seek the good it is much easier to continually do so, as is true with those who seek evil. Changing habitual actions is difficult to accomplish. Habitual acts of evil, then, could almost be seen as personal imprisonment; continually choosing evil brings a being to a point where the chances of choosing good again become negligible. When beings reach this level, Origen maintains that God deems them unworthy of assistance and abandons them.¹³² Origen explains this concept through an allegorical reading of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart,¹³³ in which he explains that God only hardened Pharaoh's heart because Pharaoh had every intention of hardening it himself.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ Holliday, "Will Satan be saved?"

¹²⁸ Origen, *Princ.*, III.I.2.

¹²⁹ Origen, *Princ.*, III.I.3.

¹³⁰ Origen, *Princ.*, II.XI.4.

¹³¹ Holliday, "Will Satan be saved?" 20. "The types of choices man makes – to act for good or evil – become habitual and in this sense, are parts of man's nature. In other words, if a man consistently acts for ill, then sinning becomes like a second nature or habit."

¹³² Origen, *Princ.*, III.I.12. "God, therefore, abandons and neglects those whom he judges to be unworthy of chastisement, "For whom the Lord loveth he casteneth and punisheth." Origen will argue that this is to give the individual time to recognize his or her own faults and seek God's grace on their own accord, however, unlikely this is to occur.

¹³³ Origen, *Princ.*, III.I.8-13

¹³⁴ Origen, *Princ.*, III.I.8.

In his *Commentary on John*, Origen also explains that, as opposing powers of God, demons are evil, but because evil does not exist as part of God, one must recognize that the demons have descended to a point of non-being. As Origen writes:

Then all partaking of The Being, and the saints partake, are correctly titled “Beings.” But those who relinquished their share of The Being, in depriving themselves of Being they have become “Non-Beings.” But we agreed previously that “Non-Being” and “Nothing” are synonymous, and through this, those who are “Non-Beings” are “Nothing,” and all evil is “Nothing” since it does not have being, and is called “Nothing” because it came into existence apart from the Word, not included in the “All Things.” And concerning this we have shown, as much as we were able, what are the “all things” made through the Word, and, that what came into existence apart from him are never “Being,” and by this, called “Nothing.”¹³⁵

Rational creatures exist in a state of being, because they are not completely separated from God. Demons, however, focus on themselves to the exclusion of God so much so that they enter a state of non-being and can no longer be considered rational creatures. Salvation for these demons is not a possibility as long as they continue in their evil direction; they will descend into their own destruction. Indeed, as Origen states:

There is nothing unnatural that a man died, but the death of him stands out not only as an example of dying for the sake of piety, but also to effect a beginning and advance of the dissolution of evil and the devil, who dominated the entire earth.¹³⁶

Tzamalikos explains that for Origen, “what is ‘non-being’ cannot prevail over ‘being’ forever. Evil is ‘non-existent,’ it is a kind of absence; it is no part of creation. The fact that depravity prevails for the time being is an anomaly in the world. Eventual extinction of evil is asserted on account of reasons which are ontological, not historical or moral.”¹³⁷ Because the devil has maintained his habitual choices towards evil for so long, Origen maintains that he will continue

¹³⁵ Origen, *Comm.Jo.*, II.7. Πάντες μὲν οὖν οἱ μετέχοντες τοῦ ὄντος, μετέχουσι δὲ οἱ ἅγιοι, εὐλόγως ἂν ὄντες χρηματίζοιεν• οἱ δὲ ἀποστραφέντες τὴν τοῦ ὄντος μετοχὴν, τῷ ἐστερηθῆσθαι τοῦ ὄντος γεγόνασιν Οὐκ ὄντες, προείπομεν δὲ ὅτι συνωνυμία ἐστὶ τοῦ Οὐκ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ Οὐδενός, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οἱ Οὐκ ὄντες Οὐδεν εἰσι, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ κακία Οὐδεν ἐστὶν ἐπεὶ καὶ Οὐκ ὄν τυχάνει, καὶ Οὐδεν καλουμένη χωρὶς γεγένηται τοῦ λόγου, τοῖς Πᾶσιν οὐ συγκαταριθμουμένη. μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν παρεστήσαμεν τίνα τὰ διὰ τοῦ λόγου γεγενημένα πάντα, καὶ τί τὸ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γινόμενον μὲν, ὄν δὲ οὐδέποτε, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Οὐδὲν καλούμενον.

¹³⁶ Origen, *Con.Cels.* VII.17 Καὶ οὐδὲν ἄτοπον καὶ ἀποτεθνηκέναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, καὶ τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ οὐ μόνον παράδειγμα ἐκκείσθαι τοῦ ὑπὲρ εὐσεβείας ἀποθνήσκειν ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ εἰργάσθαι ἀρχὴν καὶ προκοπὴν τῆς καταλύσεως τοῦ πονηροῦ καὶ διαβόλου, πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν νενεμημένου.

¹³⁷ P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History & Eschatology* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 247.

to choose evil and never return to the good; therefore, Origen maintains that the devil will be destroyed as will all who remove themselves from God.

Conclusion

In *Peri Archon* and his *Commentary on John*, Origen outlined the basis of his belief that the devil would not be saved. He built upon the discussions of free will, habit, and the destruction of non-being found in these early texts when he later clarified his position and definitively stated the devil would not find salvation. Given these nascent justifications of the devil's demise and Origen's specific explication of the matter later in his life, it is clear that Origen did not 'change his mind' or 'double back' on his position, but rather only continually clarified his original position in the face of conflict and challenges. Although in *Peri Archon* Origen does not deny the possibility of the devil's salvation, he never advocates universal salvation either, and later, in his *Letter to the Alexandrians*, Origen explicitly states the devil will not be saved. Thus, the seeming inconsistencies in Origen's position on this matter are merely a result of those who maligned his first writings and required his clarifications on the issue. Origen spent a lifetime explaining that he did not have a universal salvation model, only a *potentially* universal salvation model. For Origen, the devil *could* be saved, but would never choose that end.

